Creating and managing participative brand communities: The roles members perform

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Abstract

The success of brand communities as social structures that facilitate the co-creation of brands depends on the nature of their members' participation. Existing research provides limited insights into the roles brand community members perform. In response, this study, using role theory as its theoretical foundations, explores the roles members play. Ethnographic data were collected primarily from a brand community where highly involved working consumers interacted both off and online. The analysis reveals that there are categories of roles performed which are necessary for the development and long term prosperity of the community; it also identifies specific roles within each category and elucidates how these structure and manage the community as an entity. The study contributes to knowledge and practice by elucidating the variety and complexity of roles members need to play in order to secure an active and healthy brand community and develops further evidence to support that brand communities are primarily self-managed entities.

Keywords: Brand Communities, Brand Community Participation, Brand Community Roles, Working Consumers, Role Theory

1. Introduction

Recent consumer empowerment research recognises that brand managers and consumers co-create brands and that brand communities are key in channelling this empowerment (Ind et al., 2017; Veloutsou & Guzmán, 2017). Brand community members are critical for this co-creation as they engage with the focal brand and with other consumers both within (Bowden et al., 2017; Dessart et. al, 2015; 2016; Schau et al. 2009) and outside community boundaries (Pasternak et al., 2017). Differences in group aims and management structures lead to different types of brand community (Rodríguez-López & Diz-Comesan, 2016).

Brand community members co-create the functional characteristics of the brand (Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Cova & Pace, 2006; Skålén et al., 2015), brand meaning (Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Cova & White, 2010; Popp et al., 2016) brand culture (Schembri & Latimer, 2016) and contribute to the transformation of brands over time (Cova & Paranque, 2016). Brand community interactions have been studied through researching communities that exist online (Rodríguez-López & Diz-Comesan, 2016), off-line (Algesheimer et al., 2005), or in both these spheres (Cova & Pace, 2006; Lin et al., 2018), with most exploring online groups.

As commonly seen in team working, and corresponding with role theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978) to work together and co-create brand meaning, brand value and to build brand communities, members undertake a wide range of activities and roles where they interact with external stakeholders and the focal brand. This includes representing the community outside the group's boundaries where, for example, they try to attract new members (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Popp et al., 2016). Members can become involved with the brand management team, with this more evident in company-managed brand communities (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2014) or communities where participants act as working consumers (Black & Veloutsou, 2017). Communities facilitating working consumers possess volunteers who are highly engaged, empowered, show long-term commitment to brand meaning development and

are more likely to perform complex and sustainable functions in the brand community (Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Cova & Dalli, 2009; Cova et al., 2015a, Cova et al., 2015b).

There is significant understanding of what constitutes a brand community and the value they can create (Rodríguez-López & Diz-Comesan, 2016) and research appreciates that brand community members, although different in many ways, unite around a common goal (Özbölük, & Dursun, 2017). Indeed, recent work shows that a member's behaviour may meet or exceed other members' basic expectations to be accepted into the community (He et al., 2017). However, despite this work, there is limited attention given to the nature of the roles brand community members play with most existing empirical work categorising these participants as either active or passive (see Sun et al., 2014). The remaining research examines the roles for a specific process, such as value co-creation (Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011), or uses two (Özbölük, & Dursun, 2017; Pongsakornrungsilp, 2010), three (Fillis & Mackay, 2014), or more (Ouwersloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008; Azar et al., 2016) specific attributes to cluster members into categories.

The brand community members' roles currently identified, do not capture the complexity of the roles that conceptual work, such as Fournier & Lee (2009), suggests is required for the successful operation of a brand community, or for it to prosper. Prosperity is viewed here as the community meeting its aims to support the brand in achieving its objectives and to build and maintain a vibrant, sustained community with an active membership and strong social bonds (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001; Algesheimer et al., 2005). These are necessary conditions for each other; the community requires a focal brand and requires support from an active, vibrant brand community. Also, work that holistically identifies and organises the nature and focus of the roles is still required, especially in contexts that support high levels of complex interaction across multiple communication channels (Lin et al., 2018).

Using role theory as a lens, this study aims to identify and elucidate the roles that brand community members play and contributes to brand co-creation and brand community research in three distinct ways. It is the first study to elucidate the roles that brand community members play in order that this type of group can develop and flourish. Second, it proposes a classification of roles based on all the known functions of a community, namely members achieving their personal objectives, and supporting the brand, the community and its members and thus co-creating the brand community and the brand. This understanding contributes to the theoretical dialogue and fragmented research in this area by more fully accounting for multifaceted processes and benefits attained from brand communities by their members and the focal brands. Finally, the paper advances the brand community literature methodologically. A sizable majority of recent research examines virtual communities, though this represents only one form of brand community and one that is characterised by members networking in a restricted manner and for a limited time (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Cova & Pace, 2006). Instead, this study explores this phenomenon using ethnographic data collected over 34 months in highly involved working consumer communities who interact fluidly and with increased complexity via multiple offline and online channels. Overall, this work contributes to the literature by providing a detailed account of the roles required for the long-term prosperity of a vibrant brand community with complex interactions over time.

The paper is structured as follows: First it sets out role theory and existing literature on brand community roles to identify the gaps in this literature. Following the methods section, the findings are presented and discussed before finally reporting on this study's limitations and scope for additional work.

2. Role theory

A 'role' is a dramaturgical metaphor (Thomas & Biddle, 1966) which has been applied across disciplines and refers to learned conduct and patterns of behaviour associated with certain positions, rather than the individuals enacting them (Sarbin & Allen, 1968). Turner views social roles as a 'comprehensive pattern of behaviour and attitudes constituting a strategy for coping with a recurrent set of social situations' (Turner, 1990: 87) hence highlighting the utility they provide.

Functional, symbolic interactionist and structural perspectives have all been taken to role theory in order to elucidate how social actors learn and develop appropriate behaviours for the positions they occupy in society (Biddle, 1986). They also help understand the structure, actions and relationships between roles (Knight & Harland; 2005). The functional perspective focuses on the set of role expectations (rights, privileges duties, placed on the individual occupying the positions within a stable social system (Lynch, 2007). The roles are the shared, normative expectations that prescribe and explain these behaviours (Biddle, 1986). The symbolic interactionist view argues that roles are under constant social construction and are transferred between actors as they interpret and negotiate meaning from symbols (for instance, material objects, other actors and relationships) available from the context and group (Biddle, 1986). Accordingly, roles can be proactively created, adopted, organised and modified rather than assigned (Ashforth, 2000). Finally, the structural perspective focuses on the social environment and considers structures in the context of stable organisations composed of sets of individuals sharing similar patterned behaviours (or roles) (Biddle, 1986) that leads to the formation of role sets in various interaction contexts (Solomon et al., 1985).

Through these perspectives, role theory has been extensively used to analyse dyads, groups and organisations (Knight & Harland, 2005; Lambert et al., 2003; Wickham & Parker, 2007) with role expectations, or understanding the duties and obligations expected of the person

holding the social position, of particular importance to the aims of this research. If a brand community is a social structure that is a task-oriented, hierarchical system (Biddle, 1986), then existing work in this sphere shows role theory providing a useful framework for understanding work roles and their allocation within organisations (Knight & Harland, 2005; Wickham & Parker, 2007). Specifically, regarding role expectations, in both voluntary and remunerated work, participants are often expected to act as part of a team and to define, accept and enact task-related positions effectively and efficiently in order to achieve organisation objectives (Katz and Kahn, 1978). Hence, roles are associated with social positions negotiated considering expectations of what needs to be performed, how it should be performed and why. These expectations, particularly those regarding how the roles should operate and are facilitated to do so, are not just set formally via official organisational demands, but also informally through for example grouping used to undertake other work (Biddle, 1986; Keränen, 2017).

The success of social interaction partly depends on the degree to which individuals understand what is expected of their and other actors' roles (role congruence) and the extent to which they behave appropriately according to these expectations (role enactment) (Davoine et al., 2013). Role incongruence can lead to conflict between actors (Lambert et al., 2003) and lower performance (Langfred, 2004).

Research in marketing has employed role theory to examine structures, identify typologies and expectations in functions such as new service development (Heikkinen et al., 2007), product innovation (Markham et al., 2010), supply networks (Knight & Harland, 2005) and brand image co-creation (Törmälä & Saraniemi, 2018). However, less work uses role theory to examine roles that consumers play (Schulz, 2015). Brand community research does not explicitly refer to role theory as a lens with the exception of Carlson et al. (2018), who suggest that members of different genders are expected to play different roles.

To summarise, role theory, by seeking to understand the task oriented social positions that structure participation, the functions expected of them and their interrelations, provides a useful lens to elucidate how vibrant brand communities form and maintain themselves and how this can be supported.

3. Brand Community Roles

Similar to research in other marketing related activities (Heikkinen et al., 2007) current examinations of the roles undertaken when engaging with a brand community presents no widely accepted role structure that can be generalised across contexts. Research on brand community members' roles can however be categorised into three main streams. The first focuses on the intensity of members' overall involvement within a community, the second focuses on the type of involvement and on members' contributions to the group (including the activities with which they are involved). Finally, the third stream identifies specific roles that depend on particular brand community characteristics and activities in which members are interested.

The first and largest stream (Malinen, 2015) approaches the roles that members play simplistically by categorising brand community members into either passive members who participate irregularly or engaged members who enthusiastically participate regularly. These roles are most commonly identified as 'lurkers' or active members/posters (i.e., Lai & Chen, 2014; Mousavi et al., 2017; Schneider et al., 2013; Sun et al, 2014; Walker et al., 2010) or members with intermittent versus regular participation (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2014). Much of the recent research examines active members' activities within the brand community, such as posting content (i.e., Lai & Chen, 2014; Sun et al, 2014; Walker et al., 2010) or willingness to spread word-of-mouth (Mousavi et al., 2017).

Active members become involved with the community and brand in a wide variety of ways including affective, behavioural and cognitive engagement (Dessart et al., 2015; 2016) of a positive or negative nature (Bowden et al., 2017). Whilst they might act in a manner that meets the expectations of other members and exhibit in-role behaviour securing belonging to the community, they may also go beyond expectations and exhibit extra-role behaviour (He et al, 2017). Lurkers can be passive or active and posters can either initiate or respond to posts (Walker et al., 2010). Although reports acknowledge that the majority of online brand community members are *lurkers* (Mousavi et al., 2017), most of this research stream focuses on members that participate actively and implies that encountering a *lurker* is unlikely. Overall, this stream does not focus on how to increase participation in less behaviourally engaged members. The exception is Dessart et al., (2019) which identifies brand community member clusters based on their affective, behavioural and cognitive engagement and loyalty to the brand. However, even this work does not focus on the specific activities undertaken and the precise nature of the behavioural engagement.

The second stream of research suggests that brand communities have power and status structures (Kozinets, 1999) and that members play various roles that can be clustered over and above the level of their overall participation according to specific activities, interests or involvement. There is, however, no agreement in this stream concerning the nature of the roles performed. Conceptual work proposes that, depending on the level of self-centrality of consumer activity and social ties to brand community, members can be characterised as, for example, *devotees, insiders, tourists* or *minglers* (Kozinets, 1999). However, the roles may be more complex since they engage with each other, including through peer education, to enrich other members' experiences. Partly reflecting this, Pongsakornrungsilp (2010) characterises community roles as *strangers*, *arrivals*, *residents* and *players,* depending on the level of engagement and intensity of resources invested.

Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder (2011) go on to classify roles according to whether members provide or receive resources. Depending on the participants' relationship with the company, product and brand, they are grouped as *enthusiasts*, *behind the scenes*, *users*, *not me* and *community members* (Ouwersloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008). In a recent quantitative study, members' levels of interaction with the brand, their response to the brand's invitation to interact and the number of 'likes', comments and shares, led them to be classified as *brand detached*, *brand profiteers*, *brand companions* or *brand reliants* (Azar et al., 2016). Fillis and Mackay (2014) observed football brand community members and, taking into account the quality of social integration, attachment to the team and to the community, classified them as *social devotees*, *committed supporters*, *casual followers* and *fans*. Finally, depending on their interest and commitment to the brand and the community, the members' groups formed are *learners*, *pragmatists*, *activists*, *opinion leaders* and *evangelists* (Özbölük, & Dursun, 2017).

The last stream of research implies that these roles may be more complex and varied still and cannot be classified using a small number of dimensions. This stream is represented by Fournier and Lee (2009), who conceptualise the most sophisticated set of roles to date, defining eighteen of the most common, namely: *mentors, learners, back-ups, partners, storyteller, historians, heroes, celebrities, decision-makers, providers, greeters, guides, catalysts, performers, supporters, ambassadors, accountants* and *talent scouts*. These roles are not organised in any particular manner, but are deemed as critical for the function, preservation and evolution of the community. Most of these roles are related to interaction with prospective, new and existing members and the achievement of personal objectives of members. Although this conceptualisation may represent those undertaken in complex and active brand communities, it has not, as yet, been supported empirically.

Researchers call for a better understanding of the roles, participation and contribution of participants to brand communities (see Malinen, 2015). To aid this, in addition to presenting existing work according to its type and the kind of community examined, table one reclassifies existing research on roles performed in brand communities according to whether they relate to activities connected to the brand (i.e., Azar et al., 2016; Fillis & Mackay, 2014), the relationships between members (i.e. Ouwersloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008; Wirtz et al., 2013), brand community activities (i.e., Gambetti & Graffigna, 2014), achievement of personal objectives (i.e., Fournier & Lee; 2009; Kozinets, 1999) or resources provided by members to the community (i.e., Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011).

Insert table 1 here.

This new classification supports existing understanding of the benefits and value creation activities undertaken in brand communities. Importantly, though, it also highlights gaps in the depth and scope of this current work, as well as the need for data to support conceptual work.

Regarding existing knowledge, table 1 presents work examining how brand community members engage to achieve personal objectives and to become actively involved with the value creation processes to which they often contribute resources (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Pongsakornrungsilp, 2010; Dessart et. al, 2015; 2016). Individuals achieve personal objectives in brand communities, such as entertainment (Gambetti & Graffigna, 2014), self-expression (Cova & Pace, 2006; Skålén et al., 2015), to receive awards (Azar et al., 2016), satisfy their curiosity (Schneider et al., 2013) and limit participation to protect privacy (Pasternak et al., 2017).

Large amounts of brand community research examine community engagement (Algesheimer et al., 2005; Pongsakornrungsilp, 2010; Dessart et. al, 2015; 2016) showing that

members often participate in practices unifying the community and developing community identity (Black & Veloutsou, 2017). They develop emotional relationships amongst themselves (Schembri & Latimer, 2016), share their passion for stories (Schau et al. 2009) and information about the brand (Azar et al., 2016; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001) and provide support through activities such as welcoming new members (Schau et al. 2009) and educating one another (Schau et al. 2009; Pongsakornrungsilp, 2010).

Through participation, individuals develop and maintain emotional relationships with brands (Schembri & Latimer, 2016), care for them and look after or modify branded objects (Schau et al. 2009). Through these actions and functioning as ambassadors to various audiences (Schau et al. 2009) brand meaning is co-created with a range of internal and external stakeholders (Black & Veloutsou, 2017), often through interaction with the brand management team (Cova et al., 2015a; Cova et al., 2015b; Skålén et al., 2015).

As key elements of value co-creation, members put resources into the community (i.e., knowledge, information, time, skills and experience) to support their engagement with the brand and other consumers (Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Pongsakornrungsilp, 2010) and they often generate brand-related content that they share with others (Popp et al., 2016).

Table 1 also highlights how existing literature is often conceptual or, if empirical, then findings focus either on overall engagement or on narrow sub-sets of roles performed primarily in virtual brand communities. Very few studies examine both the engagement between community members and community members with the brand, and no study identifies roles necessary for the development and long-term prosperity of the community, co-creation of the brand, achievement of personal objectives and contribution of resources, functions important in a functioning brand community.

When a social network is observed over time, roles emerge (Heikkinen et al., 2007) and evolve (Keränen, 2017) though research in brand communities has not captured this dynamic

nature of role structure. By adding information concerning the form of community examined and whether empirical or conceptual, it also shows that most work focusses on the virtual sphere. This may limit our understanding as face-to-face contact between the brand community members will likely make the interactions deeper and more multifaceted (Lin et al., 2018) and, in turn, develop richer roles over time. Indeed, contact between members both online and offline could further enrich the heterogeneity of the roles performed. The complexity of the interaction and the roles can be further enhanced where community members are expected to actively co-create the company's offer.

This reanalysis also highlights that most existing research examines members' overall engagement with the community without in-depth understanding of the function of this engagement (i.e., Gambetti & Graffigna, 2014; Lai & Chen, 2014). Further, it highlights the dearth of work roles serving all the complex interactions and tasks in the social network (those managing members, the brand and other stakeholders). Instead, work has focussed on the roles required to support one or two of these areas or sub-sets of activities (i.e., Azar et al., 2016; Ouwersloot & Odekerken-Schröder, 2008).

Gaps, remain in knowledge regarding the roles members play in brand communities and the impact these have. Extending its use in brand community research beyond adopting its terminology, a role theory lens is used here. This is in order, for the first time, to empirically and holistically identify the range of roles required to structure and manage prosperous brand communities and to elucidate what is expected of them and their interrelationships. In doing so, greater insight is provided into how to support the development and functioning of these communities and to achieve brand objectives.

4. Context and Methodology

Participant ethnography is a commonly adopted method for researching brand communities (Villegas, 2018) and this approach was used, here, to collect data from communities that formed around the Yes Scotland brand. This brand was developed by Yes Scotland (YS), the legally designated campaigning organisation supporting Scottish Independence in the 2014 referendum. Set up in November 2011, YS provided the umbrella group under which individuals and political parties could work toward this goal. As part of the overall organisational strategy, it encouraged local groups to form in order to implement the campaign within communities across Scotland. It envisaged that these would work semi-autonomously with branded materials, messages and resources provided from the centre, but with local groups encouraged to adapt these according to their requirements. In branding terms, the outputs were envisaged to be a family of brands, with YS as the parent and the local group brands endorsed when sharing values and core design features.

The main research site was Yes Edinburgh North and Leith (YENL), one of the local, geographically-bound groups supporting the parent brand. This type of community was chosen because existing knowledge of independence movements suggested its democratic goal would encourage volunteers to become committed, active participants over a prolonged period of time. Hence, it would likely provide a rich context in which to examine brand community structures, functions and branding outputs. The importance of community roles emerged out of this wider ethnographic fieldwork and became the focus of fieldwork and analysis.

Politics is an appropriate context with recent work supporting the existence and importance of brand communities in this field (Nielsen, 2017). This stream uses the same literature and conceptual foundations from brand community research in other context when examining, for example, political parties (Busby & Cronshaw, 2015), political candidates (Milewicz &

Milewicz, 2014; Burgess et al., 2017; Lin & Himelboim, 2018) and political movements (Varnali & Gorgulu 2015; Black & Veloutsou, 2017).

YENL showed the characteristics required for it to be described as a brand community (shared consciousness, rituals and traditions, and a sense of moral responsibility; Muniz & O' Guinn, 2001). Yes Scotland envisaged that it (and others) would become instrumental to the success of the parent brand and, by the campaign's end, its members had developed strong social bonds.

YENL was a hybrid online/offline brand community which, by polling day, had 420 members who could chose to interact in either sphere and could use different forms of representation in these domains. A member of the research team became integrated into YENL and gained access to all planning and campaigning events and venues, to the extent they can be viewed as a recognised culture member (Kozinets, 2002). YENL members also planned and campaigned with groups bordering it (Yes Edinburgh West, Yes Edinburgh Central, Yes Edinburgh South) located elsewhere in Scotland (Yes Dalkeith and Yes Gorebridge) and the city-wide organisation, Yes Edinburgh. Therefore, whilst based on YENL, the ethnography elucidating brand community roles also includes data from a range of related but distinct groups.

The types of data collected from these groups over 34 months, starting in November 2011, is summarised in table 2 and these are similar to those gathered in other studies attempting to identify roles, expectations and role development in marketing related networks (Heikkinen et al., 2007; Knight & Harland, 2005) though collected over a longer period. The interviews followed an oral history approach (Thompson, 2000) and examined the volunteers' life narratives and their individual and collective experiences working in the campaign. Field notes were written in a range of settings including; campaigning events and planning and management meetings organised by YENL and the other Edinburgh groups, YENL's shop and

its rented campaign office. Social media content was downloaded from YENL's social media platforms (Facebook and Twitter) and website. Appendix one provides the characteristics of the interviewees and other informants.

Insert Table 2 here

As in recent research identifying roles (Keränen, 2017), the data was analysed using Grounded Theory coding and memoing processes and techniques (Corbin & Strauss, 1990) so helping to ensure the conceptual finding that emerged maintained a clear link to the data. Specifically, during the open coding phase, community members' behaviours, the assets, skills and experiences they deployed (and how these were utilised) and interactions with others, emerged as important. This represented an initial categorisation of the roles, what was expected of them, who undertook them and their relationship to each other. Following this, the brand community roles identified in previous studies acted as an additional analytic framework around which the researchers re-examined patterns of behaviour and evidence of motivations, power structures and conflict, with the conceptual work from Fournier and Lee (2009) proving to be particularly helpful. The data were triangulated by both authors to ensure a clear chain of evidence was available to support interpretations. Member checks (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) were performed where the emergent findings were checked by YENL volunteers. This led to the final conceptualisation presented in the findings which shows a broad range of roles explaining how the community was set up and controlled and how it managed its relationships with a wider range of stakeholders. Using this approach, the findings are grounded in data, but do not represent a Grounded Theory as exposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) which requires a wider range of techniques to be employed.

5. Findings

As part of their engagement with other members, the brand and other community stakeholders, volunteers take on roles that build, maintain and control the culture, structures and membership support required for a brand community to function and create brand value. These roles, therefore, assist in value co-creation across the brand value triad (Black & Veloutsou, 2017; Pasternak et al., 2017) and the wider stakeholders (here, the broader Scottish independence movement).

Performing roles provided legitimacy for volunteers to act as the cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984) and agents of socialisation required to produce, distribute, mediate and consume the cultural knowledge necessary to create and maintain the community and brand meaning (and reputation) across its stakeholders. The individual roles represent organising structures employed by volunteers within which they were able to contribute to the brand meaning and community outcome by utilising their resources and assets. The number and type of roles developed over time; most were associated with only one category though some spanned across categories. Numerous instances of community members playing multiple roles were observed.

Table 3 presents the roles in and role categories classified by the primary recipient of the co-created value and the main function they perform (managing the brand, managing the brand community or self-focused). A number of these roles have not been encountered in previous studies or have been modified compared to their conceptually proposed counterparts to accommodate what was observed. For example, Fournier and Lee's (2009) Partner role was split here with a new position of Host.

Insert Table 3 here.

The classification also takes into account the approximate temporal order in which roles appear. The emergence of the community requires local founding members to perform roles that set initial structures around which the social group can form. As the community becomes more established and grows, roles emerged that focused on managing both new and existing members. Further, since the goal of the working consumers participating in this community was to develop the brand, roles supporting this aim developed after the community had been established. Given the size and coherence of the brand community, some members then engaged with roles aiming to connect the group with external stakeholders. Finally, participation in the brand community, for some members, focused on achieving personal objectives.

It was clear from the data that some volunteers became recognised as brand community leaders, partly by undertaking specific roles (particularly during the formation of the community) and partly through psychological, emotional and temporal commitment to the community, its development and its members. The roles typically undertaken by leaders are identified in table 3.

The following sections explore the aims of the roles, how they were performed, by whom and their impact.

5.1. BRAND COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT ROLES

5.1.1. *Setting up the brand community*

This category represents roles that created the structures around which the community could form and includes: *Pathfinders, Corporate Liaisons, Cultural Agents and Storekeeper. Pathfinders* began the process of translating the vision of the brand as expressed by the centre into nascent groups. Most were individuals with long histories of participation in group-advancing related ideals. They undertook activities such as sending emails, posting on social

media and setting up initial group meetings that began to establish organisational and cultural structures around which the community could emerge. This role was performed with some concerns over imposing personal interpretations onto the intentions of the brand owners without authority beyond being the first to start work building the group. Indirect language ('probably', 'maybe') and humour (also helping to avoid accusations of overly strong leadership) set expectations for active membership rather than passive lurking (Schneider, Von Krogh & Jäger, 2013). By inviting people who shared the community's goal and values to initial group meetings, pathfinders reproduced time-honoured methods for community formation and, as such, encouraged participation and limited what the community could become.

Email on 8/11//12 to 17 recipients
"Dear All,
It was great to meet you all last Thursday at the launch of Yes Edinburgh. As was suggested, this email is the first attempt to start planning the activities of the Yes Edinburgh North and Leith group. As we discussed on the night it would probably make sense at the start to get an idea of what we can all do for the campaign - where our talents lay and perhaps our contacts and memberships. Finally, clearly there are many, many more people out there you know who want to get involved, please pass this email round and get them to send it back to me. Yours aye, Ruaridh

Corporate Liaisons liaised with the brand centre to gain permission for the community to exist, for support, guidance and feedback and to organise (initially) the one-way flow of materials to the brand community. In YENL, three volunteers were appointed to this role by the central organisation, partially through pre-existing relationships with employees which allowed trustworthiness, value and commitment to the brand's purpose to be assured. This relationship provided legitimacy to make decisions, in the absence of locally agreed formal leadership structures and represented one route to being considered a community leader.

The flow of information and meaning between the brand community (facilitated by the corporate liaisons) and the centre changed over time. After initially acting as one-way conduits for information flowing from the brand owners, corporate liaisons eventually became

conduits for two-way dialogue. This developed as the brand communities' emerging (perceived) self-efficacy led to requests for resources required for brand value creation. This represents the transfer of cultural custodianship of the local brand to the brand community (BC) members and, at this point, both parties are beneficiaries and producers of value (Pongsakornrungsilp and Schroeder, 2011). As the community became the primary producers of the brand, the liaisons shared brand signals and marketing communications with the centre without expecting feedback, whereupon, the aim of the role moved from setting up the local community to managing brand meaning development.

Cultural Agents guided the emergence of the BC culture as they negotiated how to replicate and localise the culture envisaged by the parent organisation using the symbolic resources available from the wider community of stakeholders (i.e., political parties or related communities of purpose). They transferred their version of the localised culture (including language, symbols and practices) by leading participation in community activities and through social media communications. These communications intentionally reproduced the visual Yes Scotland brand; furthermore, the language used (inclusive, respectful and positive) helped transfer its values to the local community. Their management of YENL's first formal meeting (formal through the use of an agenda, taking of minutes and actively chaired) played an important part in establishing the group's culture as it was the first public opportunity to transfer what had been seen and performed at the launch of the national Yes campaign to the local group.

Differing visions between agents (an example of role incongruence) led to conflict between the agents, (Cronin, 2004). For example, in 2013, YENL agents discussed conflicting views regarding the relationship between the Scottish National Party (SNP - the largest and oldest political party supporting Scottish Independence) YS, and YENL. One agent (Clive) assumed the SNP would lead whilst another (Ruaridh) proposed YS, fearful that an SNP-led

relationship would impose existing structures, norms, practices and values (perceived as being hierarchical, centralist and rigid) and stifle the emergence of a YENL culture. Over time, historians/storytellers took over transmitting YENL culture internally and externally.

Storekeepers controlled early activities by managing the allocation of resources and access to tools made available by the centre (software, marketing communications) and those produced locally. Storekeepers were initially corporate liaisons as this allowed a straightforward allocation of resources from the centre to the community members. This developed to become a role that controlled community activity. Fergal (Yes Edinburgh West) described how volunteering to store campaign materials (tables, leaflets, banners) at his home and transport these to campaign events allowed him to influence event location, duration and timing which, ultimately, influenced who could participate. Hence, by controlling the scarce resources, the storekeeper exerts strong control over community participation and brand management, though this weakened as the campaign progressed as access to resources was widened to better reflect the parent brand's values for openness and inclusion. Where disputes arose, their resolution contributed to the emergence of the arbitration role (table 3). This role saw members, on an ad-hoc, infrequent basis, being called upon to arbitrate between volunteers with irreconcilable disputes being escalated to the parent organisation.

5.1.2. *Managing New Members*

The roles involved with the management of new members are: *Talent Scouts, Greeter, Catalysts and Guides. Talent Scouts* recruit new members who can expand the community's capabilities including performing specific tasks or providing resources to build the community and crucially build it beyond that which is currently envisaged. They allow the community to escape the boundaries created by existing assets and structures, seen here as allowing YENL to grow beyond the SNP. *Talent scouts* actively targeted known individuals from other social or community networks or reacted to signs of talent from those new to the

movement. For example, in his interview, John discussed proactively recruiting Rose, whom he knew from the local SNP branch, because Yes Edinburgh West needed her skills as a secretary and organiser. Talent Scouts also recruited new volunteers and acted as catalysts (see table 3) ensuring volunteers' talents are used and that the scouts' network is strengthened.

The next three roles, which helped embed and engage new members in the community, were often performed in the same online and physical campaigning or meeting spaces. The *Greeters* welcomed new members into the community and greeted members attending each new activity. This role was enacted inconsistently, partly because of confusion regarding who should perform it, and partly because the fluid nature of community membership meant it was not always clear who was new. These failures led to feelings of exclusion from some members and even animosity towards the group, once again showing role incongruence but this time intergroup incongruence.

In her interview, Siobhan describes how she was greeted and welcomed as she takes part in canvassing (contacting voters door to door) which makes her feel comfortable and empowered:

> '*So again, it does feel like you can do that kind of thing but I need to talk to someone like Jackie who I feel knows what's going on, more inside of the group. My first time out canvassing was with Jackie…and the other important thing is she was the first person to make sure that I was connected by Facebook or something like that, more directly with a new human being. And then when she'd done that then Peter friended me. And so that helps as well, when you're not just going through the anonymous mass email - which you need as well - but it just helps you get more confidence to talk to people about what's happening. So I think that was quite important to the process of me…*'

From here, another member, Jackie, acted as a *Catalyst* as Siobhan was then friended online by Peter. Catalysts helped develop and affirm networks and embed new members within the community by introducing them to existing members who shared interests or required support. Jackie's introduction (above) further built Siobhan's confidence in

understanding how to act in the community, which highlights YENL's blended virtual/physical spheres.

Guides facilitated members to navigate the community's culture by providing advice, converting its values into specific ideas and actions and acting as role models so that volunteers are able to self-police their involvement. This role was not restricted to established members guiding less established ones and was also performed by new members as their actions reflected their understanding of community values outwards to others. Guides also expanded what it meant to be part of the collective by exploring new and emergent ideas and connections.

For example, a field note dated 8/3/14, highlights this enculturation role. It was written at a school within the Yes Edinburgh South campaigning area being used as a base for allocating work to community members. Here, a middle aged women wearing a blue high-visibility vest gave a particularly warm welcome to a volunteer who identified themselves as being a) new and b) previously active with the Scottish Labour Party (who were officially campaigning against Independence). In this way, she personified the open, inclusive values of the brand and highlighted the group's mores to other volunteers also queuing for work.

Fournier and Lee (2009) describe a '*Provider'* as someone responsible for hosting and taking care of other (including new or temporary) members. Here, looking after new members was found to be a distinct role and labelled as *Host*. The interaction between hosts and guests acts as a nexus for sharing information and practice and network building.

5.1.3. *Managing Existing Members*

The most extensive set of roles surfaced in the management of the existing members' category, where brand community members acted as *Accountants, Mentors, Partners, Historians & Storytellers, Heroes and Hosts. Accountants* kept track of individual volunteers' participation by judging it against a flexible standard dependent on their personal

circumstances to ensure that sufficient capital (of the types defined by Bourdieu, 1984) was available with the community. Often required during planning sessions organising campaigning activities, accountants were typically asked '*who can we ask to do*….?' The following discussions often included an investigation into why people were no longer involved, with accountants attempting to suppress reasons such as disagreements with other community members or that a volunteer had changed their mind about independence. Instead, they blamed uncontrollable issues or the organisational matters that, in turn, could be corrected. In this way, accountants sought to maintain community cohesion, provide important community management information and show the sense of care for one another that forms the basis for attempts to (re)engage people in the community.

Mentors taught and shared expertise regarding internal (management) tasks and external (campaigning) tasks upon which both community coordination and brand co-creation, rely. Siobhan's interview, for example, shows her learning to canvass from both Stewart and Jackie. In turn this highlights the fluid, organic nature of the community symbolised by its lack of formal codification of campaigning practices. Having multiple mentors led Siobhan to negotiate her personal style and preference from between the different approaches encountered. On one hand, this allows a mentee's expertise and experience to be heard within the community, thereby strengthening how tasks were performed and increasing feelings of membership and community voice. On the other hand, it stifled the establishment of best practice within the community, which had a detrimental effect on those performing new tasks or ones that challenged their skills, experience and confidence. Mentoring was not always successful. Data showed where a lack of consideration of member's skills and confidence led to volunteers struggling to fulfil campaigning or organisational tasks and feeling dishearten regarding their contribution to the community, brand and there overall aims.

As with Guides, Mentors shared their expertise across membership groups (new, established, brand community leaders). This highlights two issues; first, how volunteers co-create the community; and, second, how participation provides opportunities for personal growth (beyond social and cultural benefits) to develop new skills which are, in turn, developed and extended within a community.

Partners provided reciprocal emotional and motivational support in ways that deepened involvement and commitment to the community. In her interview Jackie reported:

> *"So I was doing leafleting for ages and I was resisting the Ambassador training and resisting the canvassing training because I'm not really the sort of person who could canvass and it was because June went on one of the trainings and said to me 'oh, I think we could canvas, you and me' ... She'd been canvassing with somebody and she emailed me and said 'we could totally do this, this is not what you think at all, this is really easy' that was how she put it. And I was 'really June? I feel we should but I don't know...' Anyway, so I kind of got sucked into canvassing and it is totally...It's actually quite enjoyable; we have a great time together and use it to catch up".*

Jackie described, here, how June (a long-term friend) encouraged her to participate in activities she did not view as being her. The emotional and social support became a core reason for her taking part, perhaps reenergising or defending 'herself against the difficult emotional labour of knocking on strangers' doors. This data also highlights the relationship between mentoring and partnering: June was mentored on how to canvas and then mentored and partnered Jackie who, in return, provided emotional and experiential support.

Fournier and Lee (1999) suggest that communities have both *Storytellers* (who spread the community's story throughout the group) and *Historians* who preserve community memory by codifying rituals, rites, etc. In YENL it was difficult to differentiate between these roles as, for example, social media posts telling the story of the community simultaneously acted to preserve its memory. Indeed, at the start of the community, the line between storytellers and historians was particularly blurred as there was very little history to describe and the act of telling stories about the community codified and created its history.

Trevor consistently played the role of storyteller/historian; his photography art, graphics and merchandise figuratively and symbolically told a controlled story of the community. Figure 1, posted on Facebook contrasts a YENL stall with that of the opposition (Better Together - or the 'No' campaign) and tells the story of YENL spending a morning campaigning together. The resultant social media comments reinforce community values and define it, in part, by being in opposition to another (No). By highlighting these values, it also makes a claim for YENL's authenticity within the wider Yes movement and contrasts this to the No campaign. Overall, social media, and in particular Facebook, represented a critical site for storytelling as a historical repository and, hence, as a space for cultural production and consumption. This example also highlights the online/offline nature of the community with two members appearing in the photograph and commenting on Facebook.

The storyteller/historians actively managed and extended the history of the group beyond the limited timescale of its existence. A common way to achieve this was through the appropriation of the geography in which it was sited, and its cultural figures and community landmarks. In this way, Yes Edinburgh North and Leith sought to develop its sense of shared consciousness by co-opting what it means to be a 'Leither' as Leith is a distinct area which retains a strong sense of its own individuality within the larger conurbation of Edinburgh,

Insert Figure 1 here.

Communities need their *Heroes* and this brand community is no different. Members are identified as heroes if they exemplify, through their actions specific values important in the community and its aims. Hence, they possess the dimension that unifies all the roles that manage existing members: The control and management of the flow of information within the community. Heroes are recognised for acting in a way that is substantially beyond the

expectations set by the community and can be granted for focussing on one task, performing a wide range of tasks or having overcome adversity to join and maintain community membership. Heroes are recognised and praised by other BC members and, in particular, greeters introduce and praise them to new members. Their welfare becomes a shared group concern, demonstrated partly through other members looking for opportunities to do something for the hero.

For example, Gordon was recognised for the amount of time he spent canvassing (going door-to-door asking people how they intended to vote), a task viewed as difficult, unrewarding and emotionally draining. A field note dated 15th July 2014, written at a post-campaigning social gathering, describes how Gordon, as an acknowledgement of his hard, difficult work was not expected to buy his own drinks.

5.2. BRAND MANAGEMENT ROLES

5.2.1. *Managing Brand Meaning Development*

Four roles were related to the Management of the Brand Meaning Development, namely: *Professional Working Consumers, Strategists, Boundary Spanners and Brand Liaisons.*

Professional working consumers spend significant amounts of time (up to 100 hours per week) (Black & Marsden, 2016) performing specific jobs within the community such as graphic artists, copy editors or IT managers. They utilise their skills and experience developed during their education and careers to strategically and tactically manage their local groups and to develop and extend their local brand by producing high-quality branded marketing campaigns including print and online media and public relations events (see Figure 2).

Insert Figure 2 here.

Their work was recognised by the centre and other local groups with graphics and types of PR event distributed across the network of local Yes groups, thereby helping the core brand and its wider family. Their emergence and management were a result of deliberate actions by the brand owners, personal experience and motivation and actions by other actors involved in the broader independence movement. In contrast to Cova, Pace and Skålén (2015), this group welcomed their contribution being described as 'work' as it provided symbolic material, highlighting their place within the movement.

Strategists directed the community's plan, developing both its internal relationships with members and its external relationship via brand meaning development. Leaders of the functional groups that were set up to manage the community such as public events or IT performed the role partly by facilitating formal planning. The community grants legitimacy to volunteers to perform this role if they have professional experience (either employment or volunteering for other not-for-profit organisations). Therefore, some of the strategists were also professional working consumers. The changing relationship with the brand owners initially saw this role limited to interpreting the YS's intentions but, as the local brand community grew in its collective knowledge and confidence, they became empowered to produce local strategies that challenged and modified the central view, highlighting the reciprocal and dynamic nature of this community's relationship with the centre and how local communities can either be empowered or empower themselves to use highly valuable assets available in their community.

Facilities managers were played by members who actively positioned themselves to manage brand community spaces (YENL rented a shop and an office). As they were able to control the performance of daily activities they, represent a powerful role in guiding and controlling the transfer of the group's culture internally (to new and existing members) and externally (to members of the public). Hence, through the work undertaken in the shop and

office, these places became important sites for enculturation both via storytelling and guides. The roles of *Boundary Spanners* and *Brand Liaisons* can also be found in managing the relationship with other stakeholders and will be fully discussed here.

5.2.2. *Managing the relationship with other stakeholders*

Whilst brand communities contain admirers of a specific brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001), the interests of the member intersect with related organisations and these provide sources of ideas, spaces for identity construction and community cultural development. Four roles managed these relationships for YENL- *Boundary Spanners, Brand Liaisons, Ambassadors* and *Celebrities*.

Boundary spanners promoted the agenda of a related community or organisation sharing similar values with the local brand community and vice versa. This role spans the managing brand meaning development and the managing relationships with other stakeholders' categories. For YENL, part of a wider independence movement, boundary spanners represented political parties, demographic groups (Women for Indy,) and groups promoting a particular policy platform (i.e., Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament) as well as those working with more than one local brand community (for example, Hazel campaigned for both YENL and Yes Gorebridge). They helped ensure that the BC and other organisations gained both materially and culturally from each other.

A specific boundary-spanning role taken on by corporate liaisons when managing brand meaning development is that of *Brand Liaison*. They acted as a conduit between the YENL brand community and the parent brand owners through which support, guidance, feedback and materials (infographics, symbols, and marketing communications) flow.

In the following email exchange, a Brand Liaison acted to protect the local and national brands by agreeing that YENL would stop using one of its leaflets, showing the tension between the volunteers managing local brand meaning, and how community members

subverted the will of the central organisation and highlighting the contested nature of brand ownership:

Email 18/6/Dear All,
I've just taken a call from Yes Scotland regarding the Art Nouveau postcard. Yes Scotland have been inundated with calls from the media regarding the card following a tweet by Wings over Scotland last night heaping personal abuse on a Tory MSP…As a result of media interest it will be subject of press stories tomorrow and Yes Scotland HQ have been under considerable pressure to disown the leaflet. I'm afraid therefore that I have agreed that we cease distribution of the postcard immediately - the latest of which has my home address on it! Sorry to be the bearer of this news but I hope you will agree it is for the best. Clive

Ambassadors build brand reputation by promoting the community to external stakeholders. This role is restricted to promotion rather than reciprocal communication seen with boundary spanners though they gain personal benefits from this. As explored in her interview, Hazel acted as an ambassador following her experience of YENL by advocating it and its values to other Yes groups. Later in her discussion, she described how this advocacy and resulting relationship with YENL helped her retain membership of the wider community when demotivated and rejected by her local group.

Celebrities are external figureheads promoted by the community symbolising its values and, as such, are similar to the internally focused heroes. They also help enculturate potential, new and existing members. Those chosen for this role in some way represented the brand community values; for example, Simon, who identified as gay and disabled and was described as 'a force of nature' for his work was heavily featured in press releases, community promotional materials and placed in the centre of campaign photos.

5.3. SELF FOCUSED ROLES

5.3.1. *Personal Objectives*

When they are aiming to achieve personal objectives, community members could be *Performers (Celebrities)* or members of the *Entourage*. Communities provide reciprocal

benefits to members (Schau et. al., 2009) whereas volunteers in these roles used membership primarily for their own purposes. *Performers* focussed on gaining media attention (for furthering their political career) without necessarily putting in much work (or freeloading Reynolds & Harris, 2005). For example, Isabelle describes her experience of local politicians trying to block her from forming a group.

   'They're only interested in promoting SNP and not Yes at all, or themselves specifically.'

Volunteers who were part of the community **entourage** desired social and status benefits, gained by attending social events without engaging in the group's work. They used the community primarily for networking or to enjoy the social experience.

6. Discussion

6.1. <u>Contribution to Theory</u>

   Using role theory as an underpinning, this research examines the internal structure of brand communities and how brand community members function and manage their relationships in order to achieve organisational and personal benefit/gain. It supports and extends existing knowledge of the roles that support the long-term prosperity of a brand community by reporting on a broad range of empirically supported positions which are classified into three main groups.

   This paper makes the case that the roles are a necessary organising structure required for prosperous, successful brand community. It provides, for the first time, an empirically supported holistic picture of the internal structure of a brand community in terms of the activities and roles its members play, rather than a small set of roles associated with a specific subset of activities that the existing conceptual work (Kozinets, 1999; Fournier & Lee, 2009) and research (Pongsakornrungsilp, 2010; Walker et al., 2010; Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011; Fillis & Mackay, 2014; Azar et al., 2016; Özbölük & Dursun, 2017)

recognise. Further, it highlights that the roles in two of the categories, *Brand Management* and *Brand Community Management* are important structures within which the tasks required to create and support YENL as a vibrant, cohesive, productive organisation.

The findings support previous empirical research showing that working consumers interact with each other and play numerous roles primarily to interact with the brand at a deeper level and, in doing so, co-create value (Azar et al., 2016; Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder, 2011). It also supports conceptual work that argues that consumers join brand communities to partly support their personal objectives and, therefore, may play self-focused roles (Fournier & Lee, 2009; Kozinets, 1999).

Consistent with other role theory-based work collecting data over time to examine management roles (Keränen, 2017) and with a symbolic interactionist perspective on role theory (Biddle, 1986), the findings show actors coping with new social situations by actively interpreting the available symbolic material and developing appropriate roles (Sarbin & Allen, 1968). This process ensures new roles are introduced and others evolve in order to accommodate the fluid needs of the brand community and its members.

This study reveals that brand community members' roles involve managing the people, processes and outcomes that support cohesive communities and support the co-creation of brand value. The core dimensions differentiating roles include: the levels of engagement and resources required (time, skills, knowledge, relationships); their relationship focus (other volunteers, central brand managers, members of other and related brand community and other stakeholders); whether they are allocated, bestowed or self-refereed, how often they are performed (repeatedly, for a limited time or only once); and, whether the role is transitional (it provides a starting place for further roles).

As role theory suggests (Sarbin & Allen, 1968), individuals strive to find their own position and status within a community by introducing roles that allow them to support and

develop an identity. Through defining the responsibilities and activities associated with the roles, this research demonstrates both an active, consensual form of community membership and identifies the brand community structure as hierarchical and social (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001).

This study also contributes to the brand community literature by illustrating how specific roles contribute to the development of a set of shared beliefs or values by developing impressions and social networks (Schau et. al., 2009). For example, mentoring and partnering are manifestations of whether the community is maintaining its core values. Pathfinders, cultural agents and historian/storytellers (amongst others) develop and maintain the community's language, rituals, and modes of symbolic expression, another core brand community characteristic (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). Greeters, catalysts and guides then help with the enculturation of new members.

After the initial introduction, mentoring and partnering are essential in deepening community involvement for individual members as they move from simple tasks such as delivering leaflets to complex aspects such as trying to persuade the public. Members of brand communities feel some sort of belonging to the group and even moral obligation to help other members of the group (and brand) (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). For example, mentors and partners feel it is their duty to distribute knowledge, embed and develop community activities, set and reinforce formal and informal structures and community (brand) values, while boundary spanners feel that they should protect the views of the brand community to external audiences, including to the brand centre at Yes Scotland headquarters.

The identified brand community members' roles form a central function in developing and extending the brand community and co-creating the local and corporate brands and, thus, contribute to the brand co-creation literature. For example, professional working consumers, strategists, boundary spanners and brand liaisons co-create the brand. Professional working

consumers produce symbolic material (Bourdieu, 1984) and mediate meaning by being '*engaged in forming a point of connection or articulation between production and consumption'* (Negus, 2002, p.504*).* As such, the volunteers, their roles and the brand communities become instruments of branding (in the same vein as the advertising agencies and creative directors described by McCracken, 1986) and facilitate the brand meaning creation and transfer. Rather than a unidirectional flow, brand community members, here, choose the associations and meanings available in the culturally constituted world to be transferred across a network. As such, the roles mediate cultural production and consumption across multiple regimes (Cronin, 2004). One relationship is with themselves and volunteers protected and enhanced their privileged positions within YENL by reproducing the established meaning of community (Wright, 2005) to build and maintain the brand community. Ironically, therefore, reinforcing existing understanding of community as an institution, whilst attempting to destroy another (the UK).

6.2. Managerial Implications

Consistent with the definition of brand communities, this ethnography highlights that YENL can be considered as a prosperous, successful brand community and that success required roles from both Brand Community Management and Brand Management categories (and their sub-categories) to be enacted. For example, brand management requires Professional Working Consumers (in the 'Managing brand meaning development' subcategory) to build signals such as the YENL logo (figure 2) and Brand Liaisons (in the 'Managing relationship with other stakeholders' category) to negotiate with the parent brand when the localised extension threatened to damage the core brand values. To achieve this, the Community needs to be managed and the Cultural Agents (Setting up the brand community), Guides (Managing new members) and Mentors (Managing existing members) to transmit shared values, a necessary aspect of any community.

As a brand community grows, so that the community can remain vibrant with strong inter-member relationships, the number of roles to be performed increases and more volunteers are required to enact them. Companies viewing brand communities as a collaborative and innovative vehicle to co-create value (Ind et al., 2017) should encourage members to play roles from each category so that continuous engagement with the brand community and individual members is supported. Whilst organisations may be tempted to concentrate on brand meaning development management roles that directly co-create value, they should not neglect encouraging brand community management roles. It is through active participation in vibrant communities that the skills, experience, motivation and focus required for brand value to co-create are more likely to be garnered.

The 'setting up the brand community' and the 'managing existing members' roles support this active participation, which is of particular importance to organisations that view only active, engaged members as contributing to value co-creation. Roles specifically aimed at securing community vitality (Schau et. al., 2009) include Talent Scouts who help activate lurkers, Accountants who manage participation and Mentors and Partners who work to develop emotional connections between members.

Fournier and Lee (2009, p.109) state: 'In designing a new community or strengthening an existing one, companies should incorporate an assortment of roles into the community'. Managers should remember, though, that they cannot impose roles on community members; instead, roles are supported through setting a supportive, collaborative version of a brand community strategy. Organisations looking to create successful brand communities should, instead, look to model through their actions the desired brand values and provide tools for communications and sharing, graphics and web design, access to customisable brand templates and financial support for local events and activities.

Finally, brand managers must understand the consequences to feelings of brand ownership from pursuing this form of community strategy. Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder (2011) discuss double exploitation as occurring when companies interfere with a brand's culture and consumer's first feel exploited and then betrayed. Our findings show that double exploitation may lead working consumers to take on roles which help them limit the company's power to interfere with cultural practices. The double exploitation of Yes supporters led to them to ignore and even boycott the activities of the central brand owners, and to believe they had ultimate ownership of the YENL brand. Together, this highlights that a key mechanism for managing brand communities and gaining value from them is not to attempt to control as owners but, instead, to act as custodians willing and able to facilitate consumers.

6.3. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

This study examines roles that were encountered during the observation period. Given the complexity of the phenomenon and the number of roles that brand community members may play, this study does not report on role expectations and demands or how they all evolve and relate to each other over time as previous work highlights how roles evolve (Kozinets, 1999) and how this can be enhanced or weakened depending on the personal choices of the members (Pongsakornrungsilp, 2010) and the dynamics within the group. Future research might want to focus on the expectations from and the dynamic nature of the roles played by brand community members.

This ethnographic study focusses on brand communities that supported a political brand through the participation of working consumers (volunteers) and is based on data collected over a long period of time from participants interacting both physically and virtually. The method and context allowed the identification of many roles brand community members play in that period, the observation of the evolution of some of these roles and their classification into specific categories. However, different settings may encourage brand community

members to develop other roles and future research could examine the degree to which these roles are encountered in other brand communities.

This research appreciates that the most, and less, involved active brand community members' behaviour may be triggered from different motives (He et al., 2017), but has not detailed the specific behaviours in terms of the nature of the roles played. Some are doing what is needed and future research might also want to investigate characteristics and motives of the individuals who play specific roles in brand communities and also the specific resources and skills required to perform them.

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Table 1: Research on the Roles of Brand Communities Members

Authors	Year	Research			Community			Roles related to:					
		Conceptual	Qualitative	Quantitative	Virtual	Conventional	Not specified	Brand	Community members	Community activities	Personal objectives	Resources provided	Overall engagement
Kozinets	1999	X			X				X		X		
Ouwersloot & Odekerken Schröder	2008			X		X		X	X	X			
Fournier & Lee	2009	X					X		X		X		
Pongsakornrungsilp	2010		X		X					X		X	
Walker et al.	2010		X		X								X
Pongsakornrungsilp & Schroeder	2011		X		X			X				X	
Schneider et al.	2013	X			X								X
Wirtz et al.	2013	X			X								X
Fillis & Mackay	2014		X			X		X	X	X			
Gambetti & Graffigna	2014		X		X								X
Lai & Chen	2014			X	X								X
Sun et al.	2014	X			X								X
Malinen	2015	X			X								X
Azar et al.	2016			X	X			X	X				
He et al.	2017			X	X								X
Mousavi et al.	2017			X	X								X
Özbölük, & Dursun	2017			X	X			X	X	X			
Dessart et al.	2019			X									X

Table 2: Data Collection

Type	Number	Brand Community
Observational field notes	161 (from 4 to 30 minutes in length)	YENL, Yes Edinburgh West, Yes Edinburgh Central, Yes Pentland, Yes Edinburgh
Photos and videos of activities	879 photos and 32 videos	YENL, Yes Edinburgh West, Yes Edinburgh Central, Yes Pentland and Yes Edinburgh
Group planning documents	6	YENL, Yes Edinburgh
Depth interviews	12 (1-3 hrs length)	YENL, Yes Edinburgh West, Yes Edinburgh South, Yes Gorebridge
Emails	4512	YENL but also to members of above groups and others throughout Scotland
Brand community Facebook page, Twitter account and website (www.YENL.net)	All Social media activity including posts and comments	YENL

Table 3: Brand Community Management Roles

BRAND COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT ROLES			BRAND MANAGEMENT ROLES		SELF FOCUSSED ROLES
Setting up the brand community	**Managing new members**	**Managing existing members***	**Managing brand meaning development**	**Managing relationship with other stakeholders**	**Personal objectives**
Pathfinders@ Corporate Liaison@ Cultural agents@ Storekeeper@	Talent Scouts@ Greeters Catalysts Guides Hosts	Accountants* Mentors* Partners*. Historians & Storytellers@ Heroes*	Professional Working Consumers@ Strategists@ Facilities manager@	Ambassadors	Performers*@ Entourage
			Boundary spanners Brand Liaison@		
				Celebrities	
	Arbitrators				

* Roles conceptualised by Fournier & Lee (2009). @ Roles performed by community leaders

Figure 1

Figure 2

Appendix A. List of informants.

Pseudonyms	Data	Characteristics
Catherine	Interviewee	Mid 40s, office manager, Yes Edinburgh East.
Clive	Observed	Early 50s, parliamentary officer. YENL
Donald	Interviewee	Early 30s, nurse. Yes Edinburgh South.
Fergal	Interviewee	Mid 40s, self-employed builder/IT consultant. Yes Edinburgh West.
Gordon	Observed	Mid 30's, bank worker, YENL
Hazel	Interviewee	Early 60s, retired artist. Yes Gorebridge.
Isabelle	Interviewee	Early 50s, part time sales assistant. Yes Dalkeith.
Jackie	Interviewee	Early 50s, freelance researcher. YENL.
Joanna	Observed	Late 40s, Tour guide. YENL
John	Interviewee	Early 60s, retired doctor. Yes Edinburgh West.
June	Observed	Early 50s, social worker, YENL
Nick	Interviewee	Mid 40s, charity worker. Yes Edinburgh South.
Peter	Observed	Early 50s, research scientist. YENL.
Rose	Observed	Late 50s, retired. Yes Edinburgh West
Ruaridh	Observed	Mid 40s, lecturer. YENL.
Sarah	Interviewee	Mid 40s, artist. YENL.
Siobhan	Interviewee	Mid 40s, freelance researcher. YENL.
Simon	Observed	Late 20s. Entrepreneur, YENL
Steven	Interviewee	Early 50s, marketing consultant. YENL.
Stewart	Observed	Early 30s, engineer. YENL.
Trevor	Observed	Early 30s, graphic artist. YENL.
William	Interviewee	Early 50s, translator. YENL.