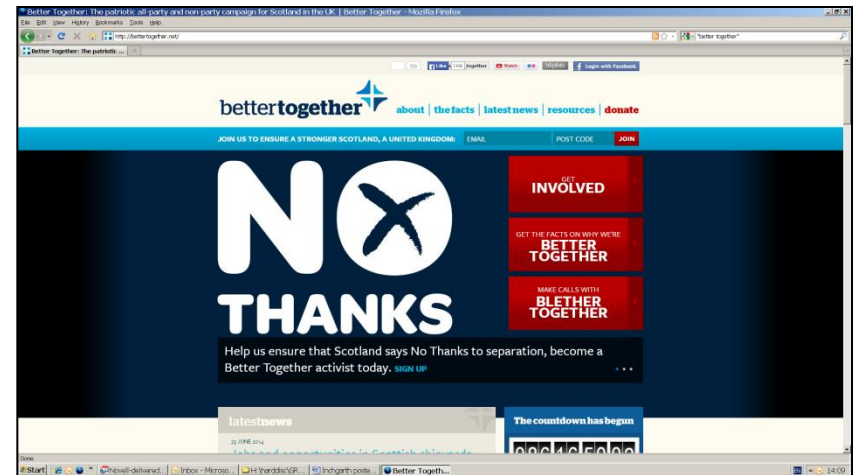


A study of voters' online information behaviour



Dept. of Information Management, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, UK

Thursday, 18th September 2014

The Referendum on Independence for Scotland

BALLOT PAPER	
Vote (X) ONLY ONCE	
Should Scotland be an independent country?	
YES	<input type="checkbox"/>
NO	<input type="checkbox"/>



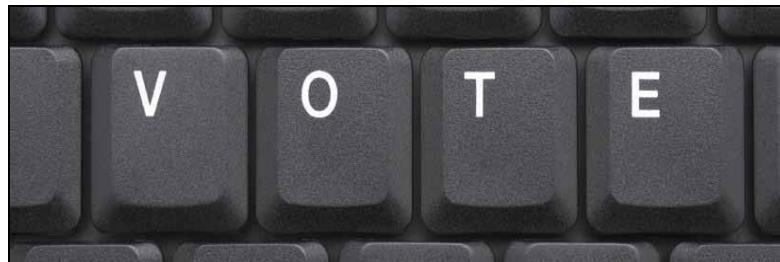
Images: Electoral Commission



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Aims of User Study

- **Identify motivations for, and barriers to, public use of campaign sites**
- **Investigate the types of information, tools and technologies voters most value**
- **Assess the likelihood of campaign sites being visited again**
- **Explore the extent to which they influence voting behaviour**



User Study

- **Used the ‘interactive, electronically-assisted interview’ method**
- **So far, interviews conducted in:-**
 - **Robert Gordon University library**
 - **Aberdeen’s busiest community centre**
 - **a church serving Commonwealth citizens**
- **Plans to conduct further interviews in:-**
 - **a care home for older people**
 - **a sports centre**
- **Used laptop with mobile broadband ‘dongle’; iPad; and smartphone**



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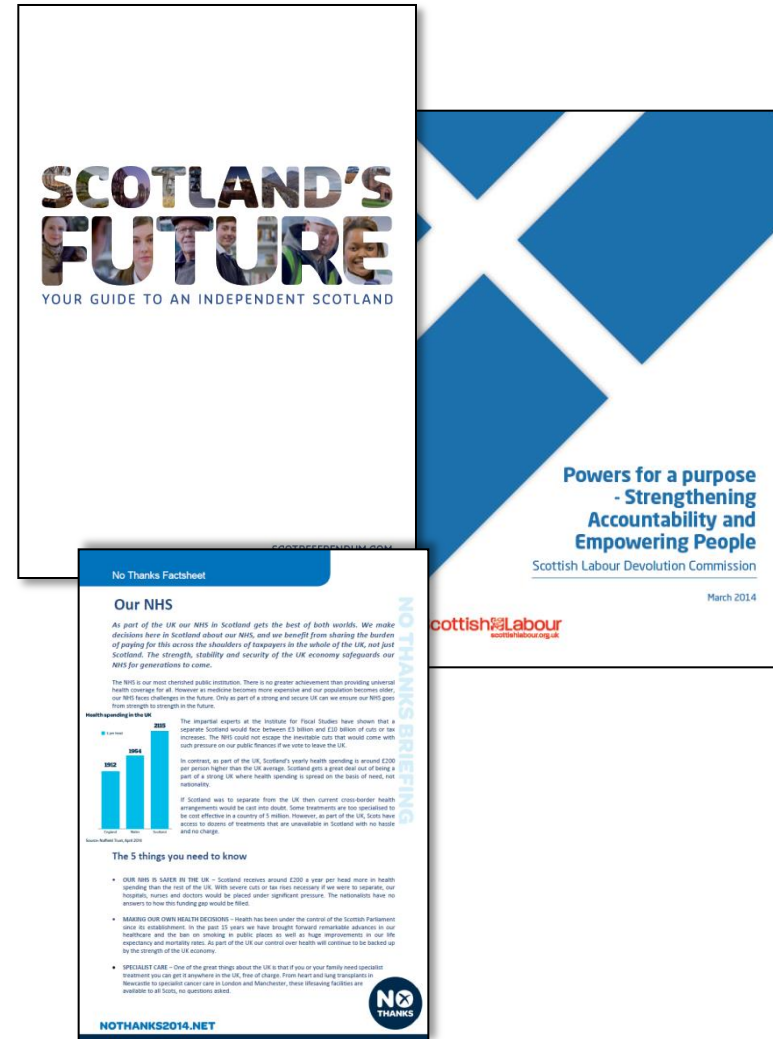
Profile of Sample (to date)

- **54 interviews conducted so far**
- **22 male, 32 female; from a range of age groups**
- **29 in employment, 4 seeking work, 21 students**
- **48 eligible to vote in referendum, 46 will definitely be voting**
- **Majority were regular and confident computer and Internet users**
- **Just 3 had never used social media**

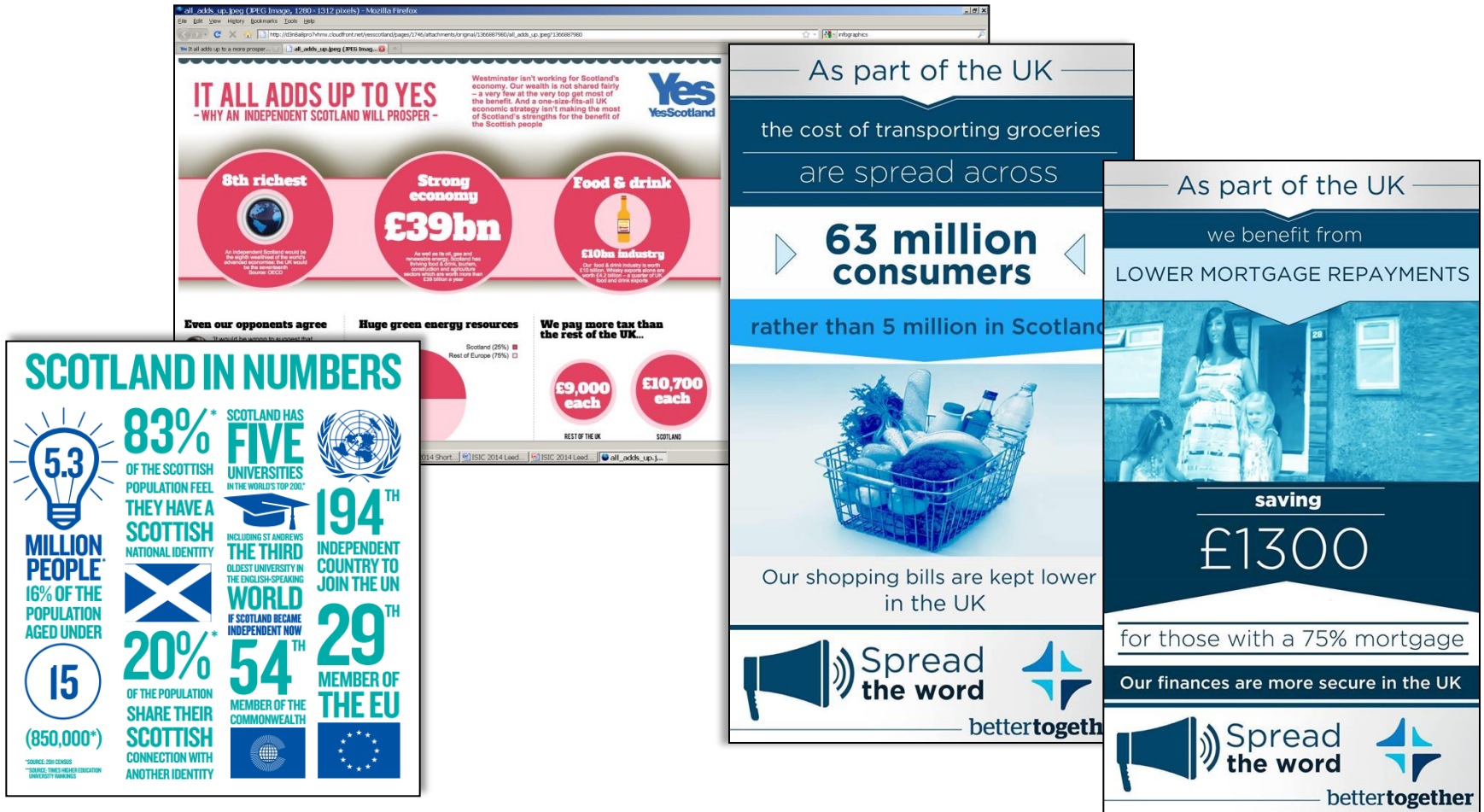


Need for Concise Policy Documents

- Reluctance to look at the Scottish Government's White Paper (670 pp) or other lengthy and wordy policy documents
- Preference for concise documents and statements (e.g. Better Together's 2- to 3-page factsheets)



Positive About the Use of Infographics



Need For 'Facts' Rather Than Opinion-Based Information

- **Unconvinced by over-reliance on opinions of 'ordinary people'**
- **Instead expressed a need for 'facts' about the impact of independence or of remaining in the UK**

Why I'm saying No Thanks - John Low



28th August

John Low is a retired headteacher from Pitlochry. Read why he's saying No Thanks to separation:

Why I'm saying No Thanks - Hannah Cook



27th August

Hannah Cook is an international development PhD student from Edinburgh

For the past five years I have been working in international development, and for much of that time I have been working on programmes funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Through this work, I have had the opportunity to visit and work with people from around the world, and have seen first-hand the urgent and devastating challenges of poverty and inequality that exist. I've also seen, however,

SUPPORTING FAMILIES THROUGH AFFORDABLE CHILDCARE

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BY JOY JOHNSTON

Joy Johnston is shocked to learn that my husband Scott and I decided to start a family, we agreed that I would be at home with the children as much as possible in the early years. Scott works offshore so it's important to us that the children have a

Yes Scotland's future in Scotland's hands

THE REALITY THE REASONS THE CHOICE TAKE ACTION NEWS DONATE SHOP



IN SUMMARY:

BY IVAN MCKEE

Two years ago, I dug up all the data on our economy and set down to analyse our national finances with one key question in mind: if Scotland were a company, would I invest in it? The numbers were simply overwhelming.

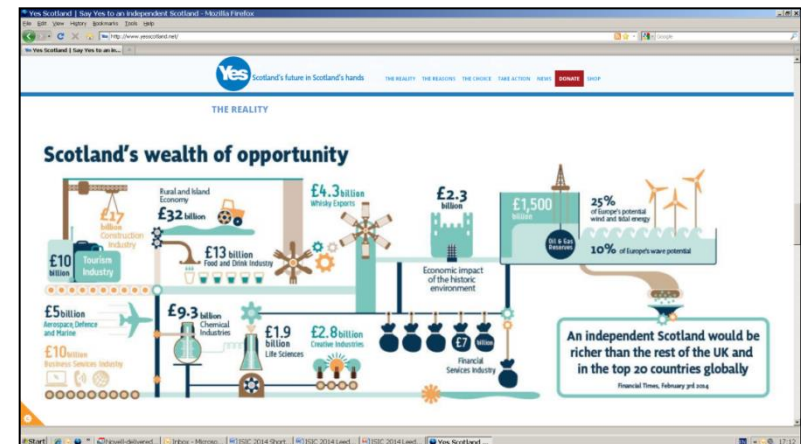
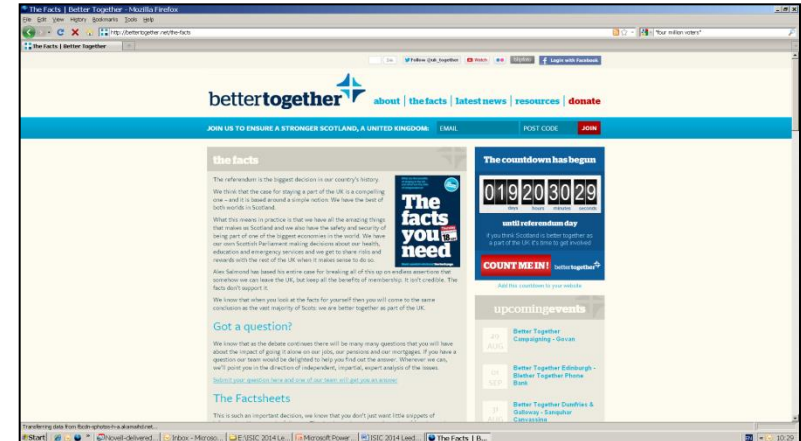
We have a strong and diverse economy, with high-performing sectors including manufacturing, food and drink, tourism and energy, and high potential growth areas in life sciences and biotechnology. That's before



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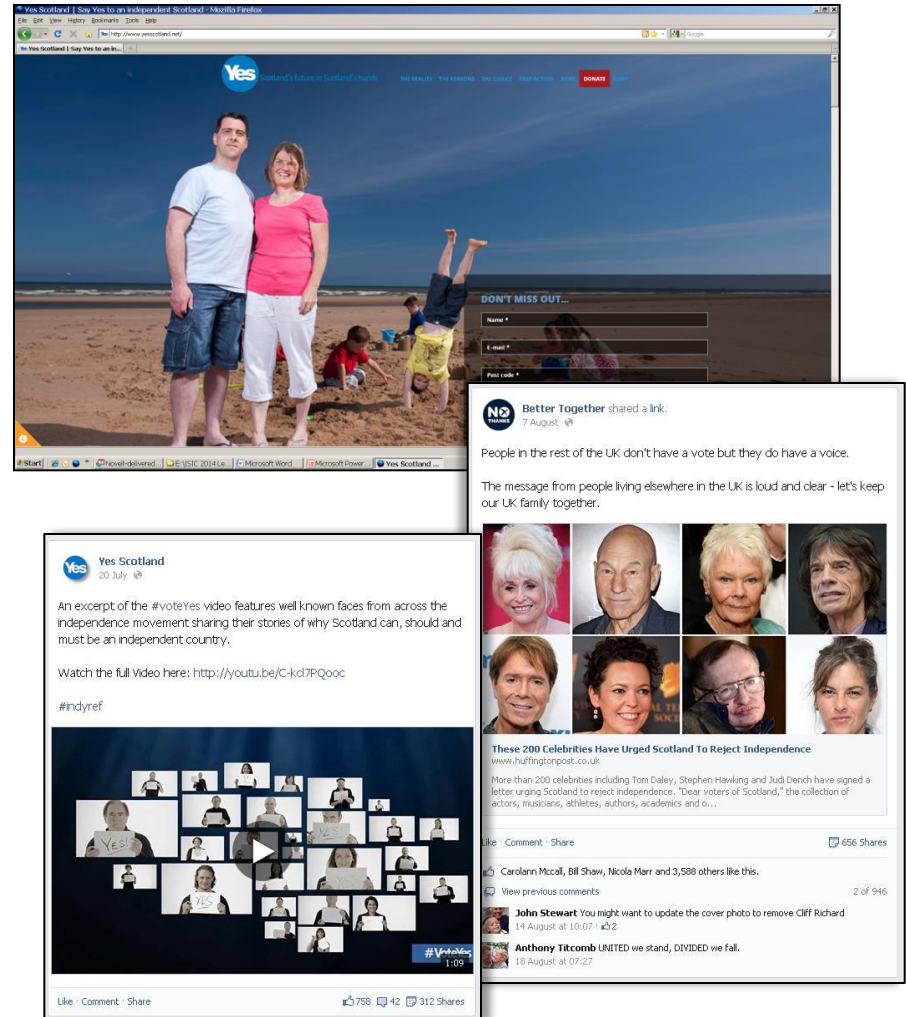
Sceptical About Impartiality and Reliability of Information Presented

- General acknowledgement of likely bias in information presented
- Need expressed for more information on *sources* of data/statistics presented



Further Levels of Cynicism

- Cynical about some of the imagery used
- Cynical about the use of celebrity endorsements



Post-Search Evaluative Questions

- **91% thought campaign sites are a useful way of providing information**
- **91% found them easy to use**
- **89% found the content interesting**
- **93% found the content easy to understand**
- **65% might look at campaign sites again before 18th September**



But...

- **Just 37% described the information as ‘very’ or ‘quite’ reliable**
- **For 75% the campaign sites had no influence on their voting intentions**
- **Instead, a continued preference for ‘traditional’ information sources and campaign methods**



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