

# **Towards a Theory of Brand Co-creation Process in Place Branding: A Case Study of Shonan**

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# Towards a Theory of Brand Co-creation Process in Place Branding: A Case Study of Shonan

## プレイス・ブランディングにおける ブランド共創プロセスの理論化：湘南を事例として

### Abstract (要約)

Place branding increasingly unfolds in multi-actor contexts where ownership and management autonomy are fragmented and no single actor centrally controls brand building. Prior research has highlighted outcomes such as revisit intention and recommendation and has positioned destination attachment as a key mediator; however, the co-creation process through which multi-actor interactions translate into brand resonance remains under-specified. The focus of this study is to find out how actors reach brand resonance in such contexts. Based on an exploratory qualitative case of Shonan, Japan, and a Grounded Theory Approach using 15 semi-structured interviews, we develop a propositional process model. The findings identify a three-stage co-creation process. In the antecedent stage, comparative evaluation and reflexive meaning activation make place meanings salient and shareable, contributing to the formation of a shared label as a shared term referable in conversation. In the transformation stage, the shared label facilitates engagement with regional platforms through recurring contact points, including everyday conversations in shops, connections formed through referrals, and repeated participation in events and hobby communities; when engagement is sustained through repeatable contact points, involvement becomes embedded in everyday life as everydayization. In the outcome stage, everydayization is associated with self-transformation and forming a sense of home, and these attachment-related bonds are translated into brand resonance behaviors, including intention to recommend, revisit and residency intention, and stewardship. By specifying how regional platforms become functioning through repeated interactions and how attachment-related bonds are translated into brand resonance behaviors, our study advances a theory of the brand co-creation process in place branding.

Key words: place branding, brand co-creation, brand resonance, multi-actor systems

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## 1. Introduction

The world is becoming increasingly urbanized, and by 2050, approximately 68 percent of the global population is projected to live in urban areas (United Nations, 2025). In this context, regions face increasing pressure to redefine and communicate their attractiveness to talented people, regardless of geographical limitations. Therefore, place branding has gained significant attention in both marketing practice and academic research. Place branding refers to “the development of brands for geographical locations, such as regions, cities or communities, usually intending to trigger positive associations and to distinguish the place from others” (Eshuis et al., 2013, as cited in Swain et al., 2023). In practice, the OECD highlights place branding as a strategy to attract talent while addressing demographic decline (OECD, 2023). In academic research, place branding is increasingly examined as a multi-actor co-creation process, such as residents’ involvement in city brand co-creation in Porto (Portugal), participatory rebranding processes in Kristianstad (Sweden), and legitimacy and inclusivity in place branding practices in Northamptonshire (UK) (Bisani et al., 2024; Casais & Monteiro, 2019; Källström & Siljeklint, 2024a).

Corporate and product brands are typically managed centrally by a single actor with clear ownership (Brand et al., 2025; Ripoll González & Gale, 2020). In contrast, place branding unfolds in a multi-actor context involving diverse actors, including local residents, newcomers, tourists, entrepreneurs and local governments (Källström & Siljeklint, 2024b). Because ownership is shared by multiple actors, brand management is not centrally controlled by any single actor (Källström & Siljeklint, 2024b). Consequently, place branding has been reframed from an expert-led approach to a “collective exercise” that integrates diverse voices, increasing interest in participatory and inclusive practices (González, 2019; Kavartzis, 2012; Källström & Siljeklint, 2024b). In our study, place branding is approached as a co-creation process, namely, interaction and influence among the participating actors, drawing on Sarasvuo et al.’s (2022) systematic review.

However, multi-actor co-creation in place branding often faces practical obstacles, such as intermittent participation and uneven burdens on specific actors (Källström & Siljeklint, 2021; Zenker & Erfgen, 2014). Ideally, brand co-creation activities should emerge not from top-down managerial control but from the bottom-up, voluntary, and proactive collaboration of all kinds of actors involved in place brand co-creation activities (Källström & Siljeklint, 2024b; Nagao et al., 2022; Wakabayashi et al., 2023).

Nevertheless, the process of brand co-creation among multiple actors has only been discussed fragmentarily in existing literatures, and a comprehensive explanation remains insufficient. To address this research gap, our study focuses on “Shonan” as a case of a successful place brand. It employs an exploratory qualitative research design to clarify the process through which a brand is co-created via interactions among multiple actors. The findings are presented as a process model and propositions.

## 2. Literature Review: Theoretical challenges in place branding

This section critically reviews existing research to clarify what remains unexplained about the brand co-creation process in place branding. It highlights the limitations of single-actor models, introduces regional platforms as interaction infrastructure, and clarifies outcome concepts by introducing brand resonance.

### 2-1. Limitations of Single-Actor Place Branding Models

Place branding research has traditionally emphasized management models in which governments and regional organizations play a central role in designing and managing the brand, often in the context of tourism promotion and urban policy. This stream has tended to adopt business brand management techniques, treating place branding as centrally managed by a single actor (Ashworth & Kavartzis, 2009; Hanna & Rowley, 2011). However, the critical distinction between place and corporate or product branding resides in the multiplicity of actors and the

fragmented nature of ownership (Källström & Siljeklint, 2024b). In fact, in recent place branding studies, the role of actors and the importance of collaboration among diverse actors have been repeatedly discussed as major themes (Swain et al., 2023). Accordingly, the theoretical premise of traditional branding, which implicitly assumes the existence of a central managing actor, has become unstable in place branding.

This theoretical instability manifests as a practical dilemma. Kobayashi (2016, p. 85) notes that “because participation is open to all, multiple actors exist and cooperation is necessary, yet no one has taken the initiative, preventing organized action.” Multi-actor involvement may enhance branding effectiveness, but it also raises issues of ownership, power relations, and the distribution of benefits, creating risks of tokenistic participation (i.e., symbolic involvement without real influence), manipulation, and marginalization of specific actors (Källström & Siljeklint, 2024b). Consequently, the question of how the place branding process generates outcomes under fragmented ownership and limited managerial autonomy is not only a practical challenge but also a significant research theme with broad social implications.

Taken together, existing single-actor models cannot fully explain the place branding process in a multi-actor context. The next section introduces the “platform” as a concept for interaction infrastructure that supports co-creation among diverse actors.

## 2-2. Platforms as Interaction Infrastructure

### Co-creation in brand research

Recent brand research increasingly conceptualizes brands not as static objects controlled by a single actor but as social constructs formed and updated through interactions among multiple actors (Brand et al., 2025). Building on this perspective, Brand et al. (2025) systematized co-creation activities as brand co-creation performances (BCCP), distinguishing between direct (dBCCP) and enabling (eBCCP) performances. Specifically, dBCCP (i.e., communicating, performing, contesting, and developing) refers to activities that directly contribute to brand building, whereas eBCCP refers to activities that enable direct performance (Figure 1).

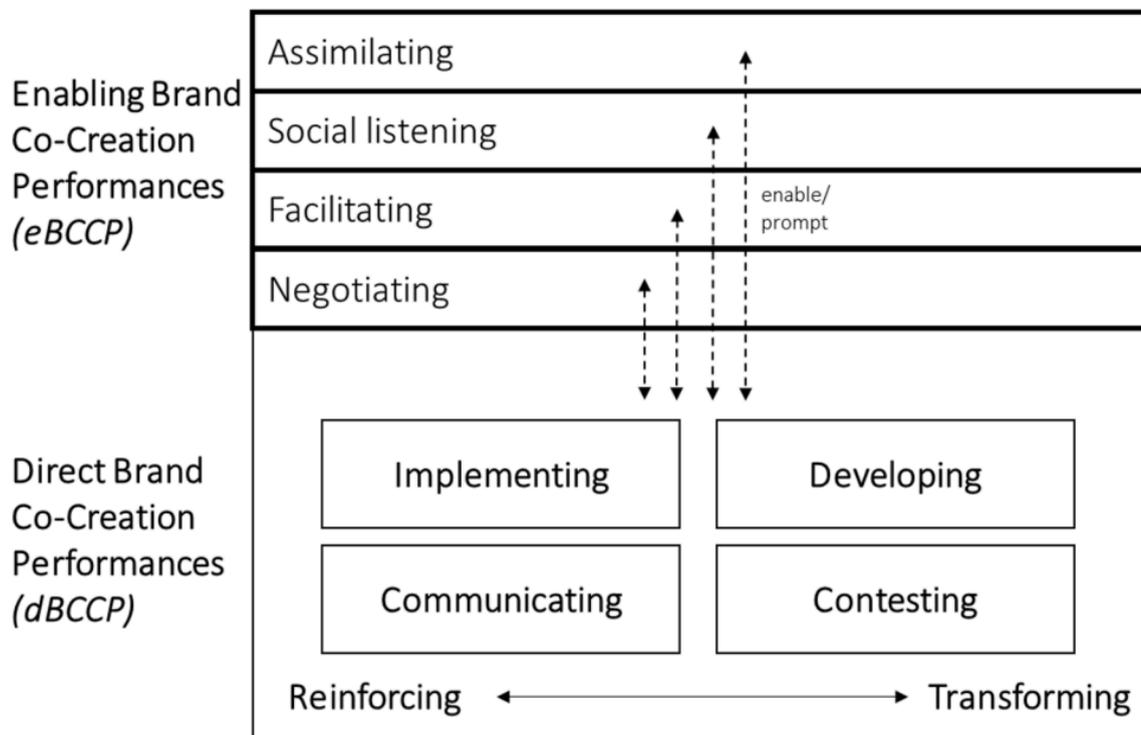


Figure 1: Interrelationships among BCCP. Based on Brand et al. (2025)

A key implication of this framework is that dBCCP can occur only when there are spaces for interaction (Brand et al., 2025). In particular, “facilitating,” one of the eBCCPs, refers to providing infrastructural conditions for dBCCP, including the development and maintenance of brand engagement platforms<sup>1</sup> (Brand et al., 2025). In other words, platforms are indispensable interaction infrastructures for co-creation activities to occur and be sustained over time.

However, these discussions primarily focus on corporate and product brands. Alves & Rodrigues (2023) suggest that co-creation in place branding is a critical future research area, given that nations, regions, and cities are inherently collective and social constructs. Therefore, the discussion below turns to regional platforms in place branding research as a place-specific concept of interaction infrastructure.

## **Regional platforms in place branding research**

In place branding research, regional platforms have been proposed as interaction infrastructure to support engagement and co-creation among diverse actors. A regional platform is defined as a “comprehensive system for the execution and realization of place branding through the collaboration of multiple actors” (Nagao et al., 2022, p. 12). Importantly, a platform does not become effective simply because people gather in one place. Value creation begins when actors repeatedly interact and create contact points over time (Nagao et al., 2022). This means that it is important to distinguish between a platform merely “existing” and “functioning” in a substantive way. However, it remains unclear how repeated interactions turn a platform from existing into functioning and produce sustained outcomes. To advance the theory of the brand co-creation process in place branding, the following section clarifies the outcome concepts.

### **2-3. Outcomes and Mediating Mechanisms: Attachment**

To advance the theory of the brand co-creation process in place branding, this section first clarifies what success means in this context. In branding research, brand resonance refers to a strong bond with a brand and the behaviors that express this bond (Keller, 2013; Swain et al., 2023). Place branding research has likewise treated brand resonance as a desirable outcome, but because the field has developed closely with tourism marketing, outcomes have often been discussed mainly through tourism-oriented consumer responses such as destination revisit intention and intention to recommend (Swain et al., 2023). Accordingly, our study uses brand resonance as a broad outcome concept to capture active behaviors of multiple actors, including tourists, locals, and newcomers.

Swain et al. (2023) synthesized place branding constructs into an integrated framework of antecedents, mediators, and consequences (Figure 2). In this framework, destination attachment is a key mediator linking antecedents to consequences. Destination attachment<sup>2</sup> is defined as the bond between individuals and their meaningful environments (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). Accordingly, our study focuses on destination attachment among these mediators.

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<sup>1</sup> Brand engagement platforms take various forms, including digital platforms (e.g., social media and websites) and physical platforms (e.g., meetings and events) (Brand et al., 2025).

<sup>2</sup> Place branding has been discussed under diverse terms, including destination branding, city branding, nation branding, and region branding (Swain et al., 2023). Accordingly, our study adopts place attachment as an umbrella term and retains destination attachment only when referring to Swain et al.'s (2023) labeling.

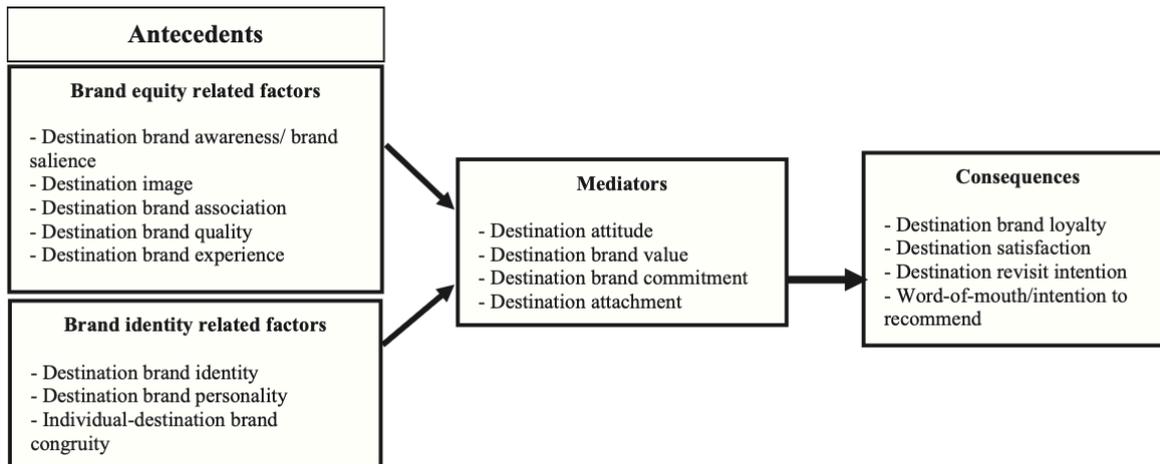


Figure 2: Conceptual framework—Place branding. Based on Swain et al. (2023)

However, existing research suggests that attachment matters, but it remains unclear how attachment is formed through co-creation and how it is transformed into brand resonance. Therefore, our study develops a process model and propositions that specify the success process.

## 2-4. Research Question

Our literature review has clarified what remains unexplained about the brand co-creation process in place branding. First, single-actor place branding models cannot fully explain place branding in a multi-actor context. Second, although regional platforms have been proposed as interaction infrastructure, it remains unclear how repeated interactions turn a platform from merely existing to functioning and producing sustained outcomes. Third, although destination attachment is a key mediator linking antecedents to consequences, it remains unclear how attachment is formed through co-creation and how it is transformed into brand resonance. Based on these theoretical gaps, our study sets the following research question:

**RQ: *What process leads actors to brand resonance in a multi-actor place branding context?***

## 3. Methodology

### 3-1. Method

This study clarifies the process through which actors reach brand resonance in a multi-actor place branding context and theorizes that process as a proposition model. Place branding unfolds under fragmented ownership, where brand management is not centrally controlled by any single actor, and outcomes emerge through interactions among diverse actors. This setting makes it difficult to capture the co-creation process using single-actor models alone. Therefore, this study focuses on the Shonan area in Japan as a success case where multi-actor co-creation is remarkably observed.

Previous studies indicate that the perceived geographical scope of Shonan varies across sectors, and Shonan is often treated as an “image” rather than a boundary-defined location (Masubuchi, 2019; Nozu, 2025). As summarized in Table 1, the definitions of the geographical scope of “Shonan” differ across sectors. This characteristic makes Shonan a prototypical place with fragmented ownership, where no single actor can impose a unified definition. Accordingly, Shonan provides a suitable setting for examining how place meanings become salient and shareable among actors and how repeated interactions contribute to the co-creation process that leads to brand resonance.

Table 1: Comparison of definitions regarding the geographical scope of "Shonan"

Source		Defined areas
Literature	Fujisawa City Board of Education	Oiso, Hiratsuka, Chigasaki, Fujisawa, Kamakura, Zushi, Hayama
	Masubuchi (2019)	Oiso, Hiratsuka, Chigasaki, Fujisawa, Kamakura, Zushi, Hayama
Administrative Regions	Shonan Regional Prefectural Administration Center	Hiratsuka, Fujisawa, Chigasaki, Hadano, Isehara, Samukawa, Oiso, Ninomiya
	Kanagawa Prefectural Tourism Association	Hiratsuka, Kamakura, Fujisawa, Chigasaki, Samukawa, Oiso, Ninomiya
	Shonan Vehicle Inspection and Registration Office (MLIT <sup>3</sup> )	Hiratsuka, Fujisawa, Odawara, Chigasaki, Hadano, Isehara, Minami-ashigara, Samukawa, Oiso, Ninomiya, Nakai, Oi, Matsuda, Yamakita, Kaisei, Hakone, Manazuru, Yugawara
Business Operations	Shonan Shinkin Bank	Yokosuka, Miura, Zushi, Hayama, Kamakura, Fujisawa, Chigasaki, Samukawa, Yokohama, Shinagawa (Tokyo), Ota (Tokyo)
	Shonan Electric Railway	Yokohama, Zushi, Yokosuka

Source: Compiled by the author based on Masubuchi (2019) and Nozu (2025).

To achieve the study's objective of developing an inductive process model from actors' accounts, this study adopts the Grounded Theory Approach (GTA), which is designed to generate theory grounded in qualitative data rather than test pre-specified hypotheses (Gioia et al., 2012; Noble & Mitchell, 2016; Wiesche et al., 2017). GTA is appropriate for this study for two reasons. First, the co-creation process leading to brand resonance is dynamic and multi-actor, involving meaning transformations that are difficult to capture using linear models alone. Second, GTA enables close engagement with data to specify themes and their relationships as testable propositions aligned with the empirical context (Gioia et al., 2012).

### 3-2. Sampling and data collection

Interviews were conducted from October 23 to November 27, 2025. To clarify the process through which actors reach brand resonance in a multi-actor place branding context, this study draws on actors' accounts of their interactions and involvement in the place. Accordingly, we conducted semi-structured interviews to elicit narratives of how meaning became salient and how engagement developed over time.

Participants were recruited through purposive and snowball sampling methods. Recruitment began by approaching individuals with experience in Shonan and then expanded through referrals to include multiple actor categories relevant to place branding. The category selection followed the multi-actor premise emphasized in place branding research and in our study design. The sample included locals, newcomers, and tourists. In this study, locals refer to actors who live in the area and have long-term familiarity with Shonan, newcomers refer to actors who moved into the area from elsewhere, and tourists refer to non-resident visitors. This

<sup>3</sup> MLIT: Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism

categorization enabled a comparison across actor positions while maintaining an analytical focus on the shared process leading to brand resonance.

Because the purpose of this study is to clarify a successful pathway toward brand resonance, the sampling strategy prioritized participants who showed a certain level of attachment to Shonan, given that attachment is a key mediator linking antecedents to outcomes in place branding research (Swain et al., 2023). Prior to the interviews, the participants completed an adapted version of the Emotional Attachment Scale (Thomson et al., 2005) for the Shonan context. Respondents rated 10 items across Affection, Connection, and Passion on a seven-point Likert scale. Participants with an overall mean score above the midpoint of the scale (4.0) were retained for analysis. One individual whose mean score fell below this threshold (2.6) was excluded, resulting in a final sample of 15 participants in this study.

Table 2: Emotional attachment scale for Shonan

Dimension	Scale item
Affection	1. Affectionate: I feel affection for "Shonan."
	2. Loved: I love "Shonan."
	3. Peaceful: Thinking about "Shonan" makes me feel peaceful.
	4. Friendly: I feel a sense of friendliness toward "Shonan."
Connection	5. Attached: I feel attached to "Shonan."
	6. Bonded: I feel a bond with "Shonan."
	7. Connected: I feel spiritually connected to "Shonan."
Passion	8. Delighted: I feel delighted when I think of "Shonan."
	9. Passionate: I have passionate feelings toward "Shonan."
	10. Captivated: I am captivated by "Shonan."

Source: Adapted by the author from Thomson et al. (2005).

The interviews used open-ended questions to avoid leading participants toward specific behaviors and eliciting narratives grounded in lived experience. Participants were asked about their relationship with Shonan (e.g., residency or visitation history) and the experiences that shaped their involvement over time. Follow-up questions probed the events discussed and the chronological order of the perceived changes. Interviews were conducted via online meeting services (Zoom or Google Meet), recorded with the participants' consent, and transcribed for analysis. The participant attributes are summarized in Table 3. To ensure anonymity, names were replaced with identification numbers, and identifying details were removed.

Table 3: Interviewees (n=16)

No.	Category	Age	Gender	Experience	Score	Duration	Date
1	Local	22	M	22	7	33m	10/23

2	Local	21	M	21	6.9	31m	10/27
3	Newcomer	59	F	1	2.6	51m	10/29
4	Tourist	65	M	30	5.2	30m	10/30
5	Newcomer	32	F	5	5.9	22m	10/30
6	Newcomer	48	M	10	7	30m	11/06
7	Local	68	M	68	6.8	43m	11/07
8	Local	57	F	57	5.8	42m	11/09
9	Newcomer	47	F	5	4.7	25m	11/10
10	Newcomer	31	M	1.5	7	25m	11/11
11	Newcomer	43	M	15	6.4	32m	11/15
12	Tourist	29	F	0.5	7	27m	11/20
13	Newcomer	31	M	1.5	6	28m	11/25
14	Newcomer	33	M	1.5	5.2	39m	11/25
15	Tourist	31	M	15	6.8	29m	11/25
16	Newcomer	27	F	1.3	6.9	28m	11/27

Source: Prepared by the author.

### 3-3. Data analysis: Coding method

The analysis followed the Grounded Theory Approach (GTA) and proceeded through open coding and axial coding (Gioia et al., 2012; Noble & Mitchell, 2016; Wiesche et al., 2017). First, all transcripts were read closely, and descriptive labels were assigned to capture the participants' accounts as faithfully as possible. At this stage, the analysis remained close to the data and minimized preconceptions from existing concepts. The unit of analysis was not a single utterance but a meaningful episode in which a participant described a specific experience within the context. Episodes were defined such that the experience could be understood from the segment itself. Next, axial coding compared similarities and differences among the 1st-order concepts and organized them into more abstract 2nd-order themes. Theme definitions were iteratively refined and reclassified to improve consistency across the coding systems. The analysis then examined how the resulting themes related to each other over time and across actor categories to clarify the process through which actors move toward brand resonance in a multi-actor place branding context.

To present the findings in a way that directly addresses the research question, the themes were organized into three analytical parts: Antecedents, Transformation mechanisms, and Outcomes. This organization highlights how the themes connect as a process while acknowledging that the actors' experiences may be iterative rather than strictly linear. The

resulting data structure is summarized in Figure 3, and the process relationships are presented as a propositional model in the Discussion section.

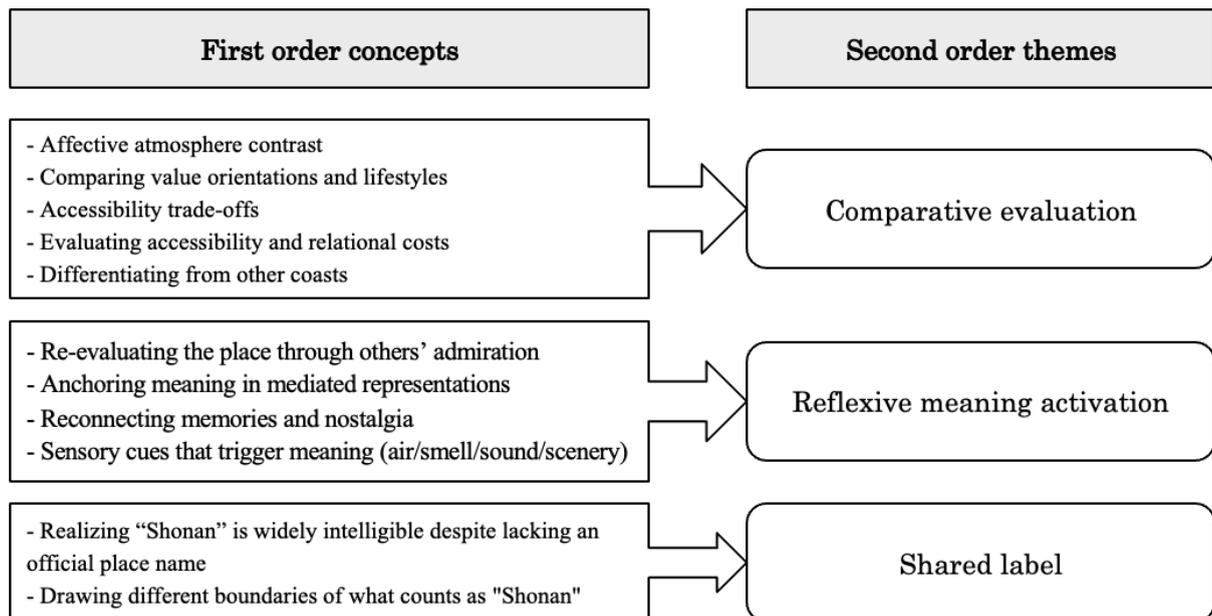
Theoretical saturation guided the endpoint of the analysis (Gioia et al., 2012; Noble & Mitchell, 2016; Wiesche et al., 2017). After approximately 10 interviews, the major categories and their relationships became stable. As the analysis continued to the final sample of 15 participants, no new concepts emerged that required revising the category structure or the relationships among themes, indicating that saturation had been reached.

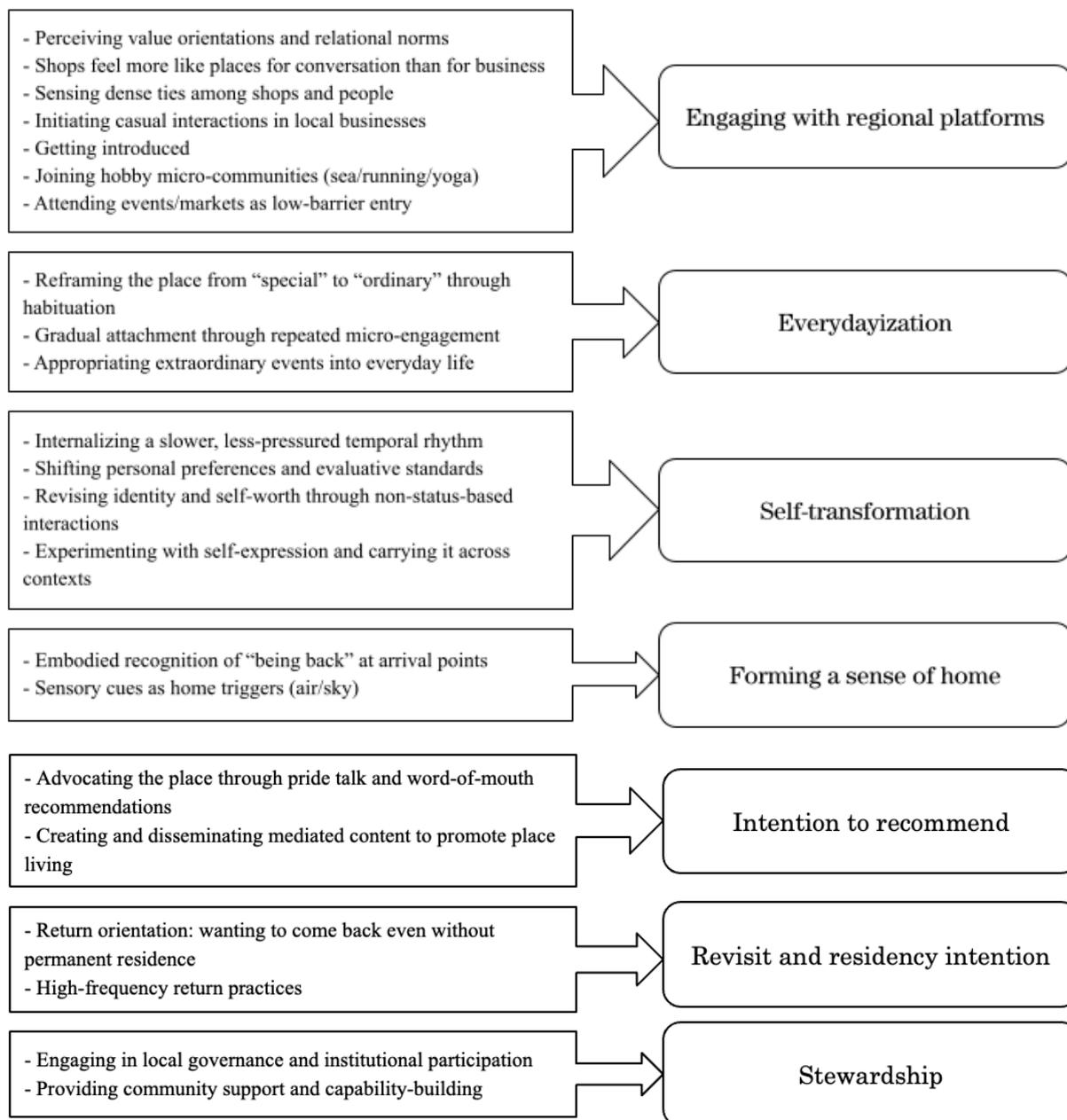
To strengthen the credibility of the analysis, the emerging codes, themes, and model were discussed with the seminar professor and 11 seminar students over approximately two months (three sessions, about one hour each). These discussions provided critical a review that helped refine theme definitions and reduce idiosyncratic interpretations.

#### 4. Findings

This section presents ten themes identified from the interview analysis. These themes describe the process through which actors reach brand resonance in a multi-actor place branding context. The themes are organized into three parts: Antecedents (“Comparative evaluation” and “Reflexive meaning activation”), Transformation mechanisms (“Shared label,” “Engaging with regional platforms,” “Everydayization,” “Self-transformation,” and “Forming a sense of home”), and Outcomes (“Intention to recommend,” “Revisit and residency intention,” and “Stewardship”). The Appendix illustrates the correspondence between the 1st-order concepts and the 2nd-order themes. The Appendix illustrates the correspondence between the 1st-order concepts and the 2nd-order themes, and Figure 3 summarizes the resulting data structure. The themes are presented in this order below.

Figure 3: Coding results





Source: Prepared by the author based on interview results.

## 4-1. Antecedents

### Comparative evaluation

Across the interviews, participants characterized Shonan’s value by contrasting it with other areas, most often Tokyo. In this study, comparative evaluation refers to how actors articulate a place’s relative value by comparing it with a common reference place (e.g., a major city or region). In this comparison, Shonan was described as calm and open, in contrast to the busyness and oppressive atmosphere of urban city, Tokyo. For instance, a local resident noted, “Unlike Tokyo or other places, it’s calm... it’s not stiff. I feel like everyone lives quite lightly here” (Local, No. 1). Similarly, a newcomer remarked, “I feel a sense of peace... I don’t feel that atmosphere of being chased by something hectic like in the city” (Newcomer, No. 11).

These comparisons were not limited to emotional aspects but also served as resources for explaining functional values in daily life. Participants framed Shonan as a “just-right” middle

ground and as a living area where the quality of the ordinary is high, often by referring to the noise and transit burdens of the city center. For example, one newcomer explained, “In the city center, it’s so noisy and exhausting... but if you go too far into the suburbs and it’s hard to get to the city, that’s also inconvenient... so it feels just right” (Newcomer, No.10). Another added, “What’s great about Shonan is that the quality of the ‘ordinary’ is quite high... in Tokyo... you can’t live a healthy life unless you think, ‘I’m going to do something special today.’ In Shonan, you can just live normally...” (Newcomer, No.6).

Notably, these comparisons with Tokyo were raised voluntarily. Although the interviews did not ask about Tokyo, 14 of the 15 participants referred to the city center as their dominant comparison point, making Tokyo the common reference place in this case. This pattern indicates that comparative evaluation is a key antecedent of the co-creation process.

### **Reflexive meaning activation**

In the interviews, participants explained how the brand meaning<sup>4</sup> of Shonan was repeatedly recalled and reinterpreted through outsiders’ evaluations, cultural representations, personal memories, and lived experiences. Reflexive meaning activation refers to the repeated re-evaluation of the meaning of a place. In this process, actors do so by interpreting current experiences through outsiders’ views, cultural symbols, and personal memories.

First, outsiders’ praise or recognition often triggered a reappraisal of Shonan’s values. For instance, a local resident noted, “When I first got a Shonan license plate, I thought it didn’t really matter, but when everyone told me, ‘That’s so cool,’ it made me feel a bit better” (Local, No. 8).

Second, cultural representations, such as music and media, provide cues for meaning-making. A tourist remarked, “At Southern Beach... you can see Eboshi Rock, which appears in the lyrics of Southern All Stars. It’s like, ‘Oh, there it is. Eboshi Rock’” (Tourist, No. 4).

Third, personal memories and lived experiences reactivated the meaning of place through individual life stories. A local resident shared, “I used to commute on the Enoden line and watch the sea every single day. Even in college, I sometimes get off the train at Fujisawa, even when I don’t need to, just because I want to remember those high school days” (Local, No. 1).

Across the interviews, reflexive meaning activation appeared as a key antecedent that made place meaning more vivid and personally grounded for actors.

### **Shared label**

Participants did not describe “Shonan” as an officially defined place name with clear geographical boundaries. Instead, they used “Shonan” as a shared label, meaning a name that functions as a shared term in conversation, even when actors do not agree on its exact boundaries. A tourist explained, “There is no actual place called ‘Shonan.’ Yet, everyone understands ‘Shonan’... I feel there is a Shonan that everyone is creating together” (Tourist, No. 15). This shows that the label helped actors talk about Shonan and align their understanding without relying on formal definitions of the term.

Simultaneously, the participants did not share a single, fixed idea of what Shonan included. A newcomer remarked, “Shonan seems broad, but it’s actually very narrow... it’s only along Route 134... that’s my personal feeling” (Newcomer, No. 14). A local resident similarly noted, “I don’t think of Kamakura, Zushi, or Hayama as Shonan anymore... even though the public says this area is part of it” (Local, No. 7). Across the interviews, “Shonan” was widely recognized as a shared label, although its perceived scope remained flexible and varied across actors.

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<sup>4</sup> In our study, brand meaning is defined as a socially constructed concept, co-created through mutual interactions where multiple actors integrate and exchange resources, such as perceptions and opinions of the place, to develop a collective understanding of the brand (Tierney et al., 2016).

## 4-2. Transformation Mechanisms

### Engaging with regional platforms

The interviews showed that the participants often began interacting through recurring contact points in the place. The previous section introduced a regional platform as an interaction infrastructure for place branding and highlighted the difference between a platform that merely exists and one that functions through repeated interactions (Nagao et al., 2022). We describe such functioning as engagement with regional platforms. In the interviews, engagement took three forms: everyday conversations in shops, connections formed through referrals, and repeated participation in events and hobby communities.

First, shops functioned as low-cost contact points where small talk occurred naturally, and relationships emerged. A newcomer remarked on the friendliness of staff and ties among shops, saying, “Interactions like, ‘It’s our day off today, so I came by,’ really warmed my heart... I guess that’s what triggered me to feel, ‘I love this area’” (Newcomer, No. 16). Another newcomer similarly noted that shops were “not just a procedure of looking at and buying products, but a place where you can have small talk” (Newcomer, No. 10).

Second, referrals connected actors quickly by linking people through acquaintances. A local resident noted, “Shonan is compact, so there are quite a lot of acquaintances. You’re connected somewhere... You get connected just by living” (Local, No. 1), suggesting that contact points in everyday life could lead to new interactions.

Third, events and hobby communities provide ongoing opportunities to join new contact points and meet others. A newcomer observed, “There are so many events. Even this month, there’s a marché happening somewhere every weekend” (Newcomer, No. 5). A tourist also shared, “Someone I met in Shonan invited me to do beach yoga together, so I participated in an event” (Tourist, No. 12), indicating that participation can emerge even among short-term visitors. Overall, engaging with regional platforms was observed when actors repeatedly encountered opportunities to interact through multiple contact points in everyday life.

### Everydayization

Everydayization appeared in how actors described their ongoing involvement with Shonan, referring to a shift in which experiences became part of everyday life through repeated engagement and proximity. Across the interviews, we observed two types of everydayization: normalization and privileged access to extraordinary events.

In normalization (when special experiences become ordinary through daily routines), newcomers described a shift in which Shonan moved from a special place to an ordinary place as their involvement blended into everyday life. One newcomer said, “Now that I’ve started living here, rather than it being a special place... I think it has become my everyday life” (Newcomer, No. 9). Another explained, “It was a process of making it not a special place anymore... The feeling that it’s ordinary and natural became so ingrained that I finally reached the point of actually living here” (Newcomer, No. 6). These narratives suggest that normalization involved more than simply getting used to the environment; it involved treating what once felt special as part of the everyday routine.

In privileged access to the extraordinary (the enjoyment of low-cost, repeated access to experiences that remain extraordinary for outsiders), locals and some newcomers illustrated everydayization as being able to experience the extraordinary as part of everyday life. A local resident noted, “Once it gets dark, there’s seriously no one around... when I’m on my motorcycle, there are seriously no cars either, and I can ride while having the sea all to myself” (Local, No. 1), capturing access during uncrowded times. Another local said, “We hang out when we’re free in the middle of the night... late at night, it’s just us students having Lalaport (the shopping mall) all to ourselves” (Local, No. 2). A newcomer also described repeated access to major events from within their living spheres. “Things like fireworks... the fact that you can see them perfectly even from a little distance away is nice, I think. ...The Hakone Ekiden, too. They run right there. I always go to cheer them on.” (Newcomer, No. 11).

These narratives suggest that while Shonan remains an extraordinary destination for outsiders, proximity allows some actors to experience it as a privileged access to the extraordinary. However, some tourists described Shonan in terms of second-home-like use rather than as a primary residence, indicating forms of involvement that did not lead to everydayization. Accordingly, this study does not treat everydayization as a necessary condition but as two modes observed in this case.

### **Self-transformation**

Self-transformation refers to experiences in which actors feel “changed” in their everyday decision-making or self-understanding through continued engagement and interaction in Shonan area.

In everyday decision-making, a newcomer explained, “When I lived near Tokyo, I used to pack my schedule very tight. Since coming here, I don’t really make schedules much anymore... if it’s sunny today, ‘I’ll go for a walk on the beach.’ It just happens almost unconsciously” (Newcomer, No. 14). Another newcomer added that the criteria for daily choices could shift: “There are many shops that are conscious of things that are good for physical health... It’s like your consciousness gets pulled in that direction in a good way” (Newcomer, No. 16). In self-understanding, a tourist reflected on how interactions mattered: “They don’t really care about your background... Until now... at the company, there was a lot of comparing, and it was really hard. Because they interacted with me in a way that wasn’t like that, I felt like... I was able to like myself without those titles” (Tourist, No.12).

Importantly, this theme appeared not only among newcomers but also among tourists, suggesting that self-transformation can emerge through the nature of engagement and interaction, not residency alone.

### **Forming a sense of home**

A sense of home was observed in the interviews. In this study, forming a sense of home refers to a form of destination attachment, namely, an emotional bond to Shonan developed through continued involvement (Scannell & Gifford, 2010). In our data, this bond was typically expressed as a sense of return, safety, and calmness.

For example, a newcomer said, “When I come back and step out onto Chigasaki Station, and I breathe in that good air, I’m like, ‘Ah, I’m back.’ It’s calming, and I feel a sense of relief” (Newcomer, No. 16), suggesting that physical sensations at arrival can cue Shonan as a psychological base. A tourist similarly noted, “I really feel how comfortable it is when I go back... When I pass through the ticket gate, it’s that feeling of ‘I’m back,’ like I feel relieved” (Tourist, No.15). These accounts indicate that everyday transit points, such as stations and ticket gates, can function as contact points that trigger a sense of returning.

This sense of home is not limited to residents. Some tourists described wanting to say “I’m home” (*tadaima*) through repeated visits (Tourist, No. 12), suggesting that a sense of home can emerge through repeated involvement and accumulated experience, not the resident/non-resident distinction alone.

## **4-3. Outcomes**

### **Intention to recommend**

In the interviews, the participants often encouraged others to visit or engage with Shonan through various word-of-mouth practices. We refer to this pattern as the intention to recommend. For example, a local resident said, “Because I absolutely adore Shonan, I can’t help but boast about it a little” (Local, No. 1). Another local resident remarked, “Like bakeries in Oiso... I strongly recommend them... If a friend comes, I think about how I want to take them here and there” (Local, No. 8). A newcomer also described content sharing: “The thing about Shonan life being good... I hope it resonates with those it’s meant to resonate with, so... I end up taking

videos of it.” (Newcomer, No. 5). These accounts illustrate WOM forms, including pride-based talk, recommendations with accompaniment, and content sharing. Overall, the intention to recommend was observed as a pattern in which actors moved beyond personal satisfaction to communicate Shonan’s value to others.

### **Revisit and residency intention**

Across the interviews, a strong orientation toward continuity was observed. Revisit and residency intentions refer to this orientation, in which actors aim to sustain their relationship with the place over time, either by repeatedly returning and visiting (revisit) or by maintaining, resuming, or starting residency in the area (residency). Shonan was therefore narrated not as a one-time destination but as a place actors wanted to keep coming back to, and in some cases, a place they did not want to leave or wanted to live in again.

For instance, a tourist described repeated returns as a habitual practice. “I usually head to Chigasaki or Shonan... It’s not hundreds of times, but anyway, I just go there all the time” (Tourist, No. 15). A newcomer expressed the intention to continue living in the area. “If you asked me if I want to live anywhere other than Shonan, I’d say I don’t want to live anywhere else” (Newcomer, No. 6). Another newcomer described wanting to return even after leaving. “I might not continue living here for many years straight, but Shonan is the first place where I’ve thought, ‘Even if I go outside once, I want to come back here again’” (Newcomer, No. 16).

Overall, revisit and residency intention was observed as continuity-oriented involvement, expressed through repeated returns and, in some accounts, a desire to maintain, resume, or begin living in the area.

### **Stewardship**

Stewardship was observed to be the most advanced form of involvement in the interviews. Participants described moving beyond recommendations or revisiting. Shonan and taking actions that sustain or improve the place. In this study, stewardship refers to higher-cost involvement through which actors support and improve a place, including participation in local organizations, community support, and the creation of opportunities.

For instance, a newcomer reported active participation in a neighborhood association and efforts to improve its practice. “I actively participate in the neighborhood association... I thought the hand-written attendance sheets were inefficient, so I created a digital version on my computer... I make sure to attend the association meetings” (Newcomer, No. 11). A local resident also noted support-oriented involvement aimed at strengthening the community’s future capacity to address the problem. “I wish there were something to attract younger people... since I think they come here for work, I’d like to be able to create those kinds of opportunities in the future” (Local, No. 13).

## **5. Discussion**

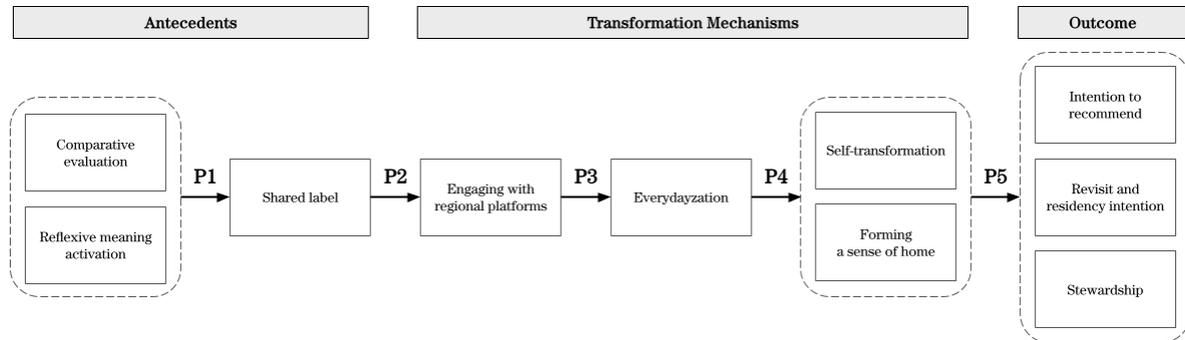
This section discusses how our findings advance a theory of the brand co-creation process in place branding. Addressing the research question—*What process leads actors to brand resonance in a multi-actor place branding context?*—we integrate the ten themes into a process model and develop five propositions that specify how actors move toward brand resonance through interaction in a place. We first discuss theoretical implications and then examine practical implications.

### **5-1. Propositions**

The objective of this section is to introduce the three-stage co-creation model (Figure 4) and present it as a series of propositions that clarify the process by which actors reach brand resonance within a multi-actor place branding context. In the following sections, the causal relationships indicated by the arrows in the model are organized as propositions P1 through P5 and are examined in comparison with existing theoretical frameworks. Together, these

propositions specify two mechanisms highlighted in the literature: the activation of regional platforms through repeated interactions and the translation of attachment-related bonds into brand resonance behaviors.

Figure 4: The three-stage co-creation model



Source: Prepared by the author based on the interview results and the previous studies.

Table 4: Explanation of ten key themes

Themes	Explanation
Comparative evaluation	Actors articulate a place's relative value by comparing it with a common reference place.
Reflexive meaning activation	Actors repeatedly re-evaluate what a place means by interpreting current experiences through outsiders' views, cultural symbols, and personal memories.
Shared label	A name actors use as a shared term in conversation to refer to a place, even when they do not agree on its exact boundaries.
Engaging with regional platforms	Actors experience a regional platform as functioning when recurring contact points repeatedly create opportunities for interaction.
Everydayzation	A shift in which place-related experiences become part of everyday life through repeated engagement and proximity. It appears either as normalization or as privileged access to the extraordinary.
Self-transformation	Actors feel "changed" in their everyday decision-making or self-understanding through continued engagement and interaction in a place.
Forming a sense of home	A form of destination attachment: an emotional bond to a place developed through continued involvement (Scannell & Gifford, 2010), often expressed as a sense of return, safety, and calmness.
Intention to recommend	Actors encourage others to visit or engage with the place through word-of-mouth practices.
Revisit and residency intention	Actors aim to sustain their relationship with the place over time, either by repeatedly returning and visiting (revisit) or by maintaining, resuming, or starting residency in the area (residency).

Stewardship	Actors support and improve the place through higher-cost involvement.
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Source: Prepared by the author based on the interview results and the previous studies.

P1 in Figure 4 organizes the causal relationships among the three elements identified in the previous section, namely comparative evaluation, reflexive meaning activation, and shared label, based on the interview data. In line with our view of place branding as a multi-actor co-creation process, the findings suggest that comparative evaluation and reflexive meaning activation function as antecedents that make place meanings salient and shareable for actors, which is observable in the formation of a shared label.

First, comparative evaluation functioned as a basis for framing the value of Shonan through contrast with Tokyo (the city center) as a strong reference point. This evaluation enabled actors to articulate both emotional values and functional values in everyday life. Simultaneously or with a time lag, reflexive meaning activation was observed as a trigger for re-evaluating what Shonan “means” through outsiders’ praise, representations in music and media, and the evoking of personal memories. As evaluations, memories, and representations were shared through narratives among people, actors gradually constructed shared perceptions of place meaning through interaction (Tierney et al., 2016).

The data further revealed that this common understanding among diverse actors took the form of a shared label. Although Shonan is not uniquely defined by administrative boundaries, it functioned as a “common language” referable in conversation. An interviewee’s comment, “There is no actual place name called ‘Shonan.’ And yet, everyone understands ‘Shonan’... I feel there is a Shonan that everyone is creating together” (Tourist No. 15), is consistent with the view that the label is established not by administrative boundaries but through collectively constructed meanings among actors (Wakabayashi et al., 2018). Because brand management is not centrally controlled by any single actor in a multi-actor context, distributing a unified definition top-down is difficult. Instead, the findings suggest that integrating multiple resources such as comparative evaluations and personal memories supports the emergence of a socially shareable world of meaning as a shared label. Furthermore, the shared label is not a final outcome in itself but provides a basis for subsequent interaction, thereby connecting to the next stage, engagement with regional platforms (P2).

***Proposition 1: Comparative evaluation and reflexive meaning activation positively impact on the formation of a shared label.***

P2 addresses the relationship between the shared label and actors’ engagement with regional platforms. As demonstrated in the previous section, actors often began interacting through recurring contact points in the place, including everyday conversations in shops, connections formed through referrals, and repeated participation in events and hobby communities. The critical point is that the shared label functions not as a tool for defining administrative boundaries, but as a shared term referable in conversation. By providing a shared point of reference for “what is being referred to” and “how the place is being characterized,” the shared label makes it easier for actors to start conversations, make introductions, and invite others to participate. In this sense, the shared label serves as a cue that lowers the entry cost for interaction.

The previous section introduced a regional platform as an interaction infrastructure for place branding and highlighted the difference between a platform that merely exists and one that functions through repeated interactions (Nagao et al., 2022). We describe such functioning as engagement with regional platforms. In this case, engagement was facilitated through three recurring forms: everyday conversations in shops, connections formed through referrals, and repeated participation in events and hobby communities. When the shared label serves as a shared point of reference and a cue, informal talk, introductions, and invitations become more likely. As a result, actors are more likely to enter and sustain interaction through these recurring contact points, thereby facilitating engagement with regional platforms.

***Proposition 2: The shared label functions as a cue necessary for initiating interaction, thereby facilitating engagement with regional platforms.***

P3 addresses how engagement with regional platforms becomes sustained and how this sustained engagement is associated with everydayization. Previous research highlights the need to distinguish between a platform that merely exists and one that functions through repeated interactions, and suggests that repeated contact points can serve as a starting point for value creation (Nagao et al., 2022). The interview data in this study likewise illustrate that when actors continue to engage through repeatable contact points, engagement becomes embedded in everyday life, resulting in everydayization.

In this study, everydayization was observed in two forms. In normalization, special experiences become ordinary through daily routines. In privileged access to the extraordinary, actors experience value in low-cost, repeated access to experiences that remain extraordinary for outsiders. Across both forms, recurring routines and low-cost repeated access made engagement easier to sustain, thereby turning a prior sense of specialness into everyday experience.

***Proposition 3: When engagement with regional platforms is sustained through repeatable contact points, involvement with the place is more likely to transition into everydayization.***

P4 presents a causal relationship in which everydayization is associated with two transformation mechanisms, self-transformation and forming a sense of home, thereby strengthening actors' bond with the place. As demonstrated in the previous section, everydayization involves more than increased frequency of contact. It reflects sustained engagement through repeatable contact points, which is reflected in changes in everyday decision-making and self-understanding. It also contributes to forming a sense of home, expressed as a sense of return, safety, and calmness.

Place branding research has treated attachment as a key mediator linking antecedents to outcomes (Swain et al., 2023), yet how such attachment is formed through co-creation remains insufficiently specified. Recent work likewise calls for clarifying the mechanisms through which attachment-related bonds, such as self-transformation and forming a sense of home, develop (Shimul et al., 2024). Building on these discussions, our findings specify a causal chain in which everydayization contributes to self-transformation and forming a sense of home through accumulated, concrete experiences. These findings clarify how sustained engagement shapes actors' attachment to the place.

***Proposition 4: Everydayization facilitates self-transformation and forming a sense of home, thereby deepening the bond with the place.***

P5 presents how the bond with a place, deepened through self-transformation and forming a sense of home, is translated into observable brand resonance outcomes. In place branding research, outcomes have often been captured through tourism-oriented indicators such as revisit intention and word-of-mouth (Swain et al., 2023). However, in a multi-actor context, brand resonance also involves active externalization behaviors by diverse actors, including locals, newcomers, entrepreneurs, and tourists. Our findings suggest that as attachment-related bonds deepen, actors become more likely to externalize the place's value through behaviors such as intention to recommend, revisit and residency intention, and stewardship.

As demonstrated in the previous section, self-transformation, in which the relationship with the place becomes integrated into the self, can motivate continued involvement and higher-cost contributions. Forming a sense of home likewise supports continuity-oriented behaviors, reflecting a sense of return and relief. These patterns extend prior work that treats destination attachment as a key mediator linking antecedents to outcomes by specifying how attachment-related bonds are expressed as concrete actions in a place branding process (Shimul et al., 2024).

At the same time, a deeper bond does not produce a single outcome. The findings indicate that different forms of brand resonance involve different costs and requirements. While intention to recommend often takes the form of individual communication, stewardship typically requires participation in local organizations and community arrangements (e.g., neighborhood

associations) or the creation of opportunities. Which outcome becomes more salient depends not only on psychological bonds but also on the opportunity structure in which each actor is situated, such as their roles, available time, and access to contact points or local organizations. In this way, P5 clarifies the process through which deepening bonds are translated into multiple forms of brand resonance outcomes, rather than being reduced to a single tourism-derived indicator (Swain et al., 2023).

***Proposition 5: As the bond with a place deepens through self-transformation and forming a sense of home, intention to recommend, revisit and residency intention, and stewardship are more likely to manifest as brand resonance behaviors. However, the specific form of these behaviors depends on the opportunity structure in which each actor is situated.***

## **5-2. Implications**

### **Theoretical implications**

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in developing the three-stage co-creation model that advances the theory of the brand co-creation process in place branding. In particular, the model clarifies two key black boxes identified in the literature: how regional platforms become functional through repeated interactions and how attachment-related bonds are translated into brand resonance behaviors.

First, the model explains how regional platforms function in a multi-actor place branding context. Previous research has emphasized that platforms do not create value simply by existing; however, it remains unclear how repeated interactions turn platforms into functioning interaction infrastructures (Nagao et al., 2022). Our model specifies this activation mechanism by showing how a shared label emerges from comparative evaluation and reflexive meaning activation (P1) and how this shared label lowers the entry cost for interaction, thereby facilitating engagement with regional platforms through recurring contact points (P2). The model further identifies sustained engagement through repeatable contact points as the condition under which engagement becomes embedded in everyday life as everydayization (P3). By specifying these turning points, the study moves platform discussions from a descriptive distinction (existence versus functioning) toward a process explanation of how functioning is achieved.

Second, the model explains how attachment-related bonds are translated into brand resonance behaviors. Prior work has positioned destination attachment as a key mediator linking antecedents to outcomes; however the mechanisms through which attachment is formed through co-creation and expressed as concrete outcomes have remained insufficiently specified (Swain et al., 2023). Our model clarifies this transformation by showing how everydayization contributes to self-transformation and forming a sense of home (P4), and how these bonds are externalized as intention to recommend, revisit and residency intention, and stewardship (P5). Thus, the study provides a process account of how attachment-related bonds become observable brand resonance behaviors in a multi-actor place branding context.

### **Managerial implications**

Practically, the three-stage co-creation model suggests that practitioners can foster brand resonance by designing repeatable interactions that make regional platforms functional and by preparing conditions that translate attachment-related bonds into concrete behaviors.

First, practitioners should enable a shared label that actors can use as a shared term referable in conversation rather than relying on top-down efforts to fix boundaries with unified definitions. In this study, the shared label supported entry into the interaction by making it easier for actors to talk about the place and invite others to participate. Accordingly, actors such as local governments, DMOs, local media, and businesses can expand engagement by increasing referable vocabulary and encouraging narratives that draw on diverse comparative evaluations and lived experiences.

Second, practitioners should design recurring contact points that make engagement with regional platforms repeatable and sustainable. Practitioners can support repeatability by

prioritizing low-cost entry, arranging regular opportunities that invite returns, and creating simple pathways for referrals and introductions. Practitioners can draw on the recurring forms observed in this study, including everyday conversations in shops, connections formed through referrals, and repeated participation in events and hobby communities.

Third, practitioners should treat everydayization as a key step linking sustained engagement to subsequent bonds. Everydayization emerged when engagement through repeatable contact points was sustained, either through normalization or privileged access to the extraordinary. Practically, this suggests designing conditions that allow repeated, low-cost participation to fit into everyday life, for example, through off-peak opportunities, integration into daily routes, and short, repeatable forms of involvement.

Fourth, practitioners should recognize that brand resonance behavior takes multiple forms and that higher-cost outcomes, such as stewardship, require participation pathways. While the intention to recommend often takes the form of individual communication, stewardship typically involves participation in local organizations and community arrangements, such as neighborhood associations or the creation of opportunities. This suggests providing stepped pathways from small contributions to more sustained roles and making roles visible so that actors can participate without overburdening a few actors.

## **6. Conclusion**

This study proposed the three-stage co-creation model to explain how actors reach brand resonance in a multi-actor place branding context. The model clarifies how regional platforms function through repeated interactions and how attachment-related bonds translate into brand resonance behaviors.

The model organizes this process into a three-stage sequence. In the antecedent stage, comparative evaluation and reflexive meaning activation make place meanings salient and shareable for actors, contributing to the formation of a shared label as a shared term that can be referable to in conversation. In the transformation stage, the shared label facilitates engagement with regional platforms through recurring contact points, including everyday conversations in shops, connections formed through referrals, and repeated participation in events and hobby communities. When engagement is sustained through repeatable contact points, it is more likely to become embedded in everyday life. In the outcome stage, everydayization is associated with self-transformation and forming a sense of home, and these attachment-related bonds are translated into brand resonance behaviors, including the intention to recommend, revisit and residency intention, and stewardship.

These results offer two core theoretical contributions. First, the model specifies how regional platforms function through repeated interactions by identifying the turning points that connect a shared label, engagement through recurring contact points, and sustained engagement through repeatable contact points. Second, the model specifies how attachment-related bonds develop through co-creation and how they are translated into observable brand resonance behaviors by linking everydayization to self-transformation and forming a sense of home, and then to intention to recommend, revisit and residency intention, and stewardship. By integrating these mechanisms within a single process model, this study advances a theory of brand co-creation process in place branding.

These results also have practical implications for place branding in multi-actor contexts. Practitioners can foster brand resonance by enabling shared labels that support entry into interactions and designing recurring contact points that make engagement with regional platforms repeatable. Practitioners can further support the translation into brand resonance behaviors by designing conditions that sustain engagement and make everydayization more likely while providing participation pathways for higher-cost behaviors, such as stewardship.

Finally, this study has several limitations. First, as an exploratory qualitative study based on a single case, the proposed model is not intended for statistical generalization (Gioia et al., 2012; Noble & Mitchell, 2016; Wiesche et al., 2017). Second, because the interview data were primarily obtained from actors already engaged with Shonan, future research should compare cases where engagement does not deepen or translate into brand resonance behaviors. Third,

future research should strengthen and refine the model through comparative and longitudinal designs and through quantitative or mixed-methods research that tests the process relationships and clarifies boundary conditions, including possible adverse effects such as exclusivity or exhaustion.

In conclusion, this study makes a theoretically meaningful contribution by proposing the three-stage co-creation model that advances a theory of the brand co-creation process in place branding. Future research should refine this model and clarify its boundary conditions through comparative and longitudinal inquiries.

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### **Appendix**

1st-order Concepts	2nd-order Themes
“Unlike Tokyo or other places, it’s calm... it’s not stiff. I feel like everyone lives quite lightly here” (Local, No.1)	Comparative evaluation

<p>"I feel a sense of peace... <u>I don't feel that atmosphere of being chased by something hectic like in the city.</u>" (Newcomer, No.11)</p>	
<p>"<u>It's kind of different from the city,</u> or... they aren't obsessed with money, I guess. It feels like they live for the sake of enjoyment..." (Local, No.2)</p>	
<p>"<u>When I was living in Kawasaki... there wasn't a spare second. But people here...</u> it's more like, having a fulfilling personal life is more important..." (Newcomer, No.9)</p>	
<p>"What I thought was <u>clearly different from Tokyo is that there are so many people living in their own way...</u> I felt like I wanted to become friends with those kinds of people." (Newcomer, No.14)</p>	
<p>"<u>In the city center, it's so noisy and exhausting... but if you go too far into the suburbs and it's hard to get to the city, that's also inconvenient... so it feels just right.</u> The proximity to the city center is, unexpectedly, an element that makes it easy to live here." (Newcomer, No.10)</p>	
<p>"You can get to Shinagawa or Tokyo quickly, in about two hours. And if you go the other way, you can get to places with plenty of nature, like the Izu or Hakone. <u>So it's like a middle point...</u> it's a place that's very easy to go anywhere from." (Newcomer, No.14)</p>	
<p>"What's great about Shonan is that the quality of the 'ordinary' is quite high... <u>in Tokyo... you can't live a healthy life unless you think,</u> 'I'm going to do something special today.' In Shonan, you can just live normally, there are amazing restaurants and you can do sports..." (Newcomer, No.6)</p>	
<p>"When I first got a Shonan license plate, I thought it didn't really matter, but <u>when everyone told me, 'That's so cool,' it made me feel a bit better</u>" (Local, No.8)</p>	<p>Reflexive meaning activation</p>
<p>"After graduating, <u>people said things like, 'Wow, you were going to such a great place'...</u> and within myself, <u>I feel really proud of it.</u>" (Local, No.1)</p>	
<p>"At Southern Beach... <u>you can see Eboshi Rock, which appears in the lyrics of Southern All Stars.</u> It's like, 'Oh, there it is! Eboshi Rock!'" (Tourist, No. 4)</p>	
<p>"Shonan, as expected, the image is centered around the sea and Enoshima... <u>from TV and all sorts of information, the image I had was, like, sparkling.</u>" (Newcomer, No.9)</p>	
<p>"My high school was in Shichirigahama... <u>I used to commute on the Enoden line and watch the sea every single day...</u> Even in college, I sometimes get off the train at Fujisawa, even when I don't need to... just because I want to remember those high school days" (Local, No.1)</p>	
<p>"<u>Memories like, 'I used to hang out here'...</u> everything combines together to give it a somewhat different, special feeling." (Tourist, No.15)</p>	
<p>"Something my university friend told me was quite memorable... <u>there is no actual place name called 'Shonan,' you know. And yet, everyone</u></p>	<p>Shared label</p>

<p><u>understands 'Shonan'...</u> I feel there is a Shonan that everyone is creating together.” (Tourist, No.15)</p>	
<p>“I don’t know the definition... but since <u>everyone is constantly saying 'Shonan, Shonan,'</u> I just assumed that for now, the place where I live is probably Shonan.” (Newcomer, No.13)</p>	
<p>“<u>Hiratsuka isn't Shonan... Honestly, I think of Kamakura as Shonan...</u> even though the license plate for Kamakura is Yokohama. While for Hiratsuka and places quite far into the western part of the prefecture, they are categorized as Shonan. But for that side, I don’t really get a ‘Shonan’ feeling, I guess.” (Local, No.1)</p>	
<p>“Shonan seems broad, but it’s actually very narrow... <u>it’s only along Route 134... that’s my personal feeling</u>” (Newcomer, No.14)</p>	
<p>“<u>I don’t think of Kamakura, Zushi, or Hayama as Shonan anymore...</u> there’s this sense that everyone admires the ‘Shonan’ brand... <u>even though the public says this area is part of it</u>” (Local, No.7)</p>	
<p>“Even if you say Shonan, it’s broad... <u>in my own mind, Chigasaki equals Shonan,</u> that’s the image.” (Tourist, No.4)</p>	
<p>“I think you could probably say <u>it’s Shonan from Misaki Port in Hayama all the way to Odawara...</u> because the coastline just continues the whole way...” (Newcomer, No.6)</p>	
<p>“My wife is more ‘Shonan-like’... every morning, she does walking or surfing. ...<u>She made a lot of ‘sea friends’...</u> she often goes out with her surfing buddies.” (Newcomer, No.11)</p>	<p>Engaging with regional platforms</p>
<p>“Speaking of shops... there aren’t any chain stores. Each one is small, but there are many shops where they’re doing what they personally want to do... Basically, <u>everyone is friendly, and rather than wanting to do business, I feel like they’re doing it because they want to talk to people.</u> ...Yeah, there isn’t much of a commercial feel.” (Newcomer, No.5)</p>	
<p>“The staff are friendly... I feel that the shops themselves are on very good terms with each other. ...<u>Interactions like, ‘It’s our day off today, so I came by,’ really warmed my heart... I guess that’s what triggered me to feel, ‘I love this area.’</u>” (Newcomer, No. 16).</p>	
<p>“not just a procedure of looking at and buying products, but <u>a place where you can have small talk</u>” (Newcomer, No. 10)</p>	
<p>“It’s an open atmosphere... and at izakayas... <u>there are older guys who just talk to you... I really liked that kind of friendliness, too.</u>” (Newcomer No.14)</p>	
<p>“<u>Breaking down the wall is, after all, through talking,</u> saying things like ‘I came with my family’ or ‘My kid goes to junior high’... If they accept you just once like that, you’re already welcome.” (Newcomer No.9)</p>	

<p>“Becoming friends with shop people and such... Shonan is compact, so <u>there are quite a lot of acquaintances. You’re connected somewhere... You get connected just by living.</u>” (Local, No. 1)</p>	
<p>“In Shonan, the whole town gets along very well. ...<u>When I go to a shop, locals often just pop in, chat, and leave... and it’s the same at the beach.</u> They meet, talk, and head home, just like that.” (Newcomer No.5)</p>	
<p>“<u>Someone I met in Shonan invited me to do beach yoga together,</u> so I participated in an event.” (Tourist, No. 12)</p>	
<p>“Through friend connections, <u>I’ve made other friends from there through things like Shonan running connections...</u> it’s like it went from a sea connection to a running connection.” (Local No.8)</p>	
<p>“There was a person around 40 years old wearing a Southern All Stars T-shirt, you see. ...So, <u>in a ‘By any chance, do you like them too?’ kind of way... I made a friend.</u>” (Tourist No.4)</p>	
<p>“<u>There are so many events. Even this month, there’s a marché happening somewhere every weekend.</u> ...I like the feeling of, like, people from specialty shops coming there.” (Newcomer No.5)</p>	
<p>“<u>I went to something like a marché...</u> they sell all sorts of things, from food to accessories and stuff. Like things made at home. I think I went about two weeks ago.” (Newcomer No.13)</p>	
<p>“Things like morning markets, or <u>my acquaintance’s shop holds that kind of event once a month, so I try going to those.</u>” (Local No.8)</p>	
<p>“<u>It was a process of making it not a special place anymore...</u> The feeling that it’s ordinary and natural became so ingrained that I finally reached the point of actually living here.” (Newcomer, No. 6).</p>	Everydayization
<p>“Now that I’ve started living here, <u>rather than it being a special place,</u> the sea is always just a 5 or 6-minute walk away, so <u>I think it has become my everyday life.</u>” (Newcomer, No. 9)</p>	
<p>“I felt like, maybe if I work hard starting now, I could actually live there... <u>Because visiting for fun and living there every day were two different things.</u>” (Tourist No.12)</p>	
<p>“Rather than there being one big trigger, <u>it’s a feeling of gradually falling in love with it...</u> At first, I didn’t particularly like the sea in Chigasaki that much, but... <u>it became a place where I feel like I want to go every day.</u>” (Newcomer No.16)</p>	
<p>“<u>Once it gets dark, there’s seriously no one around...</u> when I’m on my motorcycle, there are seriously no cars either, and <u>I can ride while having the sea all to myself.</u>” (Local No.1)</p>	
<p>“We hang out when we’re free in the middle of the night... late at night, <u>it’s just us students having Lalaport (the shopping mall) all to ourselves.</u>” (Local No.2)</p>	

<p>“Things like fireworks... the fact that <u>you can see them perfectly even from a little distance away is nice, I think.</u> ...The Hakone Ekiden, too. They run right there, you know. I always go to cheer them on.” (Newcomer No.11)</p>	
<p>“The safety has probably improved in the last 5 or 10 years... until then, it was an area where biker gangs would hang out... recently, tourists have increased so much and it feels like there are people around until late at night... so <u>while part of me feels a bit lonely, another part is like, ‘Ah, things have changed.’</u>” (Tourist No.15)</p>	
<p>“To be honest, at first I thought about living in Chigasaki. ...But while researching various things and walking around myself, I thought, <u>‘This isn’t a place to live.’ Using it like a second home... that would be the most ideal.</u>” (Tourist No.4)</p>	
<p>“When I lived near Tokyo, I used to pack my schedule very tight... but in Shonan, that’s really not a thing. There are so many people living just as they are, naturally... that kind of flow of time starts to emerge. <u>Since coming here, I don’t really make schedules much anymore...</u> like, if it’s sunny today, ‘I’ll go for a walk on the beach.’ <u>It just happens almost unconsciously.</u>” (Newcomer No.14)</p>	Self-transformation
<p>“There are many shops that are conscious of things that are good for physical health. There are many organic shops too. You naturally become healthy. <u>It’s like your consciousness gets pulled in that direction in a good way.</u>” (Newcomer No.16)</p>	
<p>“They don’t really care about your background... instead of what kind of company you work for or how you ended up here, it’s more like, ‘Oh, you like yoga?’ They judge you based on the person they see right then and there. Until now... at the company, there was a lot of comparing, and it was really hard. Because they interacted with me in a way that wasn’t like that, <u>I felt like... I was able to like myself without those titles.</u>” (Tourist No.12)</p>	
<p>“There are many people wearing colorful clothes... being able to express yourself without worrying about your favorite colors... It’s cool. <u>I wanted to soak up that vibe too, so I bought a bright blue dress.</u> Conversely, when I go back to Nagoya, I think, ‘Oh, do I wonder if I’m standing out too much?’” (Tourist No.12)</p>	
<p>“Mentally, <u>I feel like I’ve become much more open-minded</u> ...A sense of emotional leeway? I’ve become able to feel that a little bit.” (Newcomer No.9)</p>	
<p>“<u>I really feel how comfortable it is when I go back... like, ‘I’m home.’</u> ...When I pass through the ticket gate, it’s that feeling of <u>‘I’m back,’ like I feel relieved.</u>” (Tourist No.15)</p>	
<p>“Every time I go there to visit... I guess there’s this feeling where the moment <u>I arrive at the station, I want to say, ‘I’m home.’</u>” (Tourist No.12)</p>	
<p>“<u>The sense of relief when I get back is just incredible.</u>” (Newcomer No.13)</p>	

<p>“When I come back and step out onto Chigasaki Station, and I breathe in that good air, I’m like, ‘<u>Ah, I’m back. It’s calming, and I feel a sense of relief.</u>” (Newcomer No.16)</p>	
<p>“Because I absolutely adore Shonan, <u>I can’t help but boast about it a little...</u>” (Local No.1)</p>	<p>Intention to recommend</p>
<p>“Like bakeries in Oiso... <u>I strongly recommend them...If a friend comes, I think about how I want to take them here and there.</u>” (Local No.8)</p>	
<p>“If someone is tired of the city, <u>I might say, ‘Come visit Shonan, come on over!’</u>” (Newcomer No.13)</p>	
<p>“The thing about Shonan life being good... <u>I hope it resonates with those it’s meant to resonate with, so... I end up taking videos of it.</u>” (Newcomer No.5)</p>	
<p>“I’m thinking that I want to go on a working holiday, so I might not continue living here for many years straight, but <u>Shonan is the first place where I’ve thought, ‘Even if I go outside once, I want to come back here again.’</u>” (Newcomer No.16)</p>	
<p>“I don’t have that kind of ‘Wow!’ emotion, but if you asked me if I want to live anywhere other than Shonan, I’d say <u>I don’t want to live anywhere else.</u>” (Newcomer No.6)</p>	
<p>“My family and I rent a car sometimes... I’ll say, ‘I’ll go for a short drive before I return it,’ and I usually head to Chigasaki or Shonan... <u>It’s not hundreds of times, but anyway, I just go there all the time.</u>” (Tourist No.15)</p>	
<p>“Since my late 20s, <u>I had an image of living in Shonan and would go out there on weekends... like 40 or 50 times a year... almost every week.</u>” (Newcomer No.6)</p>	
<p>“<u>I actively participate in the neighborhood association...</u> I thought the hand-written attendance sheets were inefficient, so <u>I created a digital version on my computer...</u> I make sure to attend the association meetings” (Newcomer No.11)</p>	<p>Stewardship</p>
<p>“The initial trigger was wondering how the money was being used... so I took a look. Then, as I expected, there were a lot of elderly people. While thinking that they must be facing various issues, <u>I’ve been feeling like I want to do something if there’s anything I can do.</u>” (Newcomer No.11)</p>	
<p>“<u>There’s a volunteer thing like a computer class...</u> the kind where you deal with the elderly. Since I have some free time now, <u>I’m thinking of doing it.</u>” (Newcomer No.11)</p>	
<p>“I wish there were something to attract younger people... since I think they come here for work, <u>I’d like to be able to create those kinds of opportunities in the future.</u>” (Local, No. 13)</p>	

Source: prepared and translated by the author based on interviews