Working Consumers: Co-Creation of Brand Identity, Consumer Identity and Brand Community Identity

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Accepted for publication: Journal of Business Research

Accepted refereed manuscript of: Black I & Veloutsou C (2017) Working consumers: Co-creation of brand identity, consumer identity and brand community identity, *Journal of Business Research*, 70, p. 416–429. DOI: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.07.012

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ABSTRACT

The creation of identity, in terms of both consumer identity and brand identity, is a core topic in marketing theory. Based on participant ethnography of Yes Edinburgh North & Leith, part of Yes Scotland, the national referendum campaign supporting Scottish independence, this paper explores identity co-creation among three entities: The brand, the individual consumer, and the brand community. The findings suggest that the interactions among these entities co-create their identity, primarily through the actions of highly motivated working consumers. This paper identifies the main dialectic relationships and shows how the effects move beyond the dyads to affect the other entities, including the symbols used in the process of co-creation. The paper concludes with a discussion of the implications for brands, individual consumers, and brand communities.

Keywords: Brand co-creation, Brand identity, Consumer identity, Brand Community identity, Working consumers, Political marketing

1. Introduction

Brand management was a process that managers initiated and performed (Aaker, 1996; Harris & de Chernatony, 2001; Kapferer, 2008) whilst other stakeholders observed. Research nowadays suggests that brands are dynamic social processes and that branding is a cultural phenomenon driven by the incongruities and synergies among managers, employees, consumers, and other stakeholders (Merz, He & Vargo, 2009). These agents increasingly co-create brands through their actions, using images and language that shape brand meanings and values which, in turn, shape brand identity and reputation (Vallaster & von Wallpach, 2013). Indeed, groups of consumers interacting with brands they are passionate about are transforming business and communication practices (Muñiz & Schau, 2007). Brand followers are becoming such a powerful signaling source that recent research suggests that consumers co-create brand identities (da Silveira, Lages, & Simões, 2013). Furthermore, brand admirers may act as "working consumers" who actively contribute to the development and management of the brand, its identity, and brand-related activities (Cova & Dalli, 2009), while their own individual identity can also be affected.

Typically, theorists examine the identity co-creative processes in one direction, such as the brand's effect on the identity of individual consumers (Belk, 1988); the brand's effect on the identity of consumer brand-related groups (Veloutsou, 2009); and the individual's or brand-related group's effect on the meaning of the brand (Cova & Pace, 2006). Research knows less about the processes, issues, and tensions of stakeholder identity and brand identity co-creation characterized by a reciprocal effect between dyads acting as sets of agents providing symbolic meanings to create identity. Understanding how meaning moves between these dyads and the effect of the actors on each other helps explain the evolution of each identity

and, from a managerial perspective, may provide additional insight into who owns a brand and the process by which brand value develops.

This research addresses this gap by examining the reciprocal relationships among brand identity, brand community identity, and individual identity creation and readjustment over time.

The Yes Scotland brand created and managed between 2011 and 2014, as part of the campaign for Scottish independence that took place in Scotland on September 18, 2014, provides the focal brand and context for this study. Yes Scotland was the legally designated campaigning organization for supporters of Scottish independence and provided the umbrella group under which individuals and political parties could work toward this goal. The campaign actively created and managed the Yes Scotland brand as part of its key strategy to organize "the biggest grassroots campaign the country has ever seen" (Canavan, 2013) and, therefore, relied on an extensive network of active potential voters who volunteered to develop and implement the campaign and promote the brand.

The size and length of the campaign was unpreceded in UK political history and, therefore, has implications for political branding. Consistent with political marketing literature, political parties, organizations, and ideas are political brands (French & Smith, 2010; Smith & French, 2009), and the brand image and reputation of the political entity play important roles in political campaigns (Falkowski & Cwalina, 2012; Peng & Hackley, 2009; Pich & Armannsdottir, 2015). Voters represent consumers because they consume the ideas promised by the political brands (Falkowski & Cwalina, 2012) and make judgments about them not only from controlled and uncontrolled signals but also from the characteristics of campaign supporters and the behavior of campaign workers (Enos & Hersh, 2015). Political campaigns commonly recruit large numbers of volunteers or activists from the populace

(Enos & Hersh, 2015; Tam Cho & Gimpel, 2010), who act as working consumers and proactively build the brand, partly from marketing resources (e.g., designing and delivering leaflets for local candidates) and the in-kind donation their time and effort provide.

The study finds that these identities are co-created through the involvement of working consumers with the brand, which acts as a focal point of engagement. More specifically, it elucidates the dialectic relationships between these three identities (including how effects move beyond the dyads to affect the other entities) where these multiple stakeholders employ a wide range of symbols, provided by the employed brand managers and other sources, in attempts to deliver the brand's core promise. The study also contributes to reputation research by offering a more comprehensive explanation of the signaling process (i.e., uncontrolled by the brand's original developer/owner and arising from working consumers and their groups). The key managerial implication is that by explicitly planning for brand co-creation in the brand strategy and providing materials and open source brand symbols, motivated, skillful working consumers can engage in the strategic development of the brand, in addition to developing it through the marketing materials and symbols they produce.

This paper begins by defining the concepts of brand identity, brand reputation, brand meaning, and individual and brand community identity. Next, the paper discusses how brand, personal, and brand community identities are formed and poses the research question. The methodology used to collect the data is then outlined to provide a more detailed examination of the Yes Scotland brand. The paper concludes with a discussion of the results.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Brand, individual consumer, and brand community identity

Research often uses the terms “brand identity” and “brand reputation” interchangeably, and though no consensus exists on the definition (de Chernatony, 1999; Csaba & Bengtsson, 2006; Walker, 2010), in general, branding researchers agree that they differ (Walker, 2010). Brand identity is the core character of the brand (Barnett, Jermier, & Lafferty, 2006) and defines the brand. Brand identity is an internal perspective, typically created before presenting the brand to external audiences, and managed by the brand management team (Balmer & Greyser, 2006). This study defines brand identity as the set of unique brand associations that producers aspire to create or maintain and the symbols they use to identify the brand to people (Aaker, 1996). Little agreement exists on the dimensions of brand identity (Coleman, de Chernatony, & Christodoulides, 2011), though most models include the symbolic, visual, and physical representation (Aaker, 1996; Kapferer, 2008; Simões, Dibb, & Fisk, 2005); the offer characteristics (Kapferer, 2008); and the brand personality (Aaker, 1996; Coleman et al., 2011).

Brand reputation derives from the perspective of external stakeholders (Basdeo, Smith, Grimm, Rindova, & Derfus, 2006) or wider audiences (Walsh & Beatty, 2007) and is an aggregate set of public judgments whose valence may change over time (Siano, Vollero, & Palazzo, 2011). Reputation also incorporates assessments of the brand’s positioning and salient characteristics (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). Controlled and uncontrolled signaling build brand reputation over time (Walker, 2010), suggesting that signaling helps external audiences understand and assess the internally constructed brand identity. Brand meaning reflects internal and external stakeholders’ mind-set about a brand (Vallaster & von Wallpach, 2013) and, therefore, the term incorporates brand identity and reputation.

In postmodern terms, individual identity refers to the set of beliefs and evaluations people hold about who and what they are (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity); their capabilities (e.g., mental, physical), values, histories, roles (e.g., mother, campaigner), and social relationships; and what they possess (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998). A key identity source is national identity, which strongly affects consumption and group affiliation (Heere & James, 2007). Social identity consists of an individual's beliefs about his or her place in groups and the social relationships he or she forms and maintains (Sirgy, 1982). Conceptualized as a narrative that provides spatial and temporal understanding of who people are, where they came from, and what they might be (Thompson, 1997), individual and social identity are inextricably linked through the interpretation of the cultural symbols used to construct meanings (Dittmar, 1992). Consistent with the group identity or the degree to which people feel connected with a group's character or purpose (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), brand community identity is the shared social identity at the group level internalized by individual members who depersonalize their individual identity (Lantz & Loeb, 1998; Ren et al., 2012).

2.2. Consumer empowerment and co-creation of brands

Consumers are active, empowered players in the development of brands (Payne, Storbacka, Flow, & Knox, 2009). They are given, or increasingly now take, the power and authority to make decisions about branded offers (Pires, Stanton, & Rita, 2006) to the extent that they often co-produce products and services with other consumers and companies (Veloutsou & Moutinho, 2009). Consumers' ability to influence other consumers' evaluations of branded offers, through groups of like-minded individuals (Cova & Pace, 2006; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001) or general word of mouth (Hutter, Hautz, Denhardt, & Füller, 2013; Yeh & Choi, 2011), also empowers them. The Internet provides opportunities for individuals to

communicate with brands and with each other about brands, increasing consumer empowerment (Christodoulides, 2009; Quinton, 2013).

When brands develop community spirit, and consumers meet and interact around the brands, consumer empowerment increases, and brand followers may believe that they own the brands, rather than the companies that produce them (Cova & White, 2010). These consumers are more willing than others to support the brand in many ways, a conclusion extensively acknowledged in the literature (Skålén, Pace and Cova 2015; Cova & Paranque, 2016). However, there are occasions when the power of brand admirers is such that some even question whether the brand still belongs to the company (Cova & White, 2010; Veloutsou, 2009), thus hijacking the brand as their own (Cova & Pace, 2006). This empowerment can cause problems because consumer groups are capable of opposing official brands and/or creating competitive offers with little or no input from the companies (Cova & Pace, 2006). These actions are difficult to control (Muñiz & Schau, 2007), and companies may view them as unwelcome and even dangerous (Cova & White, 2010).

One aspect over which consumers have some control is brand meaning (identity *and* reputation), and in some cases, the supplier cannot manage or direct this shift of control (Cova & Pace, 2006). Prior research suggests that brand managers should manage brand identity by recognizing other internal employees who contribute to the interface between the brand's internal and external environment as brand "ambassadors" (Harris & de Chernatony, 2001). Research, however, also acknowledges that many stakeholders contribute to how audiences perceive brand reputation (Ruzzier & de Chernatony, 2013; Walsh & Beatty, 2007). Empowered consumers play a role in reputation building, especially in contexts in which consumer interaction is greater (Siano et al., 2011). In these cases, a brand's value is

beyond the tangible and intangible offer components and contains experiences co-created with consumers (Payne et al., 2009).

Consumers can contribute to brand meaning (identity and reputation) creation in two ways. First, they can express their opinions and signal information about the brands, including their assessments of and experiences with the brands (Siano et al., 2011). Here, consumers are an uncontrolled source of information that shapes the reputation of the brand. Second, they can become more involved in the brand identity development by producing signals that wider audiences perceive as originating from the brand or by helping develop new products (Antorini, Muñiz, & Askildsen, 2012; Fuchs, Prandelli, & Schreier, 2010). Companies sometimes invite consumer groups to co-create a brand's ideology, use, and persona (Cova & Pace, 2006), producing material that looks as if the brand originates from the company (Muñiz & Schau, 2007). When consumers perceive brands as shared cultural property (Cova & Dalli, 2009) they may re-appropriate the brands without company involvement (Cova & Pace, 2006). In other instances, such as with retro brands, the company and consumer communities co-create brand identity (Brown, Kozinets, & Sherry, 2003; da Silveira et al., 2013).

The potential power of consumers to create brand meaning increases when they act as working consumers (Cova & Dalli, 2009; Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011). Working consumers are consumers who volunteer their time and talent in different ways to create value for the brand or organization (Bauer & Gegenhuber, 2015). They are active and constructive (Cova, Dalli & Zwick, 2011), offering their immaterial labor, experience, or information (Cook, 2008) and adding cultural and affective value to market offerings either as self-organized entities or under the guidance of company employees (Cova & Dalli, 2009). Working consumers often have skills that help support the brand (Hu, Zhao, & Cheng, 2012;

Zwick, Bonsu, & Darmody, 2008) and work for companies through their participation in brand communities (Cova & Paranque, 2010). Differentiating between company employees and working consumers can prove difficult for other stakeholders, enabling working consumers to contribute actively to the development of both brand identity and reputation. Thus, volunteers acting as working consumers supporting political brands can have an important role in shaping and delivering messages to wider audiences (Enos & Hersh, 2015).

Working consumers receive no monetary incentive (Cova & Paranque, 2010); rather, altruism and enjoyment tend to motivate them to volunteer their time and effort to promote the brand. Reputation-based motivation is a major driver for working consumers' participation and contribution (Hu et al., 2012). Investing the self through objects is a characteristic of creating an individual identity (Belk, 1988), and working consumers clearly invest work in their chosen brand. Individuals who act as working consumers are more likely to receive positive evaluations from others when they demonstrate good-quality work (Hu et al., 2012), suggesting that consumers who care about their own reputation are more likely to become involved in brand-related activities.

2.3. Brands and individual and group identity

Within a much wider pool of symbolic material, commodities and brands provide artefacts through which consumers construct their self-concept, pursue their identities, and assert themselves as individuals in society (Belk, 1988; Holt, 2002; Schau & Gilly, 2003). This relationship between the individual and the social self is dialectic in that each constantly creates, modifies, and transfers meanings to the other in a reciprocal manner, though inherent conflict exists between how each interprets the symbols (Elliott & Wattanasuwan, 1998)

Consumers own and consume brands as a way to construct a desired self and build social identity through the styles and images these brands present and project (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012; Thompson & Hirschman, 1995). Consumers can voice their identity openly through the use of admired and loved brands (Ahuvia, 2005). In certain contexts, such as political brands, the manner in which consumers see themselves correlates with the manner they view brands (Guzmán, Paswan & Van Steenburg, 2015). Individuals support their own desired identity by expressing their admiration for the brand, actively engaging in and contributing to the brand development, and participating in brand communities (Dessart, Veloutsou, & Morgan-Thomas, 2015). Admiration and avoidance of specific brands and brand community memberships are self-expressive mechanisms that can boost desired reputation in the society (Cook, 2008; Ruane & Wallace, 2015; Veloutsou, 2009). The social signaling value of brands also arises when individuals work to achieve personal goals and self-express through brands (Healy & McDonagh, 2013) that serve as symbols of personal accomplishment and status (Ruane & Wallace, 2015).

Consumers' individual and collective identities shape attitudes and behaviors that help develop the brand identity (da Silveira et al., 2013). Brand admirers often develop social links, build collectively cultural worlds, and partake in rituals and traditions in pursuit of common consumption interests or brands they admire (Cova, 1997; Cova & Cova, 2002; Kozinets, 2002). As a result, they affect and define the way audiences perceive brands. Members of these groups develop signs, or traces of identity, that help people identify with the group (Cova & Cova, 2002). When the group links with a specific brand, members expect to influence the way audiences perceive the brand itself.

Social identity theory argues that individuals derive a part of their self-concept from the social groups and categories to which they belong (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). They create or

express their desired identity and try to develop their own reputation in the minds of others through their brand community memberships (Algesheimer, Dholakia & Herrmann, 2005) or direct interactions and relationship with brands (Veloutsou, 2009).

In support of the individual and social expressive functions of brands, consumers also construct identity by actively contributing to the brand by participating in brand communities (Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001). Brand community members are self-motivated individuals who want to declare who they are through their participation in brand-related activities, and they may be more loyal to the group of consumers who socialize around the brand than to the brand itself (Ruane & Wallace, 2015). Consumers enjoy the acknowledgment of other consumers who value their contributions to product development and the communication they generate around the brand (Quinton, 2013). These consumers develop bonds with other individuals in the group and the group as a collective (Ren et al. 2011) and put importance on their reputation among other admirers of the brand (Hu et al., 2012), with some members attempting to create favorable impressions about the brand, its enthusiasts, and the brand community outside community boundaries (Schau, Muñiz & Arnould, 2009).

Conceptual work proposes that belonging to a brand community and members' brand self-congruence affect brand co-creation with brand owners (France, Merrilees, & Miller, 2015). Identity develops through interactions with other entities. Individuals construct and express their personal identity through brands and the influence of other consumers who support these brands, but limited empirical work explores the connection among the various identities when acting together (Schembri & Latimer, 2016). Elliott and Wattanasuwan (1998) discuss a dialectic relationship between the individual and social self and between advertising and consumers. This frame can be extended to the relationships among the three studied identities and examined as dyads: Brand identity and individual identity, individual identity and brand

community, and brand community and brand identity. This study examines the social ties between participants in each dyad, how working consumers use and create symbolic meaning, how they confront tension and conflict, and the reciprocal transfer of meaning between the dyads. In addition, this study shows how working consumers co-create meanings that are transferred between individuals, between brand, and between brand communities.

Specifically, this study aims to examine how brand, individual, and brand community identities emerge and are defined and re-defined from the interactions among the brand, the individual consumer, and other consumers participating in the brand community. Hence the research question is- by what processes and using which resources do these identities co-construct each other and adjust over time (see Fig. 1)? Although most of the existing literature examines brand co-creation through the exploration of one dyadic relationship, the addition of a third party in the analysis is useful since it allows the examination of networks including network flows and the role of indirect relationships, without overcomplicating the analysis (Schreiner, 2015).

Figure 1 here.

Co-creation possibilities are higher in contexts in which information and communication technologies are extensively available (Pires et al., 2006). This study uses data collected from extensive online and offline interactions with a brand that had a finite lifespan and for which co-creation occurred quickly after the brand's launch. Furthermore, by focusing on a political brand, the study adds to the political marketing literature that focuses on advertising and other controlled signaling to construct the image and reputation of the political entity (see

Falkowski & Cwalina, 2012). This study answers the call for ethnographic studies to analyze consumer engagement with political brands at a micro level (Peng & Hackley, 2009).

3. Methodology

Over 34 months, beginning in November 2011, data were collected through participant ethnography (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994) primarily centered on the local geographically bound Yes Edinburgh North & Leith (YENL) group but also on other local Edinburgh groups and the national Yes Scotland campaign organization. By polling day, YENL had 420 activists, a shop, a large rented campaign office, significant social media presence, and a website. YENL was a politically and demographically diverse group, with members aged between 15 and 84 years (40% women) and coming from diverse areas, including Scotland, the rest of the United Kingdom, Europe, and Asia. Members of five political parties were actively involved, as were those who did not belong to any political party. Members self-selected, shared, and promoted the Yes Scotland values and were bonded in a manner that classifies YENL as a brand community (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001).

One of the researchers secured access by volunteering to be part of YENL at the first Yes Scotland roadshow meeting in November 2011, and involvement continued until after polling day. By doing so, the researcher could explore YENL's formation and development and the brand-building activities undertaken by this and other Edinburgh groups. The researcher had a pre-existing relationship with the Yes Scotland director of marketing, which helped gain access to the central campaign. Table 1 provides a summary of the data collected.

Table 1 here.

The researcher regularly attended campaigning activities and YENL planning meetings and was involved in organizing e-mails and meeting minutes. The 4,500 e-mails sent and received are a comprehensive record of the everyday planning and management of the campaign as well as a record of the decisions and trajectory of interpersonal relationships in the group. Observational data were gathered and summarized through photographs and videos and by recording verbal field notes on a digital device; details included which volunteers participated, the type of event, what took place, the thoughts and behaviors of volunteers and voters, and an overall assessment of the day's activities. Specific notes were made on the management activities undertaken to produce locally produced materials.

Part of the ethnographic data set used in this study comes from 12 face-to-face long format (one and a half to three hours) in-depth interviews (Thompson, 1997) with informants chosen using theoretical sampling (Glaser, 1978). These were -recorded and fully transcribed and took place in a range of settings (e.g., work, home, campaigning environment) with key informants, to gain insight into the issues and ideas emerging from the observational data.

Appendix A provides the characteristics of the interview and other informants from the ethnography study.

Administrator rights to Facebook and Twitter accounts were granted to gain the full history of YENL's social media. A comprehensive catalogue of all printed direct mail materials produced by YENL and Yes Scotland was also compiled. Other Yes-supporting groups, including Women for Independence (WFI), the Radical Independence Campaign, and the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP), regularly asked YENL for help distributing printed communications, which enabled the researcher to gather copies of these as well.

Participant observation data can be difficult, due to concerns over the researcher's ability to maintain sufficient analytic distance from the group and the data and ensuring that, as far

as is possible, their pre-conceptions do not bias either the data collection or analysis (Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2013; Glaser 1978). Member checks and Grounded theory coding methods addressed these concerns (Glaser, 1978). The data were initially open coded, in which all meanings are examined before moving to a selective coding phase as the core categories begin to emerge. Finally, axial coding examined the relationship between the codes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The analysis focuses on the three sets of dyadic relationships that can be formed between the three actors, the brand, the working consumers as individuals and the brand community in which the working consumers participate. It is not uncommon to examine small networks by examining the links between dyads (Lacoste & Johnsen, 2015) and this is the approach that this study adopts. Both members of the research team triangulated the analysis and ensured a clear chain of evidence to support interpretations (Belk, Fischer, & Kozinets, 2013). The emergent findings were then checked with YENL volunteers to make any required adjustments. The participant researcher also accounted for their pre-conceptions and performed member checks (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

4. Findings

4.1. The Yes Scotland organization and brand

Yes Scotland was an alliance negotiated among the Scottish National Party (SNP), the Scottish Greens, the SSP, and individuals with no party allegiance. By polling day, Yes Scotland comprised 314 local geographically bound groups, had an e-mail list containing 40,000 volunteer and participant names, and comprised of 11 sectoral organizations. The group also worked alongside other groups, such as National Collective and WFI, and established movements, such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Fluidity was significant between members and the actions of the various community sub-groups.

The overall grassroots strategy of Yes Scotland envisaged that working consumers would be closely involved with co-creating and developing the brand throughout the campaign. The individuals and the local groups were free to create, organize, manage, and fund their local campaign activities with limited direct supervision, though the central brand owners provided printed marketing communications materials, voter contact software, and training resources. The expectations of volunteers both consuming the brand, by using it symbolically as part of their developing identity narrative, and acting as workers, by using their skills and capital in a productive capacity to create valuable outputs, allowed them to be defined as working consumers and made the context ideal for identity co-creation (Cova et al., 2011).

Yes Scotland as a political brand was launched on May 25, 2012, in Edinburgh, Scotland's capital city. From the observational notes, extensive interview data with Yes Scotland's director of marketing, and a brand design origins presentation he gave to the University of Dundee's Communications Design students (January 17, 2014), the brand identity portrayed at the beginning of the campaign was:

4.1.1. Brand as symbol

The campaign required a brand that set an outcome, rather than a logo, avoided words or ideas that could be subjectively liked or disliked, was open source, and could represent the electorate's individual journey to Yes. The word "Yes" fit these criteria, and the design featured a sky blue, Arial font with a capital "Y" and connected letters (see Fig. 2). The designers chose a simple and highly recognizable font, to avoid subjective like or dislike and to encourage inclusivity. The features also allowed for easy incorporation into other designs and logos, ensuring a consistent theme across the abundant variations. The Yes Scotland designers included unifying national symbols capable of appealing to voters' sense of national identity and of bridging across political groups and identities. For example, the core

"Yes" logo used the blue and white color of the Scottish national flag, though variations using red and green, associated with the Labour Party, the SSP, and the Green Party (see Appendix B), were also produced. Use and interpretation of the national symbols and national identity and how they were appropriated by the working consumers were contested, both within those campaigning for Yes and between those voting yes and no.

Figure 2 here.

4.1.2. Brand as product

The Yes brand is an idea, rather than a physical product, and elicits thoughts of what independence can mean. The "Yes" word and its ideas are hopeful, positive, forward looking, and resonant of Barack Obama's 2008 presidential election platform "Yes we can." This deliberately contrasts with the negative and fear-driven political marketing that is now prevalent in UK and US politics (Walter, 2014). This positivity, along with fairness, prosperity, and sustainability (explicitly highlighted at launch and by the initial marketing communications), was an attempt to give the idea that the brand represents the necessary broad appeal to the majority of the people living in Scotland. Yes Scotland's core brand values were positivity and inclusiveness and stressed prosperity, fairness, democracy, and sustainable development. These values reflected the core values of the parties involved in the creation of Yes Scotland.

4.1.3. Brand as person

Yes challenges the national stereotype of a "dour Scot". As a person, through association with the SNP and Alex Salmond (the party leader during the campaign) and Nicola Sturgeon (his deputy and current leader), it attempts to give Yes the traits of confidence, success and

competence that mirror the image of the nation the brand founders believe Scotland can become. These traits align the brand with individual and national identities. However the personification via Alex Salmond also brings negative perceptions, such as arrogance and untrustworthiness (Panelbase, 2013).

The remainder of this section is structured around the three reciprocal relationships highlighted in Fig.1 and how each dyad creates and uses symbolic meaning, solves tension and conflict, and transfers meaning to the other dyads. Also examined is how the identity co-creation and development between these entities affect the meaning of the symbols themselves.

4.2. Brand identity and individual identity

It was widely observed both online and at groups' campaigning activities that from the beginning of the campaign, volunteers bought, wore, and publicized official visual symbols, such as badges, T-shirts, and (later) "twibbons.[1]" As Fig. 3 shows, twibbons were added to existing Facebook profile pictures to create additional individual meaning. In one, William adds *Bu Choir*, the Gaelic version of "yes", to his profile picture of a pair of Dr. Marten boots (an iconic fashion brand) sporting different colored laces to signify his multilingual status as a professional translator and, through this alternative sense of fashion, his self-declared "outsider" status. The other shows a Yes twibbon added to a colorful avatar with the same color hair as the woman (Joanne) whose profile picture this is. These two people are declaring their status as Yes supporters to their Facebook friends and using the brand controlled signaling to express their individual identity. The movement of meaning also flows in the other direction. William's identity supports and provides authenticity to Yes's anti-

[1] A twibbon is a graphic that can be added to a social media profile picture to show affiliation to or support for a cause or club.

establishment, “ordinary Scot” values, whereas Joanne helps build authenticity first by personifying the brand as a woman (evidence suggests women were less likely to support Independence; see Ormston, 2014) and then by showing the fun side of her character.

Figure 3 here.

Examining this dyad also shows how the brand helped build connections between supporters, which provided additional resources to build individual identity, and additional symbolic resources, including how supporters co-created brand *and* individual identities.

Field note: 08/09/14. Stall set up on pavement along main road to Leith (Leith Walk). Peter and Sarah staff the table which has numerous leaflets, badges and stickers to give out. This collection is made of materials produced by YENL, the central Yes Scotland campaign and WFI:

Observed: Activists speaking to several women with children and men in small groups. A younger man (20-25 years old) comes up to the stall, said “I’m already a Yes,” many other people waving and saying hello. There is a real connection between the activists and those who come over. Smiles greet each interaction, the volunteers wave the supporters goodbye, like old friends. Many badges and car stickers are taken, the badges tend to be put on immediately and clearly visible before walking off. A number of people put their head down and walk forward with the scowl on their face.

The overall Yes brand and the locally created version become symbolic resources through the display materials (badges, leaflets) and their personification by the volunteers. By wearing the Yes and/or the local YENL badges (stating “Leith Says Aye”), voters and volunteers build their identity by making it a possession, and through these symbols, social

connections, demonstrated by the smiles and waves, are built. These displays and actions also show the connections of volunteers (and supporters) with one another and act as markers of the 'wee-ness" (Bender, 1978) that demonstrates one facet of a brand community's consciousness of kind (Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001). Passers-by who avoid this contact are also signaling information about who they are and their outsider status, albeit in more transient, less certain ways. These positive, welcoming interactions around the stalls also teach and develop what behaviors are appropriate when interacting with the brand and reinforce the values it was intended to possess.

The reciprocal nature of the relationship in this dyad also comes from other symbolic material the individuals possess. For example, wearing badges allows individuals to personify the brand through visual characteristics, and any associated interpretations of socio-economic class or ethnicity become available to modify, reinforce, or contest the identity of the brand, particularly if these challenge what the individuals believe the brand stands for. For example, by displaying Yes symbols, volunteers signal aspects of their identity highlighted by existing brand meanings (e.g., believing in social justice). By interacting with working consumers (or other supporters), these meanings may be reinterpreted, for example, Sarah's English accent may challenge their view of Yes's identity to include greater national diversity.

The widespread production and display of badges show how co-creation of brand symbols can, beyond acting as symbolic material for the brand and individual identity, change the meaning of the category of symbol. Political badges have a long history (Halavais, 2012), but the volume of badges distributed (YENL distributed 13,400) and the various designs of the referendum campaign (i.e., "Quines for Yes," "Aye," "Green Yes") moved them from a party membership or campaign allegiance signal to a form of mass political signal, connecting sub-groups of voters with a larger movement by signaling inclusion to groups who may have felt

like outsiders or were seen so by the voters (i.e., “English for Yes”). Tension exists in the dialectic between badges as a means of building identity and individuals producing different variations that modify the brand identity. To some degree, the Yes badges produced by the central campaign did not fully symbolize what individuals (and groups) wanted to convey about themselves, so they created and wore their own variations to display other parts of their identity and show membership to other groups.

Another process used to remold volunteers’ identity narratives and further identify with the Yes brand involved telling, reinterpreting, emphasizing, and even suppressing personal stories and past experiences. For example, to highlight his working-class and social justice values (corresponding to those of the Yes brand), Peter described his youth spent living in a tower-block dwelling and how he needed a scholarship to attend a selective state-funded school, stating “How working class am I?” (field note 16/3/14, evening canvassing session in Leith). In a similar vein, research suggests that in political campaigns, volunteers sometimes tailor the issues they portray when working for the campaign to their own personal priorities, goals, and way of thinking (Enos & Hersh, 2015). In highlighting this brand attribute and his possession of it Peter, as a respected, leading member of YENL, underscores its importance to other members of the group and provides an attribute for constructing the brand community identity.

Overall, the reciprocal identity construction relies on a controlled signal from the brand owners to the working consumers, who then send uncontrolled signals to other stakeholders. Working consumers use the brand and then develop its brand visual identity through their possessions and creativity; they authenticate and modify the brand through their demographics, actions, personality, stories, and history. Their contact with other consumers

then makes this modified symbolic resource available to display, create, and modify their own identity.

This dialectic relationship shows how the brand develops the individual and, in turn, how the individual develops the brand. In addition, mediated by the co-created Yes brand, the individual uses others' additional symbolic material to develop him- or herself further and to change the meaning of a category of symbols.

4.3. Brand identity and brand community identity

YENL explicitly and implicitly undertook group identity construction processes by creating a local variation of the Yes brand for its own merchandise and locally targeted marketing communications. This brand, the actions required to produce it, and repeated campaign activities led to the formation of a distinct YENL brand community. Other groups, including Yes Scotland, subsequently used the elements of these materials and campaign practices, demonstrating the reciprocal nature of the brand–brand community relationship dyad.

In the early stages of YENL (January–October 2013), the group relied heavily on official graphics, materials, and merchandise provided by Yes Scotland. Fig. 4 depicts a picture taken at the first group meeting (and uploaded to YENL's Facebook page) of the initial leaflet provided by Yes to show the purpose of the gathering. Volunteers wear Yes badges and stickers and hold pens to show their allegiance and build the collective identity.

Figure 4 here.

By May 2013, the group's growing confidence and success in encouraging a wider membership led to the initial stages of developing a localized brand identity. A local graphics designer, Stewart Bremner (2015), produced numerous graphic designs and illustrations for local printed materials and then for the national campaign and also copied these designs onto T-shirts and mugs, which provided financial and identity resources for voters, YENL, and himself. Yes Scotland later employed Stewart, so his involvement and remuneration blur the line of working consumers, who are not paid for their uncontrolled signaling work (Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011). The initial YENL brand (Fig. 5) used on Facebook shows a simple localization of the core Yes brand, and the predominance given to Leith over Edinburgh North reflected the power balance in the steering group and the stronger local identity of this area.

The summer of 2013 was a transition period for YENL, in which the uniformity actively managed through use of the official brand and merchandise was loosened as volunteers began using variations made by the local group, and the reciprocity of identity creation began manifesting itself.

Figure 5 here.

Fig. 6 shows further transition toward a local brand, creativity and expression from the side of the community. Taken at the start of a national rally, the picture shows a lead YENL volunteer wearing an official Yes T-shirt and standing under the locally produced and branded banner, whose font and color vary slightly from the core Yes brand. The "Leith Says Aye" placard he holds also varies significantly, and though the slogan conforms to the

sentiment of the “journey to Yes” integral to the core brand, the placard uses a different font, color, language, and location to declare solidarity and individuality.

Figure 6 here.

When asked about this picture, the volunteer (Ruaridh) said:

On reflection this sums me up; from my background in marketing I knew it was important that we show consistency so that the undecided voters can recognize us and what we stand for. But I also worked in Yes Scotland on an unofficial basis and it was important for me to declare both my loyalty to this group and to the local area.

The “Leith Says Aye” slogan represented the third brand development stage for YENL, locating the group more firmly into one geographic location and within the Scottish working class by using “Aye” instead of “Yes”. This slogan subsequently appeared on T-shirts and normative appeal-based advertising and was used in a one-day political festival modified as “Leith Said Aye” after the referendum outcome.

By this stage of the campaign, YENL had moved beyond a group producing its own materials to a specific brand community. Volunteers expressed modes of behavior for campaigning that were transferred between one another and to newcomers as an expression of the identity of the group inspired from the Yes Scotland brand identity. They developed these informally over the many group gatherings, initially using the controlled band signals (e.g., positivity, inclusion) from Yes Scotland as a guide.

One set of actions, taking group photos and sharing them on social media, developed well and was repeated often enough to form a brand ritual that highlighted the community’s sense

of moral responsibility (Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001). At the start of each group gathering (i.e., Appendix B), one of the experienced members (Peter, Stewart, Ruaridh, or Siobhan) would organize all attendees to stand together, hold available Yes signs, and shout "Yes" as the picture was taken. Such actions helped repeat to new and established members key information (e.g., the need to be positive and upbeat) and convey that inclusion and diversity were valued. These gatherings also served as initiation ceremonies to welcome new volunteers to the community. The final act was for volunteers to upload photographs to social media, such as Facebook, comments typically focused on congratulations and thanks for taking part and promises to attend in the future. These actions of integrating and retaining new members and disseminating information to the wider Yes community also show that the group felt a sense of moral duty to one another (Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001) based around the belief in the independence cause. Actions repeated at important sites also helped perpetuate the history of the group. This type of group photograph was also distributed by other parts of the Yes campaign, and their widespread adoption suggests that they became a mechanism for transferring meaning within and between brand communities.

The emergence of the YENL brand community also saw its values change slightly from other individuals and groups, and the community began to influence and redefine the national Yes Scotland brand identity by providing a different set of symbols to demonstrate a form of civic rather than ethnic nationalism. Particularly through the Fiona graphic (Fig. 7) YENL provided the controlled brand with a visual response to accusations of blood-and-soil nationalism (BBC, 2014), while attempting to capture positive national associations. In this way, the graphic diffused the dialectic tension between the brand and brand community over the role of nationalism by showing that different interpretations of nationalism were possible and could co-exist. This was an important issue for YENL's (and the wider campaign's)

multinational group of working consumers and in the context of the area's multicultural population.

Figure 7 here.

Fig. 8 shows national symbols along with the local and nationally produced materials used in the campaign. The man in the middle of the photograph wears a white T-shirt with green lettering produced by the central Yes Scotland, while the five men on the far right wear individualized blue T-shirts. Importantly they, as well as others, are also wearing kilts, and still others are waving and literally wrapping themselves in national flags. This is an obvious attempt by independence supporters to show that voting yes is the patriotic choice, as contested national identity sits at the very heart of this and other independence campaigns.

Figure 8 here.

YENL, with its multinational membership and members of internationalist parties, strongly resisted accusations of ethnic nationalism while also attempting to use the positive associations held about Scotland, such as community and social orientation, hard work, inventiveness, and bravery. YENL-produced materials from March 2014 onward particularly emphasized this tension between nationalism and national pride by providing a symbol where the nationalist and artistic signals were easily contested (see Fig. 7). The Fiona graphic was featured frequently on YENL printed and online materials before being used by other Yes-supporting groups and the national campaign. Lesley Riddoch, a well-known Scottish

journalist, in her preface to Bremner's (2015) book describes the graphic thus: "Stewart created an iconic image the whole Yes campaign could rally around and identify with."

The Fiona graphic relies heavily on national imagery, such as blue and white coloring, a saltire, tartan sash, a Balmoral diced military hat, and a thistle (Scotland's national flower), and is a deliberate representation of Scotland before the Acts of Union of 1707. However, all this is juxtaposed against stylistic elements taken from the Czech artist Alphonse Mucha and attempts to portray the campaign's beauty, thoughtfulness, and positive aspiration.

Although the image does not represent the country's wider ethnic and national diversity, through its use as part of the central campaign, the YENL brand community found a presentation of "Scottishness" acceptable to those wanting to use the national symbol and those preferring civic nationalism. The Fiona graphic, as a controlled signal, became a wider campaign resource. Its use by different local groups changed the national brand by modifying the identity of its constituent parts, making the brand less centralized and more chaotic and reinforcing its grassroots nature. YENL received requests to use the graphic from other groups, including WFI (an independent and equality-based brand community), which modified the picture into a bookmark. This open-source nature of the graphic again demonstrates the reciprocity of the brand–brand community relationship. In addition, Chris Law (now an SNP member of parliament) used the graphic to decorate an old fire engine in which he toured Scotland (Appendix C), which shows movement from the brand–brand community dyad onwards to providing a resource to develop individual identity.

4.4. Individual identity and brand community identity

Working consumers used their home towns, life histories, and employment to build a brand community identity and how other volunteers, in turn, used this to modify how they

expressed themselves and how they wanted to be perceived. As the campaign entered its final summer, YENL became more engaged in developing its own brand and marketing materials. As a group, members believed they were more experienced, knowledgeable, and skillful than Yes Scotland at running their local campaign. This engagement was partly due to the talent and creative work of the volunteers and party because Yes Scotland had removed its director of marketing and director of communities from the group.

Much of the inspiration for this local work came from the identity of and identities within Leith. Building on the "Leith Says Aye" slogan, the group developed the "Leith Notables" campaign, which consisted of a leaflet distributed to street stalls and local homes (Appendix D) and was supported by a series of YouTube videos with links posted across the group's social media (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y95e79XZ-ps). The materials featured quotes of support from well-known Leith actors, such as publicans, activists, and shop owners, in an effort to build local bonds with the idea of independence and to show that these people saw themselves as "normal" Leithers:

Love the quotes. Think the headline "Leithers are voting Yes" is absolutely right - we need everyone to feel that is the right thing for them to do: normalize the idea of voting Yes, which this leaflet would help. I would see ourselves (Yes volunteers) as a cross section (with the people quoted) so a photograph of us at the foot of the Walk with Yes cards could be a strong front image. (Steven, e-mail sent 6/2/14 to YENL steering group)

In the Leith Notables campaign, the working consumers involved (William, Jackie, and Stewart) used local symbolic resources to co-create a more hyper-local, individual, creative, and "edgy" Leith element to the YENL brand community that reflected their own skills, histories, and possessions. Historically a highly industrialized area reliant on shipbuilding and a major maritime dock, Leith has re-emerged and re-interpreted from the loss of much of this

work and symbolic capital to become a location known for its creativity and art and where the gentrified urban exists alongside areas of high social deprivation (National Records of Scotland, 2011). Its creative identity reflects Stewart's own identity and, indeed, he represents one of the artists giving the area its reputation. The juxtaposition of industrial and social decay with urban gentrification highlights the fairness and equity concerns both William and Jackie (both ex-Labour party members) hold. One "notable" person was the former owner of a notorious Leith pub, known locally for its broad-based clientele and lively (and sometimes dangerous) atmosphere. Her participation gave YENL credibility in representing Leith and its citizens.

In turn, members of the steering group, such as Peter and Jackie (despite having been born and raised elsewhere) used the changes to the YENL brand as a symbolic resource to self-express and connect them to the creative, working-class support of the town. For example, Peter was born and raised in western Edinburgh and lives just outside the boundary of Leith, but he appropriates Leith and YENL through his choice of clothes ("Leith Says Aye" T-shirt) and Facebook posts (labeling various pictures as "Leith Windaes" [a Scottish spelling of "windows"]) and use of phrases such as "Only in Leith" (e-mail 16/6/14), to develop himself and then embed himself further into the group.

The Peter example highlights both the appropriation of symbols and the reinterpretation process used to develop his identity narrative. Just as volunteers promote their experiences from their life narratives, so too do they suppress these experiences in order to fit in with the values of the local group and, thus, the campaign. For example, Ruaridh attended and sends his children to private school, though he often stresses that he spent more time at state schools, choosing to minimize the years in private school.

In this dyad, the life experiences and skills of the volunteers build, authenticate and extend the values of the local brand community which, in turn, gives other individuals controlled resources and other symbolic material to rework their own identity. However, as the local and national brand symbols were often worn or used together (e.g., Appendix B shows both the early and hyper-localized versions of YENL branding and that of Yes Scotland), the identity creation and modification of the individual and the brand community work simultaneously as symbols that re-create and modify the brand.

4.5. Summary of findings

Fig. 9 summarizes the key processes by which the identities co-create each other and the type of symbolic materials they use. It highlights how the same basic reciprocal process occurs within and between each dyad. Resources with symbolic potential are provided and appropriated, where they can become incorporated into the receiver's identity. The receiver's possessions, experiences and other identity building materials then authenticate and extend the meanings of these resources and so develop the identity of the entity providing them. The modified and co-created identity also receives materials from its other dyad which are also used, authenticated and extended, hence meanings and influences on identity circulate within and between the dyads. Underpinning this are the working consumers, whose skillful, highly motivated involvement was sustained by strong feelings of moral responsibility for each other, the brand community but more fundamentally, for the cause of independence encapsulated in the Yes Scotland brand. It was this moral connectedness that led them to engage and work hard and creatively when invited by the original brand owners.

Figure 9 here.

5. Discussion

The Yes Scotland brand was created, developed, and contested by dynamic, highly involved social processes of interaction among stakeholders (Csaba & Bengtsson, 2006; Merz et al., 2009). This paper explores how intense interactions among individuals, brand communities, and the Yes Scotland brand co-created the identities of the three parties. The study contributes to the literature on identity creation by showing how brands give consumers the opportunity to interact with other consumers and express and adjust their individual identity accordingly. The study also contributes to brand reputation research by demonstrating that external stakeholders can be influential in the development of brand meaning (identity and reputation).

The context of this study is a large brand community that actively supported the Yes Scotland campaign and brand, specifically the local sub-group, YENL. Although the large community of Yes Scotland activists consisted of sub-groups and the data from this study mostly pertain to the activities and actions of one member, all the members of the wider community were bound to the ideology represented by this brand and by their commitment to this ideology. The volunteers who offered their time and effort to support the brand were working consumers who had an unusual proximity to the center of the campaign. They actively co-created the brand, and outsiders perceived them as representatives of the brand. Unlike other brands that need to share stories to keep the brand alive (Muñiz & Schau, 2005), the members of this community and the center constructed the brand meaning in real time.

Furthermore, YENL modified “Leith Says Aye” to the “Leith Said Aye” after the referendum and produced this on T-shirts, mugs and badges to spread its message of continuation and defiance. This is echoed in the “We are the 45%” slogan (referring to the

percentage who voted yes) circulated across social media. So whereas the brand's life span was expected to be temporary and, therefore, more likely to rely on co-creative forces, it is now being continued and developed entirely by its working consumers as Yes Scotland ceased to exist at the end of the campaign.

Although this study identifies three main dialectic relationships, identity reciprocation effects cannot be isolated to having occurred only within the dyads. Evidence shows a transfer of resources and meaning within and between the dyads beyond a hierarchical transfer from Yes Scotland to its local groups. Even when the campaign was revealed to the public, the specific direction of transfer cannot be identified because the brand was already infused at this stage with shared meanings based on the understanding of the individuals and communities that would interact with the brand. Individuals and communities transferred resources and meanings among themselves, partly from a perceived lack of resources and skill within the central campaign and partly from the experience, knowledge, and skills of the working consumers. Thus, when a brand changes the individual, and vice versa, the brand community is also changed (France et al., 2015).

Online and offline relationships, developed during the campaign, enabled this easy transfer of ideas and materials across social media. Through these mechanisms, a constant flow and co-construction of meaning occurred among the brand, the individual consumer, and the brand community. These identities existed in harmony and complemented one another, though the working consumers also provided materials to defuse symbolic tensions between the parties. Thus, the brand and brand community serve as different entities of identification for each individual consumer.

A key unifying theme across all three main relationships was the demonstration of affinity with, membership of, and emergence from traditional working-class backgrounds. As such,

individuals, groups, and the brand attempted to root their identity in a form of archetypal Scottish background (Devine, 2012), which allowed the movement to claim affinity with a large number of voters and position independence as part of the struggle for social justice and against the establishment and the owners of capital.

The Yes Scotland brand confronted the same issues as other brands with extensive user-generated content from members of brand communities (Muñiz & Schau, 2007). By polling day, the working consumers had created many different local and sectoral versions of the Yes brands that were united in their goal for a yes vote for independence but showed variation in values and brand design elements (e.g., slogans, font, and color). They created signals that changed and diluted the main brand's meanings, though this was welcomed rather than perceived as a threat (Cappozi, 2005). Such signals often involved using clearly linked visual identities, in which the core brand graphics were appropriated and remade to suit local or individual beliefs about what the campaign, or what independence, meant. The Yes brand became more diverse and integrated the logos and signs of many national and local Scottish brands. More controversially, its use of national symbols, such as the saltire, highlighted its contested attempt to define Yes as a patriotic decision. For its supporters, Yes remained positive and optimistic, incorporating humor and a slightly chaotic edge.

Most research on brand communities tends to examine consumer groups that have a given brand as a focal point. The findings of this study corroborate the limited evidence from other studies showing that the identity of brand followers and their communities can be infused not only by the brand itself but also by other external factors, such as nationality, demographic categories, and membership organizations (Heere & James, 2007). The Yes Scotland brand remained inclusive and oriented to fairness and prosperity but, as discussions about prosperity were often framed around national oil and gas reserves, sustainability became less

credible. In its place, equality, social justice, and a civic, internationalist nationalism changed what the perceived benefits of voting yes might be. The Yes Scotland brand personality remained tied with the then First Minister Alex Salmond, but at the local level, attempts were made to personify Yes as ordinary, working-class Scots who wanted something better for themselves, their families, and their communities.

The findings suggest that when consumers interact with brands, they do not just co-create brand production; they also create the brand identity, contribute to brand reputation, and express their identity through their active support of the branded offer. Extensive borrowing of identities takes place among the brand, the individual, and the brand community. Individuals decide which brands to support and with which groups of followers to associate. As previous research suggests, in order to encourage love brands need to enhance consumers' self-concept and their need to belong to groups of like-minded individuals (Vernuccio, Pagani, Barbarossa, & Pastore, 2015). The brand should be close to the individuals' identity and be able to enhance or transform the way others perceive them or how they perceive themselves. For individuals to join a brand-related group and to participate actively in this group, both the brand identity and the identity of the group need to help individuals express values and portray personality traits to which they aspire. In particular, working consumers tend to become partners with the brand and thus need to feel proud to work for the brand. Evidence also shows that motivated, skillful volunteers produce significant amounts of their own branded materials, believe they possess more expertise and skill than the brand originators, and provide ideas and symbols for use by the brand. This study, therefore, reinforces the view that theorists need to redefine economic concepts of value, ownership, consumption, and production (Cova et al., 2011).

The findings of this study are relevant for practitioners in various contexts. The Yes Scotland brand (and the brand developed by YENL) has similarities to other brands, such as service brands, other political brands (Marland, 2003), and brands or causes that recruit activists to support their focal identity (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004). Yes Scotland developed the promise and delivered its actual essence, to a large extent, at the touch points between the consumers and the brand. The working consumers supporting the brand were dedicated people highly involved in the creation and delivery of the brand promise. Therefore, the findings of this study should generalize to other situations in which working consumers are involved in communities of brands and given the opportunity to create, or at least deliver, part of the brand promise, such as charitable organizations and other consumer movements. As the identity of the brand, the individuals supporting it and the brand community are co-created by each other practitioners need to consider how best to manage the process of brand identity co-creation. This will include what symbolic materials to make available, how to facilitate relationships between the entities and how to position and use brand signals produced by the working consumers. They must also consider how to manage working consumers and brand communities who they perceive may be damaging the central brand.

This study focuses on a political brand for a cause for which followers have high interest and evaluate thoroughly because of its long-term influence on their lives (Peng & Hackley, 2009). The working consumers of the brand believed that the achievements were, to some extent, a personal reward and, in working for the campaign, they supported not simply its goals but also their own beliefs. However, this factor is a limitation of the study. Although individuals participating in brand communities and contributing to the brand as working consumers tend to have high involvement, engagement, and identification with the brand

community and the brand, most are not involved to such an extent as the working consumers in the Yes Scotland campaign were. Thus, these consumers could be characterized as fanatics when given access to the development of brand identity.

Though extensive, the data set primarily came from one of the local groups supporting the Yes Scotland campaign, although some data related to other local groups were also collected. While this practice is not uncommon in either political marketing and branding research (Enos & Hersh, 2015; Pich & Armannsdottir, 2015) or brand community research (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Hutter et al., 2013; Muñiz & Schau, 2007), the approach of using a case study from Scotland as the focal brand is limited. As previous research suggests, the characteristics of the local area could influence the findings to some extent (Tam et al., 2010). Thus, further research is necessary to determine whether the study findings transfer to other contexts in which brand reputation is less dependent on the actions of the working consumers, and in contexts outside political branding in which consumers' future is not affected as much from the brand. Research focusing on the effect of uncontrolled signaling from working consumers and the brand community on the brand's reputation would also be worthwhile.

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Appendix A. List of informants

Pseudonym	Data	Characteristics
Sarah	Interviewee	Mid 40s, no political party membership, artist. YENL.
Steven	Interviewee	Early 50s, SNP member, marketing consultant. YENL.
Isabelle	Interviewee	Early 50s, no political party membership, part time. Yes Dalkeith.
John	Interviewee	Early 60s, SNP member, retired doctor. Yes Edinburgh West.
Fergal	Interviewee	Mid 40s, no political party membership, self-employed builder/IT consultant. Yes Edinburgh West.
Hazel	Interviewee	Early 60s, no political party membership, retired artist. Yes Gorebridge.
Jackie	Interviewee	Early 50s, ex-Labour party member, freelance researcher. YENL.
William	Interviewee	Early 50s, no political party membership, (ex-Communist and Labour party member), translator. YENL.
Siobhan	Interviewee	Mid 40s, Green party member. YENL.
Catherine	Interviewee	Mid 40s, SNP member, office manager, Yes Edinburgh East.
Donald	Interviewee	Early 30s, no political party membership, nurse. Yes Edinburgh South.
Nick	Interviewee	Mid 40s, SNP member, charity worker. Yes Edinburgh South.
Ruaridh	Observation	Mid 40s, SNP member, lecturer. YENL.
Peter	Observation	Early 50s, SNP member, research scientist. YENL.
Stewart	Observation	Early 30s, Green party member, graphic artist YENL.
Joanna	Observation	Late 40s, SNP member, Tour guide, YENL

Appendix B. Use of the Yes brand at a street stall

Appendix C. Socializing after the “Leith Says Aye” festival with Spirit of Independence fire engine

Appendix D. Leith notables leaflet

Side A

LEITH SAYS AYE!

AUDREY BIRT
Coach and consultant, former nurse and charity director
"After a Yes vote we'll have the opportunity to do things differently in Scotland. We can start to create a more inclusive society where everyone has equal value and there's a place for everyone."

RACHEL BELL
Artist, R. Bell Artists, Albion Business Centre, Albion Road
"An independent Scotland will be free to become a force for good in the world. We can get rid of Trident and we'll never again get dragged into senseless, shameful wars against our wishes."

CHRIS ELSHEIKHI
Owner, Bainbridge Music, Iona Street
"The idea of change fills me with optimism and hope. I'm excited about the possibilities for the creative industries in Scotland if we vote Yes."

MORAG KERR
Volunteer with Childline and Parentline. Education advisor and trainer, Interchange UK, Summerfield Place
"I'd never say to anyone that independence will be easy – it's going to be hard work – but we have the talent and resources to shape our own future and build the kind of society we want in Scotland – one with social justice at its heart."

LEITHERS ARE VOTING YES!

Side B

MARY MORIARTY
Volunteer organiser, Leith Festival
"We should take pride in what we've got here. Scotland's a wonderful country with all sorts of natural resources and a strong community spirit – how could we not do well if we run things ourselves?"

GUNNAR GROVES-RAINES
Architect
"I'm very optimistic about what a Yes vote could bring. I see a lot of potential to use our vast natural and cultural resources to make Scotland a much fairer, wealthier and more sustainable country."

ROLAND REID
Former secretary, Leith Central Community Council. Volunteer trustee, Out of the Blue Arts and Education Trust, Leith Theatre Trust
"It's like any important decision you make in life – your career, home, family – you take the step and afterwards you think 'Why didn't I do this sooner?' It'll be the same after the referendum."

WENDY SINCLAIR
Proprietor, Hirsute Barbershop for Men, Easter Road
"Independence – where we make our own decisions – has always been in my hopes and dreams for Scotland's future. From then on, it's up to the people to make it work."

THINK OF JUST ONE THING YOU'D LIKE TO CHANGE ABOUT THIS COUNTRY AND ASK YOURSELF - IS IT MORE OR LESS LIKELY TO HAPPEN WITH INDEPENDENCE?

JOIN US!

Yes Edinburgh North and Leith (YENL) is a community based group campaigning for a Yes vote in the Independence Referendum. The group welcomes anybody who wants to campaign with us, whether or not you have ever been involved in a campaign before.

Email: **yesedinburghnorthandleith@gmail.com**
Facebook: **/YesEdinburghNorthAndLeith**
Twitter: **@YesENL**
YouTube: **bit.ly/ENLtube**
www.yesedinburghnorthandleith.net

Printed by Events Armoury Ltd, 9 West Richmond Street, Edinburgh EH8 9EH. Promoted by H. Munn on behalf of Yes Edinburgh North & Leith, both of 10 Ryehill Terrace, Leith, EH6 8EW.

Table 1

Data source summary

Data Source	***N***
Participant observation	34 months
Observational field notes	161
Depth interviews	12
E-mails	4512
Planning documents	6
Photos of events and activities	879
Videos of events and activities	32
YENL Facebook site	1
YENL Twitter account	1
YENL webpage	1
Direct mail materials produced by Yes Scotland, YENL, other Yes-supporting groups	65