Political Brand Engagement and Positioning: An Integrated Framework

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INTRODUCTION

The exploration of branding and politics continues to be an inescapable phenomenon and developed into a specialised topic of political marketing (Lilleker & Moufahim, 2022). Further, the application of branding concepts and frameworks to the political setting remains a contemporary field of study for practitioners, researchers and academics due to the abundant theoretical implications and managerial opportunities derived from research in this area (Lloyd, 2022; Pich et al., 2020; Scammell, 2015). Indeed, the diversity and abundance of research on different types of political brands in international settings has expanded and continues to capture the imagination and curiosity of multiple stakeholders including academics, researchers-strategists, politicians, political parties and most importantly voters to name but a few (Baines et al., 2014; Marland et al., 2017; Newman & Newman, 2022). Nevertheless, two related priority issues continue to represent under-explored areas of study supported by explicit calls for further understanding. Firstly, investigating how voters engage with brands continues to be a key issue for marketers and brand managers within and beyond the realms of political marketing (Boleat, 2023; Poorrezaei et al., 2023). Secondly, examining how a political brand manages and communicates an intended position representing 'what it stands for', versus the realised position brought to life in the mind of voters (Baines et al., 2014; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009; Pich et al., 2020; Smith & French, 2009). In order to frame the exploration, the engagement and positioning associated with political brands, this chapter of adopts intrinsically linked concepts such as consumer brand engagement (CBE), brand identity and brand image, which serve as appropriate theoretical lenses (Bolton & Saxena-Iyer, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011; Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Gambetti et al., 2015; Hollebeek, 2011b; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Leckie et al., 2016). This in turn will satisfy demands for a deeper understanding into engagement and positioning yet also explore the 'inter-relationships' between the concepts of CBE, brand identity and brand image (Hollebeek, 2011a). Investigating how voters engage and interpret political brands equips marketers and brand managers with the knowledge to devise strategies and tactics to strengthen existing behaviours, enhance long-term relationships and maintain desired positioning.

This chapter adheres to four objectives. First, the chapter presents the different typologies of political brands. Second, the chapter discusses the interactions and relationships between stakeholders and political brands through the theoretical construct of CBE. Third, the chapter presents the antecedents-drivers of consumer (political) brand engagement namely the concepts of political brand identity and political brand image. The chapter concludes with two short empirical case studies to illustrate application of the key constructs. Case one focuses on political brand positioning and identity in the British Crown Dependencies of Jersey. Case two focuses on presenting an integrated political brand engagement and positioning framework in the context of Pakistan with a specific focus on the PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) party brand. The British Crown Dependencies of Jersey and Pakistan were chosen as they represent two under-explored yet dynamic contexts. Further, the two cases were in no way selected as comparisons but served to illustrate two unique international settings and home to different types of political brands. Finally, the two cases demonstrate the transfer potential of branding concepts to politics however acknowledges that core branding theory may need to be tailored to address the unique settings and contexts. The chapter concludes by presenting the political brand engagement and positioning framework (Figure 7.8), underpinned by the related yet distinct concepts of political brand identity, political brand image and CBE. Strategists and researchers should adopt the Political Brand Engagement and Positioning Framework as a mechanism to capture the engagement and/or positioning associated with political brands particularly from a multi-stakeholder perspective. Further, the chapter argues that it is important to routinely audit and track the positioning and engagement of political brands as this may reveal coherency or misalignment of desired and actual positioning, which strategists can respond and develop strategies to maintain alignment or devise repositioning-engagement strategies (Baines et al., 1999; Collins & Butler, 2002; Pich, 2022; Smith, 2005).

POLITICAL BRANDING

The exploration of brands and branding continues to be an inescapable phenomenon and research topic (Bastos & Levy, 2012; Richelieu, 2018). Further, research demonstrates that there is no limit to the application of branding concepts and frameworks to different contexts and settings. For example, branding principles can be transferred to products, services, people, institutions, religions, monarchies, campaigns, nations, cities, destinations, philosophies and politics (Bendisch et al., 2013; Mirza, 2016; Needham & Smith, 2015; Richelieu, 2014; Salzman, 2013; Speed et al., 2015; Zenker, 2014). Thus 'branding is everywhere and everything is a brand' (Richelieu, 2018, p. 354). However, it should be recognised that the transfer of branding concepts and frameworks to diverse settings is not a simple straightforward process and the branding principles may require adaptation and refinement to reflect the unique environment (Speed et al., 2015). Nevertheless, brands are more than names, images and logos (Shepherd, 2005). Brands are amalgamations of multiple tangible and intangible dimensions strategically designed to stand out from competitors, communicate a consistent message and build long-term relationships with their target markets (Marland et al., 2017).

One area of research that has witnessed advancement is the development of political branding. Further, the study of branding and politics has expanded in sophistication and scope over the last 30 years and has become a specialised area of political marketing (Pich et al., 2020; Scammell, 2015; Speed et al., 2015). Brand-related principles applied to the political environment enable parties, politicians and campaign groups to identify desired positioning, create, manage and communicate an envisaged identity, tailor campaigns-messages to distinct groups and stakeholders, which in turn provides a means of differentiation from political competitors (Baines et al., 2014; Lin & Himelboim, 2019; Marder et al., 2018; Nielsen, 2016). Indeed, political brands need to ensure they are perceived as authentic, united, engaging, trustworthy and understood in the desired manner by multiple stakeholders for success (Marland, 2016; Marwick & Boyd, 2010; Speed et al., 2015). Nevertheless, there are many related yet distinct typologies of political brands (examples outlined in Table 7.1) and this represents the complexity and multifaceted nature of political brands (Pich & Newman, 2020).

Indeed, some progress has been made in political branding in terms of conceptualising different typologies in diverse contexts such as Canada, USA, Australia, India, Iceland, Indonesia and British Crown Dependency of Guernsey (Armannsdottir et al., 2019; Falkowski & Jabłonska, 2019; Jain & Ganesh, 2019; Marland & Wagner, 2020). Existing research has tended to focus on 'established' rather than with new/recent political brands often with an emphasis on traditional electoral 'party systems' opposed to independent 'non-party' settings. Further,

Table 7.1   Different Typologies of Political Brands

Political Brand Typologies	Example
Corporate	National and international level such as the Democratic Party (US), The Labour Party (UK), Bharatiya Janata Party (India).
Local-Sub	Regional level yet affiliated with the corporate political brands such as Nottingham Labour (UK), New York Republican State Committee (USA), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Women Wing (Pakistan).
Politician-Personal	Politicians-personal brands of individual politicians/candidates at national level, for example, President Macron (France), Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern (New Zealand), Chief Minister Gavin St Pier (Guernsey), or regional-local level such as Members of Parliament, Assembly Ministers, Councillors or local representatives.
Coalitions-Groups	Multi-party governments at national level such as the Republic of Iceland, Grand Coalition in Germany and international level such as the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats For Europe in the European Parliament.
Political Movements	Political campaign groups at local, national and international level that are independent yet endorse political parties, politicians or campaigns to achieve a common goal such as Momentum (UK), Greta Thunberg's fight against climate change or Greenpeace.
Pop-up Brands	Created around campaigns and political events such as 'Yes Scotland' referendum group in the 2014 Scottish Independence Referendum, 'Vote Leave' campaign group that supported a leave vote in the 2016 UK EU membership referendum.
Political Events	Campaign activities during elections as local, national and international level such as 2021 London Mayoral Election (UK), 2020 Presidential Elections (USA) and 2019 European Parliamentary Elections (EU).

existing studies have investigated the typologies of political brands through a distinct theoretical lens. These include brand identity, brand image, brand reputation, co-branding, brand equity, self-branding, brand communities, positioning, orientation often from an internal strategist perspective and/or from an external voter perspective (Pich & Newman, 2020; Lin & Himelboim, 2019; Marder et al., 2018; Nielsen, 2016; Van Steenburg & Guzmán, 2019). Irrespective of the theoretical construct, what seems to be clear and the common factor across studies is that they all aim to investigate how political brands are positioned by political stakeholders and how citizens interpret and perceive the communicated political brands (Baines et al., 2014; Nielsen, 2016; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009). Therefore, political branding 'is an evolution of image management' (Marland & Flanagan, 2014, p. 952) and a strategic process of communicating a clear vision brought to life through physical and intangible dimensions and touchpoints (Marland et al., 2017).

Despite advancements in political branding research, there continues to be explicit calls for the additional understanding of different types of political brands from different perspectives and in diverse settings and contexts. More specifically, future research should examine two important characteristics such as how citizens *perceive* and *engage* with political brands particularly from a 'voter centric

perspective' (Ahmed et al., 2015; Nielsen, 2016; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009). This will build a convincing account into the relationship between political brands and citizens (Needham & Smith, 2015). This in turn will address calls for more insight into diverse cases of political brands and consider distinct theoretical lenses as this will continue the develop of the subject area (O'Cass & Voola, 2011; Pich et al., 2020; Rutter et al., 2015; Scammell, 2015; Simons, 2016). However, the next step is *to* conceptualise how consumers-citizens *engage* with brands followed by conceptualising how to investigate the *perceptions* of brands.

POLITICAL (CONSUMER) BRAND ENGAGEMENT

The exploration of how consumers (or citizens) engage with their brands continues to be a priority issue for marketers and brand managers (Gambetti et al., 2015). Consumers interact with thousands of brands on a daily basis; however, they only develop an 'intense connection' and relationship with a small number of these tangible-intangible entities (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018). Consumers are fluid in terms of their relationships with brands due to increased competition, fading loyalty and

identification and dynamic markets (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Van Doorn et al., 2010). Further, the notion of 'engagement' and how consumers 'engage' with brands continues to attract interest and promise (Halaszovich & Jaques, 2017; Raed et al., 2018). Indeed, understanding how consumers engage with brands equips marketers and brand managers with the knowledge to devise strategies and tactics to strengthen existing behaviours, enhance long-term relationships and maintain desired positioning (Raed et al., 2018).

According to Hollebeek et al. (2014), the engagement process can be uncovered by investigating a two-way interactive relationship between the subject and object. More specifically, the consumer is seen as the 'engagement subject' and the brand is defined as the 'engagement objective' (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Halaszovich & Jaques, 2017; Verhoef et al., 2010). In addition, the majority of studies frame their research around 'engagement contexts', for example, technology, services, politics and psychology, which in turn provides a focus for the subject, object and investigator (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018). Therefore, understanding the relationship between the consumer and brand grounded in a specific context will reveal insight into the engagement process and highlight how these interactions between the object, subject and context develop over time (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Halaszovich & Jaques, 2017; Hollebeek, 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Verhoef et al., 2010). However, engagement is a complex and multifaceted concept (Hollebeek, 2011). Further, engagement is not a new construct within the marketing literature with origins yet interest in this area continues to capture the imagination of researchers across diverse disciplines including psychology, sociology, organisational behaviour, brand management and political science (Brodie et al., 2011; Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Hollebeek, 2011; Powell, 2016; Raed et al., 2018). Indeed, engagement is often conceptualised differently in studies and contexts (Dessart et al., 2015; Halaszovich & Jaques, 2017) and often approached from different perspectives (Brodie et al., 2011; Raed et al., 2018). This has resulted is continued confusion and a lack of consensus with defining the concept of engagement (Brodie et al., 2011; Dessart et al., 2015; Machado et al., 2019).

DIMENSIONALITY VARIATION

Indeed, there remains 'variation in the dimensionality of the concept' of engagement (France et al., 2016, p. 121). In its simplest form, engagement is often constructed via three dimensions including cognition, emotion and/or behaviour (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Further, existing research has defined engagement as unidimensional (focusing on cognition, emotion or behaviour) alternatively multidimensional (cognition, emotion and behaviour) (Brodie et al., 2011). Therefore, irrespective of whether a single or multiple dimensional approach is adopted, the majority of studies concur that engagement is underpinned by cognition, emotion and/or behaviour (Ahn & Back, 2018; France et al., 2016; Gambetti et al., 2015; Gong, 2018; Halaszovich & Jaques, 2017). What seems to be distinct is the variation of different theoretical lenses blended with the engagement literature, which has resulted in the development of numerous similar yet distinct concepts (Hollebeek et al., 2014). For example, we have seen the development of customer engagement, customer brand engagement, CBE, online engagement, brand community engagement and advertising engagement (Bowden, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011; Calder et al., 2009; Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; France et al., 2016; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Leckie et al., 2016; Raed et al., 2018; Vale & Fernandes, 2018). However, existing studies acknowledge that there is 'semantic confusion' (Hollebeek, 2011) with engagement research and 'similar conceptual scope despite employing differing concept designations' (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 152) particularly with the concepts of customer brand engagement and CBE.

Customer brand engagement emphasises the relationship between the customer and brand (France et al., 2016; Halaszovich & Jaques, 2017) and focuses on a 'customer's motivational, brand related and context-dependent state characterised by specific levels of cognitive, affective and behavioural activities' (Ahn & Back, 2018, p. 145). Further, customer brand engagement acknowledges a psychological, motivational state concerning the individual and brand/organisation, which is manifested through a customer's actions, sentimental attachment and informed reasoning (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Gambetti et al., 2015). Similarly, CBE is recognised as a dynamic relational process (Gambetti et al., 2015) and focuses on a 'consumer's positively valenced (feeling of quality) cognitive, emotional and behavioural brand-related activity during, or related to, specific consumer/brand interactions' (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 151). However, what about negative experiences and behaviours and how does this relate to engagement (Gong, 2018)? In addition, CBE is considered a 'multidimensional concept...which plays a central role in the

process of relational exchange where other relational concepts are engagement antecedents and/or consequences in iterative engagement processes within the brand community' (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 151). Nevertheless, both customer and consumer brand engagement appear to comprise rationalised interest related to the brand under study, emotional subjective feelings associated with the brand and behavioural exchanges between the individual and brand (Ahn & Back, 2018; Brodie et al., 2011; Halaszovich & Jaques, 2017; Machado et al., 2019). Further, it is important to note that the customer-consumer engagement process 'does not follow an orderly sequential progression of phases over time' (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018, p. 25) and this suggests that all three dimensions have equal importance and relevance. However, CBE is considered more comprehensive and multidimensional than customer brand engagement (Hollebeek et al., 2014; Leckie et al., 2016; Machado et al., 2019).

DRIVERS AND CONSEQUENCES

Irrespective of definition and dimensionality, existing research has focused on 'drivers-antecedents' and 'consequences' of CBE. For example, examining an individual's involvement (Leckie et al., 2016; Raed et al., 2018), participation, self-expression (Leckie et al., 2016), experiences, activities (Gambetti et al., 2015) interactivity, rapport, perceived quality, satisfaction, trust, commitment, customer value and loyalty (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Hollebeek, 2011) with brands will explain current engagement. Equally, existing research has also investigated 'consequences' of engagement that relate to the potential or improved relationship between the individual and brand. More specifically, consequences of understanding engagement can influence loyalty, retention, positive word-of-mouth, (Leckie et al., 2016), satisfaction, commitment and trust (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Raed et al., 2018), identification (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018), familiarity, ownership, identification, (Gong, 2018; van Doorn et al., 2010) and empowerment (Vale & Fernandes, 2018). Therefore, there appears to be some overlap between 'drivers-antecedents' and 'consequences' of CBE. The 'drivers-antecedents' of CBE have the potential of managing 'consequences' of CBE and this has implications for marketers and brand managers. Thus, generating deep insight into the cognitive-emotive perceptions, associations and attitudes, combined with knowledge on the behaviours and experiences of individuals and

brands could lead to a greater understanding of CBE by providing additional drivers-antecedents and consequences. Further, this may also reveal whether the consequences are intended or unintended by the brand's creator.

Despite the advancements and topical nature with CBE, there continues to be calls for further research in this area (Gong, 2018; Powell, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2010). Recent work has inductively captured 'the essence of the CBE process' from the brand decision makers such as marketers, brand managers and advertising executives (Gambetti et al., 2015). However, there continues to be limited research on the CBE process from the first-hand accounts of consumers (Bowden, 2009) and from a multi-stakeholder perspective (Gambetti et al., 2015). Therefore, CBE remains a 'prominent construct' and can impact on the development of future relationships between individuals and brands (Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018).

As the CBE process can be dissimilar across different settings and contexts (Halaszovich & Jaques, 2017), future studies must focus on specific brands (Leckie et al., 2016) and other contexts and settings (Ahn & Back, 2018; France et al., 2016). Indeed, CBE represents an under-explored and promising area of study (Hollebeek et al., 2014). Conceptual scope within existing CBE studies have been aided by adopting an interdisciplinary approach and employing different theoretical constructs to frame the investigations and debates. Theoretical constructs include consumer culture theory, service dominant logic, relationship marketing (Brodie et al., 2011; Hollebeek et al., 2014), social identity and brand loyalty (Leckie et al., 2016), psychological ownership theory and regulatory focus theory (Gong, 2018), systems theory (Bolton & Saxena-Iyer, 2009) and social exchange theory (Raed et al., 2018). However, existing studies on CBE argue further research is required and future studies should consider an interdisciplinary approach and framed through appropriate and relevant marketing-based theoretical lenses (Bolton & Saxena-Iyer, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011; Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Gambetti et al., 2015; Hollebeek, 2011b; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Leckie et al., 2016). More specifically, Hollebeek (2011a, p. 569) explicitly called for future research to address 'the nature of CBE interrelationships with other concepts' including how brands are positioned and how they are interpreted by consumers. Therefore, construct of positioning, brand identity and brand image could be considered drivers-antecedents of CBE and may provide deep insight into CBE, which in turn would address

demands for more empirical research in this area (Bolton & Saxena-Iyer, 2009; France et al., 2016; Hollebeek, 2011a; Hollebeek, 2011b; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Leckie et al., 2016).

POLITICAL BRAND POSITIONING

Political strategists aim to project a clear, relatable and comprehensible position which signifies how the political brand intends 'to be seen' in the mind of the voter (Baines et al. 1999, 2014; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009; Pich, 2022; Smith & French, 2009). Further, successful positioning allows political brands to communicate clear points of differentiation compared to competitors and serves to illustrate relevance by addressing the wants and needs of stakeholders (Newman & Newman, 2022; Smith, 2005; Wring, 2022). In addition, positioning is strategic in orientation and represents a process that candidates, political parties and/or campaign groups follow to efficiently and effectively portray the political brand's product offering (Baines, 1999; Gurău & Ayadi, 2011). However, political brand positioning is a complex procedure that can be interpreted as a 'two-way communication process' involving the producer (insider the organisation) and consumer (outside the organisation) (O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009, p. 239). Nevertheless, intended *and* actual positioning can differ, and it is the role of strategists to work towards aligning the two related yet distinct perspectives (Newman, 1999; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009). Aligned political brands have the potential to be perceived as credible, trustworthy, authentic and united, which can lead to greater success at the ballot box (Smith & French, 2009). Therefore, positioning has a 'central place within political branding theory as it provides insight into the political brand's product offering; responds to the wants and needs of voters; and enables strategists to create a competitive differentiation in the political marketplace' (Pich, 2022, p. 121). However, it is important to routinely audit and track the positioning of political brands. For instance, voters might have unintended perceptions (O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009). Therefore, routinely investigating political brand positioning will may reveal coherency or misalignment of desired and actual positioning, which strategists can respond and develop strategies to maintain alignment or devise repositioning strategies (Baines et al., 1999; Collins & Butler, 2002; Pich, 2022; Smith, 2005).

Research on the positioning of political brands has received some attention. However, existing research has tended to focus on the measurement of how political brands are positioned (positioning scales) or appraisal of strategies and communication tactics implemented by political brands during election campaigns (Baines et al., 1999; Collins & Butler, 2002; Gurău & Ayadi, 2011; Johnson, 1971; Newman & Newman, 2022; Norris et al., 1999; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009; Smith, 2005; Smith & French, 2009). For instance, Smith (2005) examined the positioning strategies of the three main political parties (Labour, Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats) during the 2005 UK General Election. It was found from the beginning of the campaign that all three political brands faced political positioning 'dilemmas' and this included the UK Conservative Party brand. The Conservative Party brand faced the internal problem of appeasing not only the previously silenced pro-European wing of the party but also the core anti-European constituency (Smith, 2005). In addition, the UK Conservative brand was still positioned by the party's past, they failed to develop a clear point of differentiation from political competitors, especially Labour. They were perceived as an opposition party, not credible, and a 'nasty' uncaring party for the 'rich and privileged' (Smith, 2005). Furthermore, Smith (2005) concluded they had failed to produce an integrated long-term strategy and needed to develop new approaches to address the political brand's dilemmas.

Subsequently, there continues to be a paucity of research dedicated to investigating the intended and actual positioning of political brands (Baines et al., 1999; Gurău & Ayadi, 2011; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009; Pich, 2022; Smith, 2005). Further, the positioning of political brands 'is often difficult to capture' (Baines et al., 2014; Pich, 2022, p. 121) and may be due to the complex and nebulous nature of political brand positioning. This may be a key factor for the limited studies on political brand positioning. To address this, perhaps appropriate theoretical lenses are needed to help structure the investigatory process of political brand positioning. To reiterate positioning is a 'two-way communication process' which focuses on a political brand's intended vision created-communicated by a producer and brought to life in the mind of the consumer (O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009). Therefore, the related yet distinct constructs of brand identity and brand image could be seen as important dimensions of positioning and serve as unproblematic

theoretical constructs to frame the investigatory process of political brand positioning.

Political Brand Identity

In order to conceptualise how a political brand creates a desired position in the minds of stakeholders, the construct of brand identity is a suitable theoretical lens to help structure the envisioned characterisation (He et al., 2016; Su & Kunkel, 2019). More specifically, brand identity represents an internally created strategy designed to communicate what brands intend to 'stand for' and constructed to appeal to multiple stakeholders inside and outside the organisation (Nandan, 2005; O'Shaughnessy and Baines 2009; Savitri et al., 2022; Silveira et al., 2013). Further, brand identity enables organisations to map out a distinctive intended narrative from competitors and express their relevance, which in turn provides rationale for stakeholders to identify with their offering and establish a long-term relationship between organisations and their target markets (Foroudi et al., 2018; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009; Pich & Armannsdottir, 2022). Brand identity can be created and managed around physical and intangible touchpoints (Baines et al.,

2014; Plumeyer et al., 2017; Propheto et al., 2020; Schneider, 2004). For example, physical touchpoints include components such as symbols, logos, signage, messages, policies and communication platforms-methods-tools devised to raise awareness, communicate differentiation and resonate with specific target markets. Intangible touchpoints can include components such as brand values, vision, goals, ideology, heritage-culture, feelings, attitudes and associations often brought to life by the physical touchpoints. A visualisation to illustrate the key components of desired brand identity and envisaged positioning is outlined in Figure 7.1.

Successful identities irrespective of their manifestation depend on brands adhering to three simple rules (Pich & Armannsdottir, 2022). First, all stakeholders inside the political brand have a responsibility to ensure coherency between the physical and intangible elements. Further, internal stakeholders should be united and remain 'on message' (Marland et al., 2017; Marland & Flanagan, 2014). This increases the likelihood of projecting a clear, unambiguous identity and maintaining an authentic, credible political brand. Second, relevant, clearly differentiated and appealing identities can lead to the establishment
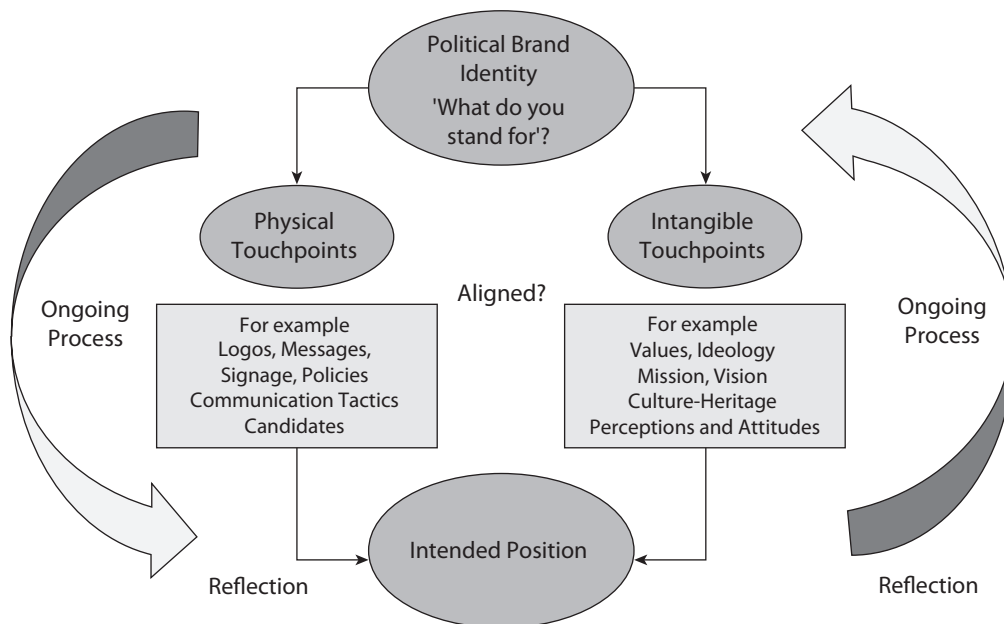

Figure 7.1   Visualisation of Brand Identity and Brand Positioning

of a close relationship and a sense of loyalty between the political brand and citizen (Armannsdottir et al., 2019; Foroudi et al., 2018; Savitri et al., 2022). Therefore, political brands need to ensure their intended identities are believable, grounded on style and substance, live up to expectations, coherent across all touchpoints and be prepared to amend their offering in relation to an ever-changing dynamic political environment (O'Shaughnessy & Baines 2009). Third, strategists, politicians and communication directors need to routinely reflect on the physical and intangible touchpoints and audit the identities of their political brands and recognise the benefits and implications of strong political brand identities (Marland et al., 2017). Further, by routinely reflecting and carrying out a holistic audit on the current identities of political brands, internal stakeholders can develop strategies to maintain positive, strong, aligned identities or design tactics to correct any misalignment, ambiguity and weaknesses associated with the desired position (Pich & Armannsdottir, 2022). Therefore, adhering to the three simple rules provides a series of motivations, which in turn will raise the prospect of long-term success. Key motivations for strong political brand identities can be seen in Figure 7.2.

Subsequently, designing and managing political brand identity is not just about raising

awareness. Indeed, political brand identities should demonstrate positive unique characteristics that allow political brands to project a clearly differentiated position compared with political rivals (Armannsdottir et al., 2019; Baines et al., 2014; Silveira et al., 2013). Further, it is important that citizens recognise the uniqueness and distinct identities, and this can lead to alignment between the communicated identity and understood image in the mind of the public, which in turn can lead to success at the ballot box (Nandan, 2005; Pich et al., 2020). Therefore, periodically assessing political brand identity is not the only construct that needs to be monitored and individuals need to consider the concept of political brand image.

POLITICAL BRAND IMAGE

Brand image has been defined 'as the current/ immediate associations perceived and formulated in the mind of the consumer' (Pich, 2022: 193). Further, brand image has also been recognised as a set of actual 'beliefs, attitudes, stereotypes, ideas, relevant behaviours or impressions that a person holds regarding an object, person or organisation' (Panda et al., 2019, p. 237). Brand creators develop and communicate the brand identity; however, they have little control over how the brand is actually perceived by consumers (Marland et al., 2017). For

Figure 7.2   Motivations for Successful Political Brand Identities Developed From Pich and Armannsdottir (2022)

example, brands can become associated with unde-sired and unintended imagery, perceptions and atti-tudes (O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009). Therefore, it is important to understand what benefits brands offers consumers and what experiences consumers have or want to have with a brand. Alignment between intended brand identity and actual brand image is critical for organisations if brand is to be considered as 'authentic' (Pich et al., 2020).

Political brand image has been defined as the manifestation of the communicated identity com-bined with perceptions associations and attitudes in the mind of the citizen or voter (Pich et al., 2018). Political brand image should reveal distinct factors of differentiation which can represent unique selling points for brands. However, polit-ical strategists can often have little control over how voters understand or engage with their brand. Further, misalignment between political brand identity and image can damage the clarity of the message or positioning while strong alignment will help with voters' engagement and trust.

Similarly, to brand image, political brand image is seen as the voters' understanding of the political brands, their perception of what they stand for and their experiences with brands (Pich & Armanns-dottir, 2022). It should also be perceived as authentic and should differentiate the brand from

other competitors. Furthermore, political brand image should encourage involvement with multi-ple stakeholders, live up to voter expectations and help create a feeling of trust in the minds of voters. Figure 7.3 summarises a series of motivations for political brand image associated with successful political brands.

For politicians and political strategists, a strong political brand image should help with creating and managing their branding strategy. It is important that politicians manage and monitor their brand image to be able to establish a positive relationship with their voters (Plumeyer et al. 2017). Figure 7.3 summarises implications of political brand image. Political brands can be seen as a trinity of three elements, including the party leader, political party and party policy (Butler et al., 2011; Davies & Mian, 2010; Smith & French, 2011). Previous research on brand image has focused on one or two elements of the trinity but few have investigated all three elements of political brand as will be done here.

CASE STUDIES: APPLICATION

So far, we have discussed the different typologies of political brands and the interactions and
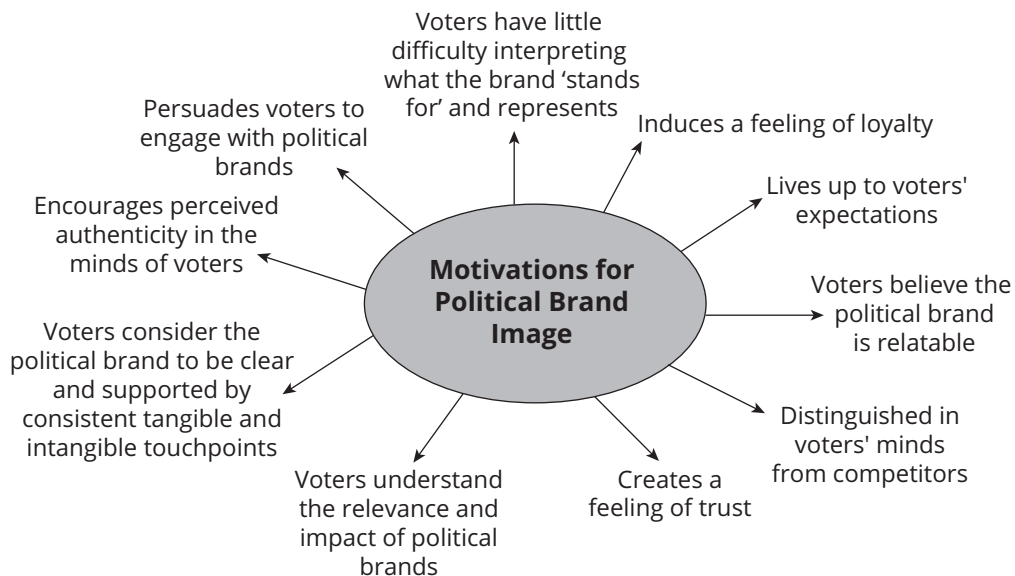

Figure 7.3   Motivations for Successful Political Brand Image Developed From Pich and Armannsdottir (2022)

relationships between stakeholders and political brands through the theoretical lens of CBE. We have also presented the antecedents-drivers of consumer (political) brand engagement namely the concepts of political brand identity and political brand image. Political brand identity and political brand image remain two related yet distinct constructs and allow political stakeholders (politicians, political parties, supporters and activists) to create and manage a desired position in the mind of voters. This section will focus on two specific case studies to demonstrate the applicability of political brand engagement, identity and image to international contexts and settings. The British Crown Dependencies of Jersey and Pakistan contextualise the two cases. The two cases were in no way selected as comparisons and represent two unique international settings. Jersey and Pakistan are home to different types of political brands and represent two under-explored yet dynamic contexts. Further, existing studies on political branding call for further research in under-researched electoral systems (Armannsdottir et al., 2019; Falkowski & Jabłonska, 2019; Jain & Ganesh, 2019; Marland & Wagner, 2020). Firstly, we discuss the political brand position through the concept of political brand identity in the context of the Channel Island of Jersey. Finally, we will discuss the political brand position with the aid of the theoretical concept of political brand image in the context of the PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) party brand in Pakistan. The two cases demonstrate the transfer potential of branding concepts to politics however acknowledges that core branding theory may need to be tailored to address the unique settings and contexts.

CASE 1: POLITICAL BRAND POSITIONING AND IDENTITY IN JERSEY

Introduction

Case one focuses on investigating the political positioning and identity of the four political party brands in the context of the British Crown Dependency of Jersey. To reiterate, brand identity can be interpreted as the desired position developed by internal stakeholders (strategists, politicians and communication directors) and communicated to external stakeholders including voters (Baines et al., 2014; Nandan, 2005; Su & Kunkel, 2019). Thus, brand identity represents the political brand's aspirations and vision structured around physical touchpoints such as logos, symbols, communication

platforms-tools, messages and policies and also developed from intangible elements such as values, heritage-culture, mission, vision and ideology often designed to appeal to different groups or target markets (Pich & Armannsdottir, 2022). Further, successful identities are coherent, unambiguous and perceived as authentic, which in turn can encourage multiple internal and external stakeholders to engage and form a connection with political brands (Armannsdottir et al., 2019; Foroudi et al., 2018; Savitri et al., 2022). Existing research on political brand identity has tended to focus well-established political party brands in party systems such as the United Kingdom, Canada, the United States and India (Jain & Ganesh, 2019; Marland & Flanagan, 2014; Marland & Wagner, 2020; Pich & Dean, 2015). In addition, there is limited research on new or emerging political party brands especially from an insider-internal perspective. This is supported by explicit calls for further research on different typologies of political brands in dynamic contexts and settings (Needham & Smith, 2015; Newman & Newman, 2022; Pich & Newman, 2020). In order to contextualise this case study, the British Crown Dependency of Jersey serves as an appropriate setting. Jersey is an independent small island state situated off the north-coast of France and has a population of just over 103,000 citizens (Boleat, 2023). Until recently, Jersey has been dominated by independent politics with a paucity of political parties. However, ahead of the 2022 Jersey General Election, three new political parties (Progress, Jersey Alliance and Jersey Liberal Conservatives [JLC]) were created to join the only established political party (Reform Jersey) and fight for representation in the 49-seat Parliament. Further, 40% of the 93 candidates contested the 2022 General Election under the banner of the four political parties, which was a huge change from previous elections where 'independent politics was the norm' (Boleat, 2023). Therefore, this case focuses political brand identity as its theoretical concept to assess the political brand positioning of the four party brands in Jersey. In addition, this case demonstrates the applicability and useful nature of using the construct of brand identity to deconstruct the desired positioning which can impact on consumer-voter brand engagement.

Research Design

As this case aimed to explore the creation and management of political brand identity and positioning from the perspective of key internal stakeholders within Jersey's four political parties,

a qualitative interpretivist approach was adopted. A qualitative interpretivist approach is ideal for exploratory research and under-explored settings as it can delve beneath the surface to capture deep insight and detailed understanding of the phenomenon under study (Warren & Karner, 2010). Further, qualitative interpretivist studies allow researchers to build an in-depth understanding and uncover rich explanations based on the testimonies and perspectives of participants (Bell et al., 2019; Zikmund, 2003). This case utilised online semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders from all four political parties in Jersey including Reform Jersey, the Progress Party, Jersey Alliance and the JLC. Key stakeholders included candidates-politicians, activists and party members. Participants were invited via email to take part in this study. Interviews were carried out online via MS Teams and Zoom due to the travel restrictions which were in place during this time. Eleven participants came forward to take part in this study. Interviews were conducted from November 2021 to February 2022. Table 7.2 outlines the profile of our sample.

As outlined in Table 2, participants were given a unique code to ensure anonymity, for example, 'participant 1' was coded as 'P1' and the coding process was repeated for all participants. Websites, campaign materials (manifestoes, leaflets, posters) and social media posts associated with all four parties were also examined as part of our analysis. To analyse the interview transcripts and additional content, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stages of thematic analysis were adopted as our analytical strategy, which in turn provided a systematic process and transparency to our analysis.

Aspired Identity and Positioning

The four political party brands in Jersey created desired identities and aspired positioning based on three inter-related themes including *party or alliance*, *values and ideology,* and *personality and leadership* as illustrated in Figure 7.4 below.

Party or Alliance?: Party

The first key theme uncovered relates to structure and construct of the four political party brands. It is worth remembering that up until recent years, Jersey's Parliament was dominated by independent politicians (politicians not part of political parties but stood as individuals in elections). Thus, the introduction of political party brands was novel to the political landscape. An overview of the lifecycle and structure of the four political party brands is set out in Table 7.3.

Reform Jersey founded in 2014 remains the oldest and most established political party brand in the Bailiwick and contested several elections prior to Jersey's General Election in 2022. Nevertheless, Reform Jersey can trace its origins back to 2012 having evolved from a grassroots 'political movement' before registering as an official party ahead of the 2014 Jersey General Election. Further, Reform is 'mature, professional, strategic and continues to evolve' (P3) and each election serves as an opportunity to reflect and improve their electioneering and messaging, sharpen their policies and demonstrate their existence and relevance as an authentic party brand. However, it could be argued that Reform's three competitors (Progress, Alliance and JLC) were 'late for the party' (i.e. 2022 General Election). The Progress political brand was founded in January 2021,

Table 7.2   Sample Profile of Our Sample

Participant Code	Party Membership
P1 = (Participant 1)	Jersey Alliance
P2 = (Participant 2)	Progress
P3 = (Participant 3)	Jersey Liberal Conservatives
P4 = (Participant 4)	Reform Jersey
P5 = (Participant 5)	Jersey Liberal Conservatives
P6 = (Participant 6)	Reform Jersey
P7 = (Participant 7)	Progress
P8 = (Participant 8)	Jersey Alliance
P9 = (Participant 9)	Progress
P10 = (Participant 10)	Jersey Liberal Conservatives
P11 = (Participant 11)	Jersey Alliance
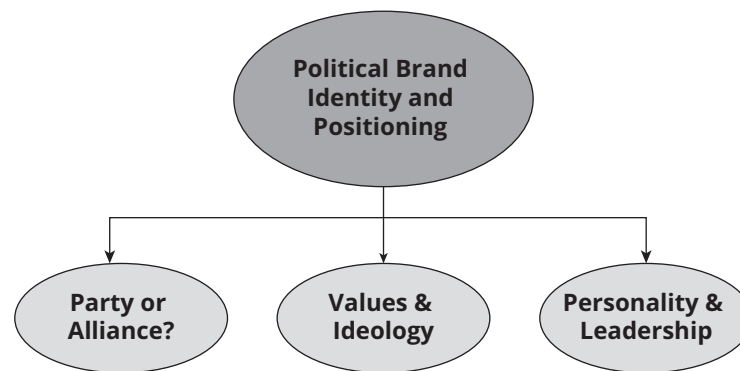
Figure 7.4   Core Themes Identified Related to Political Brand Identity and Positioning

Table 7.3   Lifecycle and Structure of the Four Political Party Brands in Jersey

	Reform Jersey	The Progress Party	Jersey Alliance	Jersey Liberal Conservatives (JLC)
Founded	2014	January 2021	July 2021	January 2022
Political Brand Slogan	'Social and economic justice' 'New deal for Jersey'	'Balanced policy for Jersey's future prosperity and wellbeing, policies that will be delivered for good for every islander'.	'Pride in our Past. Purpose in our Future'.	'Socially liberal, fiscally conservative'.
Party	'Tradition Party'	'Tradition Party'	'An Alliance not a Party'	'Tradition Party'
Structure	-Constitution and Whip System -Regular meetings – Chair -150+ members -Membership fee £2 -Youth branch -Free membership	-Constitution and Whip System -Limited resources -100 members -Bottom-up, members driven	-Current Ministers in Government 2018–2022 -No whip -3-tiered membership -Selective recruitment	-Inclusive -Trying to persuade people to join -Committee-led – 9 individuals
Outcome General Election 22nd June 2022	*Out of 49 Seats* **2022 = 10 Seats** **2018 = 5 Seats**	*Out of 49 Seats* **2022 = 1 Seat**	*Out of 49 Seats* **2022 = 1 Seat**	*Out of 49 Seats* **2022 = 2 Seats**

Alliance July 2021 and JLC in January 2022; therefore, the three new political brands were established 17 months – 6 months before Jersey's 2022 General Election.

In terms of structure, three of the four political brands (Reform, Progress and JLC) positioned themselves as 'traditional political parties' with 'constitutions', adhering to the 'whipping system', an official leader and internally governed by a 'committee' or 'working group' with members with distinct roles such as 'chair', 'treasurer' and 'co-founders'. Further, Reform, Progress and JLC promoted a culture of inclusion in terms of practicing a bottom-up, member-led approach in terms

of developing polices and feedback on values and positioning. However, Alliance did not practice the 'whipping-system' and promoted a selective top-down approach in terms of recruiting candidates-members and approaching individuals 'with a track record', 'like-minded individuals' and belief 'they could work with [them]'. Nevertheless, all parties revealed that they had members-supporters and had developed membership schemes (paid and unpaid membership); however, the membership base for each party brand remains unknown.

Values and Ideology: Policy

Firstly, the envisaged identities of all four party brands were created around values and ideological positioning designed by a small number of founders and party leaders. For example, Reform Jersey were positioned as a 'social democratic party' and a very much 'centre-left' political brand with a strong belief and 'track record' for 'inclusivity, diversity with progressive policies and opportunities for all'. In contrast, the Progress Party, positioned as a 'big tent' political brand favouring 'practical solutions' rather than a focus on ideology campaigned on broad values such as 'transparency and accountability'...and the pledge to deliver on housing, immigration and change for all islanders. The centre-right Jersey Alliance, positioned as a 'political group' rather than a 'party', pledged to 'continue' with the current Government's plan and acted as a champion for an 'open economy' with a focus on 'opportunities for all' and 'investment across the island'. Finally, the JLC, like the Progress Party in terms of 'not keen on ideology' put forward several broad values including 'opportunity and enterprise', belief in personal freedom and responsibility, 'fiscal prudence' and 'competent leadership'.

Despite two of the four political brands arguing that *ideology* was not a core dimension of their desired identities (Progress and JLC), following the analysis of the transcripts and other content such as the party websites, social media platforms and manifestoes, it was deduced that both entities were positioned as 'centre-right' political brands. Therefore, the centre-right position of Jersey's political landscape was 'quite crowed' (P7) with three political brands fighting for a similar position. Whereas Reform Jersey was clearly positioned as a centre-left political brand, which in turn provided differentiation from key competitors.

Personality and Leadership: Leader

It was argued that 'Jersey is so personality based' (P7) and each of the four political party brands were led by 'big personalities...seasoned politicians' (P6) with strong recognition, familiarity and awareness in the mind of islanders. It was revealed that each of the four leaders were part of the founding team or driving force in terms of establishing the four political brands and created their political brands based on their own belief systems or envisaged positions. Further, three of the four party leaders (Progress, Alliance and JLC) were experienced politicians having contested several elections and served as independent parliamentarians for many years before forming their respective parties. However, creating and developing the political party brands was a 'big political experiment' (P4), 'a political poker game' (P2) and a 'treacherous journey of launching a political party' from scratch and the leadership teams had 'no experience...we had to make it up as we went along' (P6). A 'artisan approach' (P1) seemed to be adopted by most political party brands as there was little support or resources from Jersey's Parliament or existing political system to support the development of political party brands. Further, Reform were trendsetters in Jersey politics as they had spent several elections making the argument 'for party politics in Jersey' and had 'won the argument' for the introduction of political party brands (P3). Therefore, Reform had carried out the groundwork for the three new political party brands and moved the debate forward allowing the new political parties to opportunity to explain their identities and positioning rather than spend time justifying their existence.

Case One Summary

This case addresses one of two related priority issues for further research in political branding. More specifically, this case provides first-hand accounts and insight on how four political party brands in Jersey created and managed their intended positioning and attempted to communicate their envisaged identifies designed to encourage engagement (Baines et al., 2014; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009; Pich et al., 2020; Smith & French, 2009). Further, this case addresses explicit calls for additional understanding on different types of political brands including new/emerging political brands and political brands in diverse settings and contexts (O'Cass & Voola, 2011;

Pich, 2022; Pich et al., 2020; Rutter et al., 2015; Scammell, 2015; Simons, 2016). Up until now, existing research has tended to focus on traditional electoral 'party systems' and well-established political 'party' brands (Armannsdottir et al., 2019; Falkowski & Jabłonska, 2019; Jain & Ganesh, 2019; Marland & Wagner, 2020). This case demonstrates that the political party brands in Jersey were positioned by values and ideology often created by the belief system of the party leader, governed by a distinct leader, and supported by a hierarchy of key stakeholders. Figure 7.5 illustrates key elements of the four political brand identities in Jersey.

This case revealed all four political 'party' brands possessed all elements of the political brand trinity including party, leader and policy (Butler et al., 2011; Davies & Mian, 2010; Smith & French, 2011). However, Reform Jersey appears to have developed a clearer position and distinct identity compared with its three rivals. Further, Reform has developed its position and identity over a considerable period having contested several elections and had the opportunity to road-test its policies, vision and relevance, messaging and tactics compared with competitors. Therefore, Reform's political brand position appears to have resulted in stronger engagement with the electorate compared with its political rivals. Despite the dominance of independent politics in Jersey, many believe 'parties are inevitable'; however, 'it will take a few election cycles' (P7) for other political party brands to catch up with Reform. For example, it will take time for the other three parties to develop and establish clear intended identities and professionalise their electioneering strategies and tactics. Further, this case provides insight into the dynamic electoral system of Jersey, one traditionally structured around the personal brands of politicians (independent politicians unaffiliated to political parties) with the limited existence of corporate political party brands (Pich, 2022). Therefore, the jurisdiction of Jersey is witnessing fundamental changes to its electoral system and the metamorphosis of its political brands. It is unknown whether political 'party' brands will become the norm in Jersey. However, this represents an area for further research. Further research on political branding should consider carrying out longitudinal and comparative research, which up until now remains limited. Future research could also investigate whether the small gains made by the three new parties were a result of a crowded political landscape and whether each political party brand projected-communicated a coherent identity, which was clearly differentiated from competitors. In addition, future research could be conducted to examine why independent politicians continue to experience stronger engagement (success at the ballot box) compared with party brands. Finally, future studies could assess whether the success with Reform Jersey was due to a well-established authentic, engaging identity and/or the professionalism and disciplined nature of their political brand. Nevertheless, this case demonstrates the versatility and unproblematic nature of applying the theoretical lens of political brand identity to under-explored contexts to uncover the intended position of an emerging political 'party' brands.

CASE 2: POLITICAL BRAND IMAGE AND ENGAGEMENT IN PAKISTAN

Introduction

A corporate brand image, consisting of the trinity of leader, party and policies (Robertson & Meintjes, 2021; Smith & French, 2011), is the mental picture or total impressions of an organisation held by external stakeholders (Conz, 2019; Greyser & Urde, 2019; Iglesias & Ind, 2020; Koporcic & Halinen, 2018). Several corporate brand images exist for an organisation at any given time (Garas et al., 2018) since it is the sum of comprehensive associations held by a multitude of stakeholders (Markovic et al., 2018; Spry & Pich, 2021). Hatch and Schultz (2001; 2003; 2008) advise organisations to streamline their corporate identity and image to create a coherent corporate brand and use it as a competitive advantage. PTI party is Pakistan's main opposition party, founded and led by former world-class cricketer Imran Khan. Imran Khan founded the party in 1996 and led it to electoral victory in 2018 serving as Prime Minister of Pakistan until 2022. Since its inception, PTI has gained a significant following across various segments of society, advocating for reform, anti-corruption measures and social justice. PTI's policies and initiatives have been of particular interest to journalists, university students, small business owners, public servants and the Pakistani diaspora, making them key stakeholders in assessing the party's corporate brand image. Corporate political brands face challenges in maintaining a coherent image due to their complex and multifaceted nature, resulting in a multiplicity of images (Coker et al., 2021; Rutter et al., 2018). However, current research on brand image has primarily focused on voters, overlooking the involvement of

Outcome of the 2022 General Election in Jersey Out of 49 Seats

- Reform Jersey = 10 Seats
- Progress Party = 1 Seat
- Jersey Alliance = 1 Seat
- JLC = 2 Seats

External Understanding Voter

Actual Political Brand Image in Jersey?

- Represents an area for future research.
- Limited research on intended identity AND actual image.
- All four political brands secured some success at the ballot-box (some stronger than others), were the successes based on the intended political identities?
- Drivers or barriers to engagement?

Political Brand Positioning

Political Brand Image

Political Brand Identity

Political Consumer Brand Engagement

Actual

Intended

Aligned?

Internally Created

Driver?

Barrier?

Intended Political Brand Identities in Jersey

- Three of four political brands were explicitly **positioned** as **'political parties'** opposed to an 'alliance' or 'political group'.
- The four political brands in Jersey were **positioned by intangible touchpoints including values, and explicit or implicit ideology.** The political landscape appeared 'quite crowded' with Reform Jersey positioned as centre-left whereas the three other political party brands (Progress, Alliance, and JLC) were fighting for the centre-right position. The Reform Jersey political brand had a track record (heritage) and a professionalised, strategic culture for contesting elections and campaigning. **Reform – established in 2014 and contested previous elections** had moved the debate for the existence of political parties in Jersey forward allowing the new political parties to opportunity to explain their identities and positioning rather than spend time justifying their existence.
- The four political brands in Jersey were also **positioned by physical touchpoints including distinct logos, slogans, manifestoes and policies. The political brands adopted online, and offline communication tactics.** The political brands were also positioned via the personality of candidates and leaders and supported by members-supporters. However, limited support-resources from Jersey's political system to facilitate the development of brand identities.
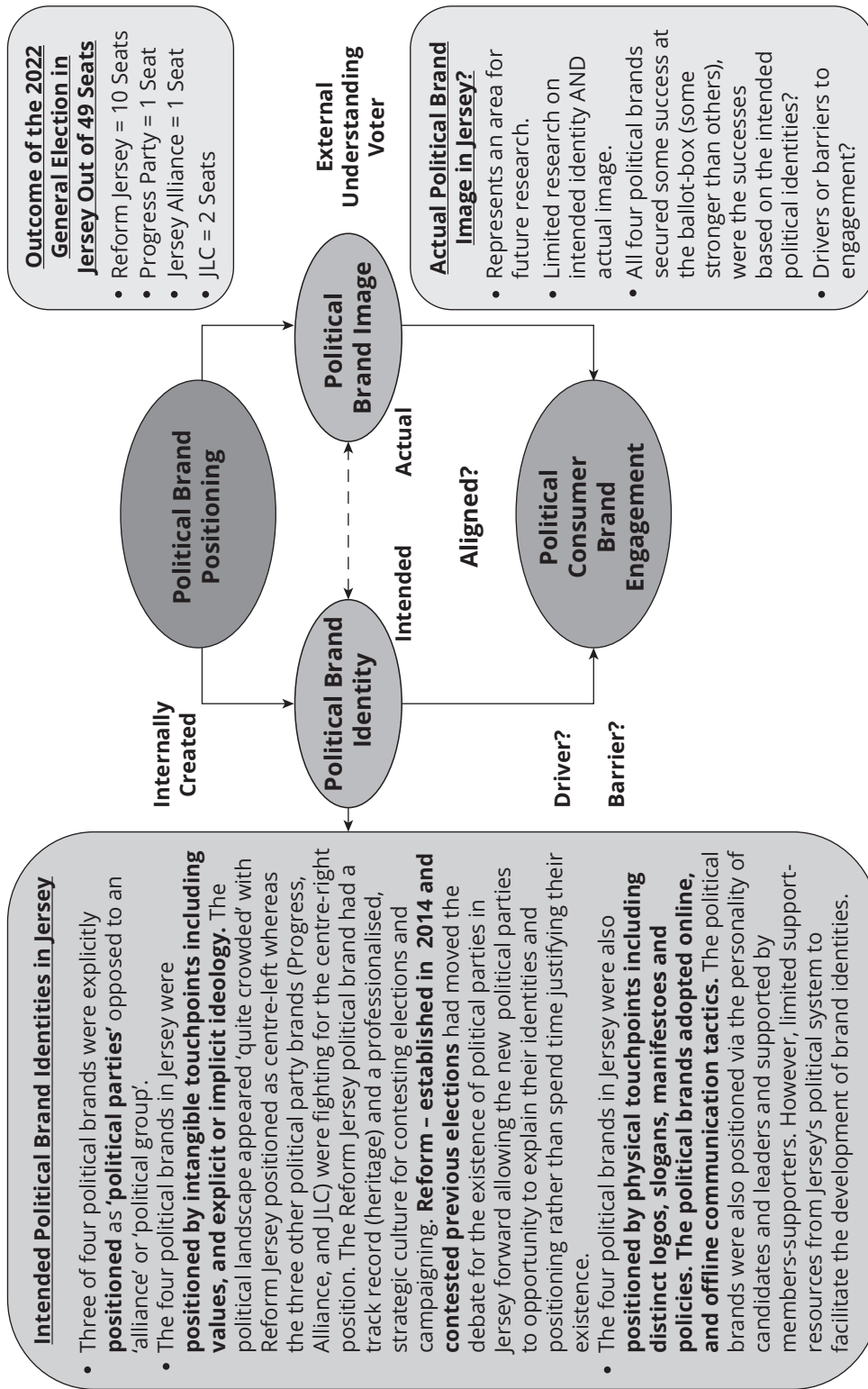
Figure 7.5 Key Elements of Political Brand Identities in Jersey and Areas for Further Research

numerous stakeholders in the political branding process (Pich & Dean, 2015; Pich et al., 2018). This oversight calls for an exploration of the brand image from the perspective of multiple stakeholders, which can provide a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the brand's perception.

Research Design

The overall philosophy of this study was to focus on exploring the corporate brand image of PTI from the perspective of multiple stakeholders. A qualitative research approach was adopted as it is renowned for providing an in-depth exploration of participants' perspectives (Aspers & Corte, 2019; Azungah, 2018; Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2013; Gelo et al., 2008; Gephart, 2004; Mohajan, 2018). Further, focus groups were chosen due to their ability to uncover unexpected aspects of social phenomena from the participants' perspectives, rather than the researcher's (Acocella, 2012; Guest et al. 2017; Kruger et al., 2019). The focus group discussions were held with journalists, university students, Pakistani diaspora, business owners and government officials between May 2020 and November 2020 in Lahore and Karachi. A six-step 'contextualist thematic analysis' (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was then utilised to analyse the transcripts and reveal rich insights into the corporate brand image from the perspective of multiple stakeholders.

Key Findings

From the perspective of these five external stakeholder groups, the PTI corporate brand can be divided into a trinity of leader, party and policy. The main themes that emerge about this trinity are charismatic and competent leader, inclusive yet contentious party, and progressive policies (Figure 7.6). The leader element of the corporate political brand is the strongest and most coherent dimension for the brand image. The other two elements, that is, the party and policies were next in order respectively. The leader was always associated with positive attributes even by those who were otherwise critical of the party brand. The party element was consistent across all stakeholder groups with positive and negative associations. Whereas there was greater diversity in opinion among stakeholders when it came to policies.

Leader: Leader as the Ace of the Pack

All five stakeholder groups saw the leader element of the brand trinity in a positive light. The leader, Imran Khan, the former World Cup-winning cricket captain (Mehmood et al., 2021), was widely praised for his integrity and stakeholders from all groups highlighted this trait as a key strength. Additionally, it was seen that the leader exuded charisma, and stakeholders across all groups acknowledged this characteristic. Journalists and university students emphasised the leader's visionary and progressive approach and his success in handling the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, a journalist from Karachi was of the view 'He (Imran Khan) opposed the (COVID-19) lockdown which is why we are in a much better position than other countries in the region. You can imagine how bad it would have been if we had locked down'. Another respondent, a university student in Lahore commented on the leader's vision by saying, 'All of his (Imran Khan) policies have resulted in more women empowerment... torch bearer of women's rights' in reference to PTI's health card, education, and law and order. The health card has benefitted women by providing more prenatal and postnatal care. Education policies have seen more female enrolment in public schools, and law and order measures have

Figure 7.6   Corporate Political Brand Image of PTI

made women safer by tackling crimes against them.

Public servants also identified the leader's strength and unifying leadership style. Small business owners praised the leader for his unifying approach and COVID-19 success. Finally, Pakistani diaspora members highlighted the leader's unifying and charismatic qualities and his honest leadership. Overall, the PTI party's leader was widely praised for his integrity, charisma, unifying leadership style and success in handling the COVID-19 pandemic. It can be concluded that the leader is the strongest element of the PTI corporate brand.

Party: Inclusive yet Contentious Party

The party which is the second element of the corporate political brand was associated with both positive and negative perspectives. All stakeholder groups agreed that the PTI party was inclusive as it represented all segments of Pakistani society. Public servants praised the party for introducing new faces into politics and bringing professionals into the fold, while university students appreciated the party's inclusivity on an ethnic basis. For example, a business owner from Lahore said 'They (PTI) are the only national party today and promote the youth...- under 35 are the majority in Pakistan and PTI champions them'. However, stakeholders also expressed concerns about infighting, poor communication and values dissonance/ contradictions within the party. Journalists and university students called out the party for its self-destructive conflicts and disorganised structure. For example, a journalist from Lahore said 'There are many rival groups within the party that are trying to take each other down'. Small business owners were also critical of the selfish/ self-interest of some party members and the party's disconnect from the corporate brand. Pakistani diaspora members also cited communication struggles with the party and identified new members who are off-brand as concerns for the brand. In summary, external stakeholders view the party as inclusive yet divided.

Policies: Progressive Policies

Fighting corruption was seen as PTI's central policy by all stakeholder groups, and it was identified by university students, journalists, small business owners, public servants and the Pakistani diaspora. PTI's focus on social issues was also a

key finding, with both university students and small business owners highlighting them as a policy priority. For example, a student from Karachi said 'I personally know people who have used the health card to avail private health care'. Small business owners and public servants said that PTI represented institutional reforms and youth empowerment. Journalists and university students also highlighted PTI as the party of change and reform but emphasised the importance of addressing the communication disconnect and social media overreliance. Concerns over the bad shape of the economy were also voiced by university students, journalists, small business owners and public servants. Inflation was identified as a significant issue by small business owners one of whom said 'They have destroyed the economy... everything is so expensive and continues to be'. While public servants called for social policies to be a central area of focus. Finally, Pakistani diaspora members echoed similar opinions about anti-corruption measures, social policies, inflation and the need for institutional restructuring. Overall, it can be said that PTI's policies are seen as progressive.

Case Two Summary

This case study addresses two priority issues in existing research on political branding. First, it explores the under-researched area of corporate political branding within Pakistan, addressing calls for research in diverse contexts (Jain & Ganesh, 2019; Pich & Newman, 2020). While scholars have conceptualised political brands as corporate brands (Jain & Ganesh, 2019; Pich et al., 2018), Pakistan's political landscape offers a unique opportunity to examine this concept in a fresh light. Secondly, this study goes beyond existing research by exploring brand image from the perspective of multiple stakeholders (Pich & Newman, 2020). Although political brands are often conceptualised as corporate entities with various stakeholders (Conz, 2019; Coker et al., 2021; Jain & Ganesh, 2019; Pich et al., 2018), there is a paucity of studies that analyse brand image from multiple perspectives at the same time. By incorporating the perspectives of journalists, students, public servants, business owners and the Pakistani diaspora, this case study provides a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of a political party's corporate brand image. For example, Figure 7.7 illustrates key elements of the PTI's corporate brand image.

The leader element of the PTI corporate brand trinity appears to be a consistent theme across focus groups. The leader is the strongest and most engaging dimension of PTI. However, opposing opinions emerged among stakeholder groups for the party and policies dimensions which are present but not as coherent. This case demonstrates the complexities of managing a political brand image, particularly when relying heavily on a single leader. While Khan's leadership enjoys strong support, internal inconsistencies within the party and concerns about policy implementation create a disconnect. To strengthen brand image and stakeholder engagement, PTI may need to address these inconsistencies and communicate a more unified message across all elements of the brand trinity (leader, party, policies). Subsequently, political brand creators need to align all parts of their brand (party, leader, policy) to increase engagement, trust and loyalty with all their stakeholders. In this case, barriers to engagement are the internal issues within the party and conflicting views regarding policies. To increase engagement, PTI needs to communicate a clear and 'authentic brand' which is only possible if all elements of the trinity are aligned. Journalists, in particular, were found to be less favourable of the PTI party and policies while students, public servants, small business owners and Pakistani diaspora had a mixed view of the same. This creates a conundrum for brand owners while they aim to align the corporate brand identity and image (Hatch & Schultz, 2001, 2003, 2008; Pich & Newman, 2020). External stakeholders can often have competing interests (Coker et al., 2021; Garas et al., 2018) and treading this delicate path of managing the brand image further reveals its complexity and multi-faceted nature. It is equally important that further research into brand image is undertaken to monitor the perceptions, associations and attitudes as they are subject to change. Equally important is to understand the internal identity of the PTI brand and future research should consider this.

DISCUSSION

This chapter discussed two important characteristics associated with different types of political brands including engagement and positioning. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, this chapter introduced and applied the concept of CBE to political branding. CBE represents a dynamic, comprehensive and multidimensional construct (Gambetti et al., 2015; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Leckie et al.,

2016; Machado et al., 2019), and focuses on a 'consumer's positively valenced (feeling of quality) cognitive, emotional and behavioural brand-related activity during, or related to, specific consumer/brand interactions' (Hollebeek et al., 2014, p. 151). Therefore, this chapter demonstrates the applicability and unproblematic nature of transferring CBE as a construct to investigate the rational, emotional and behavioural exchanges between the individual and political brands (Ahn & Back, 2018; Brodie et al., 2011; Halaszovich & Jaques, 2017; Machado et al., 2019). This in turn answers calls for further research in this area (Gong, 2018; Powell, 2016; Verhoef et al., 2010). Secondly, this chapter presented the related yet distinct drivers of CBE including political brand identity and political brand image and developed the *political brand engagement and positioning framework* as outlined in Figure 7.8.

Political brand identity was conceptualised as the internally created and intended position of the political brand structured around tangible and intelligible touchpoints (Baines et al., 2014; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009; Plumeyer et al., 2017; Propheto et al., 2020; Schneider, 2004). In contrast, political brand image was defined as the actual perceptions, attitudes and imagery positioned in the mind of the voter (O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009; Pich, 2022). This chapter demonstrates that political brand identity and political brand image are appropriate theoretical constructs to help structure the investigatory process of political brand positioning, which up until now was difficult to capture (Baines et al., 2014; Pich, 2022). Therefore, political brand positioning can be seen as a 'two-way communication process' (O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009, p. 23), which focuses on a political brand's intended vision created-communicated by a producer and brought to life in the mind of the consumer (Baines, 1999; Gurău & Ayadi, 2011; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009). Alignment is an important process of strategically managing political brands. Further, further research should focus on whether intended and actual positioning are drivers and barriers of political CBE.

This chapter goes some way in addressing the paucity of research dedicated to investigating the *intended* and *actual* positioning of political brands (Baines et al., 1999; Gurău & Ayadi, 2011; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009; Pich, 2022; Smith, 2005). In addition, investigating the positioning of political brands will provide insight into how stakeholders engage with political brands and reveal whether the desired identity and understood image are barriers or drivers of
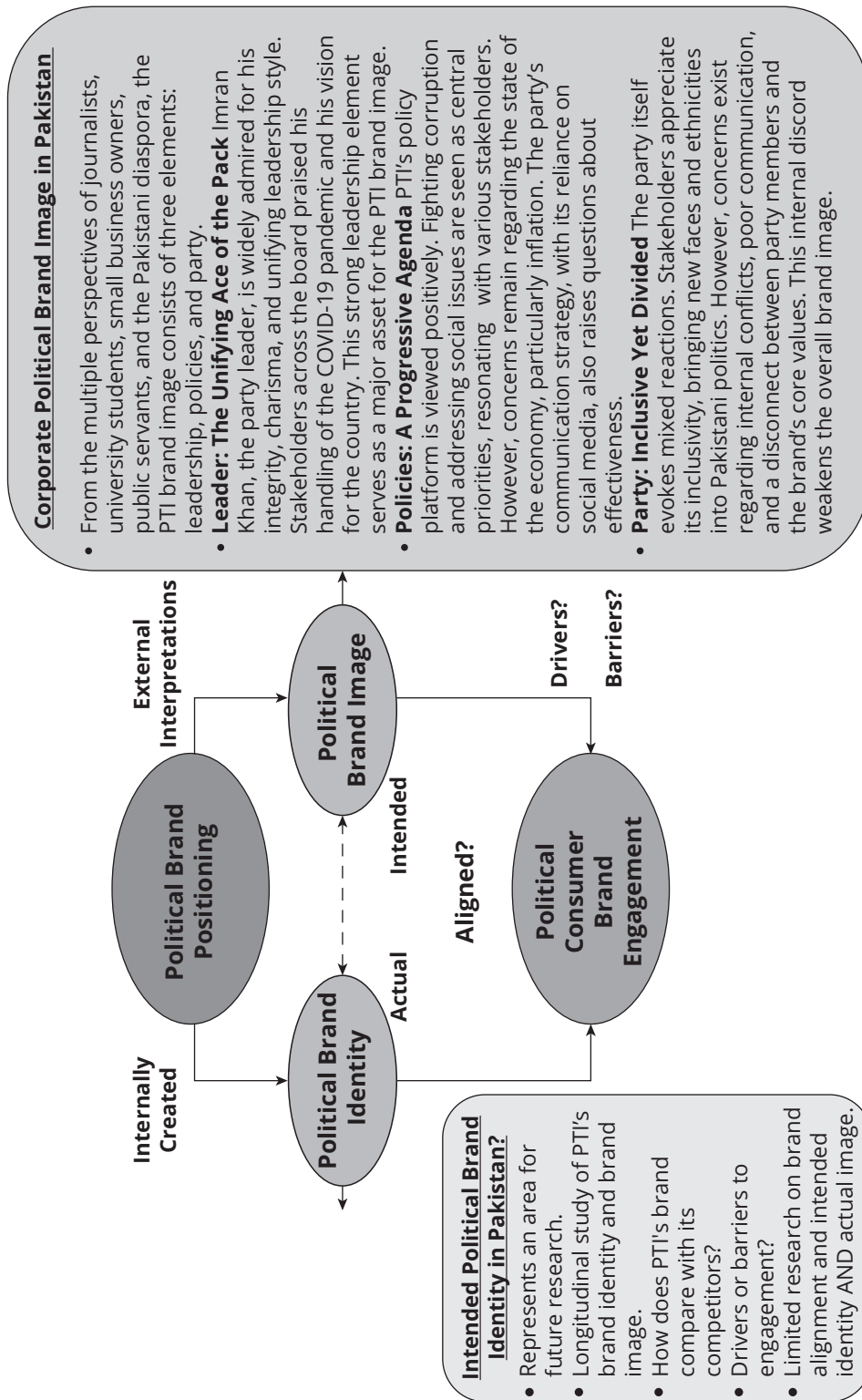
Corporate Political Brand Image in Pakistan

- From the multiple perspectives of journalists, university students, small business owners, public servants, and the Pakistani diaspora, the PTI brand image consists of three elements: leadership, policies, and party.
- **Leader: The Unifying Ace of the Pack** Imran Khan, the party leader, is widely admired for his integrity, charisma, and unifying leadership style. Stakeholders across the board praised his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and his vision for the country. This strong leadership element serves as a major asset for the PTI brand image.
- **Policies: A Progressive Agenda** PTI's policy platform is viewed positively. Fighting corruption and addressing social issues are seen as central priorities, resonating with various stakeholders. However, concerns remain regarding the state of the economy, particularly inflation. The party's communication strategy, with its reliance on social media, also raises questions about effectiveness.
- **Party: Inclusive Yet Divided** The party itself evokes mixed reactions. Stakeholders appreciate its inclusivity, bringing new faces and ethnicities into Pakistani politics. However, concerns exist regarding internal conflicts, poor communication, and a disconnect between party members and the brand's core values. This internal discord weakens the overall brand image.

External Interpretations

Political Brand Positioning

Political Brand Image

Internally Created

Political Brand Identity

Actual   **Intended**

Aligned?

Political Consumer Brand Engagement

Drivers?

Barriers?

Intended Political Brand Identity in Pakistan?
- Represents an area for future research.
- Longitudinal study of PTI's brand identity and brand image.
- How does PTI's brand compare with its competitors?
- Drivers or barriers to engagement?
- Limited research on brand alignment and intended identity AND actual image.

Figure 7.7   Key Elements of the External View of the PTI Political Brand Image and Areas for Further Research

Political Brand Positioning

A **"two-way communication process"** involving the producer (insider the organisation) and consumer (outside the organisation). The intended and actual positioning can differ, and it is the role of strategists to work towards aligning the two related yet distinct perspectives (Newman, 1999; O'Shaughnessy and Baines, 2009: 239).

Intended Political Brand Identity

Internally Created

Underpinned by Physical Touchpoints for example
Logos, Messages, Signage, Policies Communication Tactics Candidates

and

Underpinned by Intangible Touchpoints for example
Values, Ideology Mission, Vision Culture-Heritage Perceptions and Attitudes

Actual Political Brand Image

External Created

Attitudes, perceptions, and imagery associated with the Physical Touchpoints for example
Logos, Messages, Signage, Policies Communication Tactics Candidates

and

Attitudes, perceptions, and imagery associated with the Intangible Touchpoints for example
Values, Ideology Mission, Vision Culture-Heritage Perceptions and Attitudes

Political Brand Identity

Political Brand Image

Intended   Actual

Aligned?

Drivers?

Barriers?

Drivers?

Barriers?

Political Brand Engagement

Political brand engagement is a multidimensional and a dynamic two-way interactive relationship between the voter and political brand. Further, political brand engagement is deconstructed via three related yet distinct dimensions including cognition, emotion and/or behaviour associated with the brand-related touchpoints (physical and intangible). The brand-related touchpoints underpin a political brand's positioning and will reveal specific positive and negative interactions between voters-political brands prior, during and post political events (e.g. elections, campaigns). The brand-related touchpoints can drive and/or represent barriers to voters engaging with political brands.
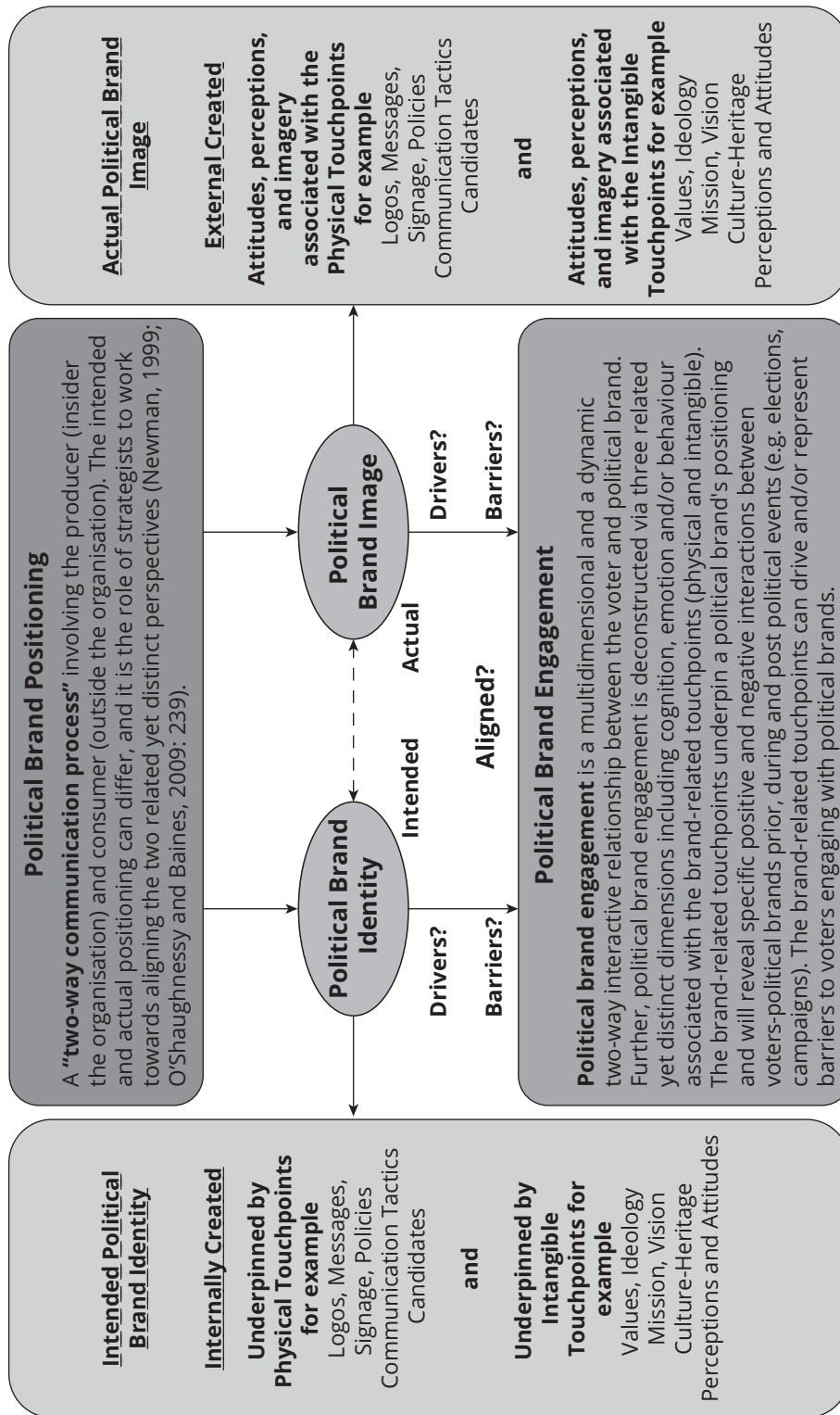
Figure 7.8   Political Brand Engagement and Positioning Framework

engagement. This in turn addresses explicit calls for further research on 'the nature of CBE interrelationships with other concepts' including how brands are positioned and how they are interpreted by consumers and responds to demands for more empirical research in this area (Bolton & Saxena-Iyer, 2009; France et al., 2016; Hollebeek, 2011a; Hollebeek, 2011b; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Leckie et al., 2016). Strategists and researchers should adopt the Political Brand Engagement and Positioning Framework (Figure 7.8) as a mechanism to understand the engagement and/or positioning associated with political brands particularly from a multi-stakeholder perspective. It is important to routinely audit and track the positioning and engagement of political brands as this may reveal coherency or misalignment of desired and actual positioning, which strategists can respond and develop strategies to maintain alignment or devise repositioning-engagement strategies (Baines et al., 1999; Collins & Butler, 2002; Pich, 2022; Smith, 2005).

CONCLUSION

This chapter discussed two related priority issues linked to political brand positioning, which represented under-explored areas of study within political branding. More specifically, this chapter examined how a political brand creates, manages and communicates an intended identity, and discussed how researchers and strategists can capture the actual position associated with a political brand developed in the minds of voters (Baines et al., 2014; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009; Pich et al., 2020; Poorrezaei et al., 2023; Smith & French, 2009). Further, this chapter considered several intrinsically linked concepts including CBE, brand identity and brand image, which served as appropriate theoretical lenses to frame the discussion (Bolton & Saxena-Iyer, 2009; Brodie et al., 2011; Carvalho & Fernandes, 2018; Gambetti et al., 2015; Hollebeek, 2011b; Hollebeek et al., 2014; Leckie et al., 2016). This chapter satisfies demands for a deeper understanding into engagement and positioning yet also explores the 'interrelationships' between the concepts of CBE, brand identity and brand image (Hollebeek, 2011). Investigating how voters engaged and interpreted political brands equips marketers and brand managers with the knowledge to devise strategies and tactics to strengthen existing behaviours, enhance long-term relationships and maintain desired positioning.

Two short empirical case studies were presented to illustrate the unproblematic applicability of the key constructs. Case one focused on political brand positioning and identity in the British Crown Dependencies of Jersey. Case two focused on political brand image and engagement in the context of Pakistan with a specific focus on the PTI party brand. The British Crown Dependencies of Jersey and Pakistan were in no way selected as comparisons but served to illustrate two unique international settings and home to different types of political brands. Therefore, this chapter addresses explicit calls for further research on different types of political brands in under-explored contexts (Ahmed et al., 2015; Armannsdottir et al., 2019; Falkowski & Jabłonska, 2019; Jain & Ganesh, 2019; Marland & Wagner, 2020; Nielsen, 2016; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009) and investigated with the aid of related yet distinct theoretical lenses (O'Cass & Voola, 2011; Pich et al., 2020; Rutter et al., 2015; Scammell, 2015; Simons, 2016). Finally, the two cases demonstrate the transfer potential of branding concepts to politics however acknowledges that core branding theory may need to be tailored to address the unique settings and contexts.

The chapter concludes by presenting the 'political brand engagement and positioning framework' (Figure 8), underpinned by interlinked concepts including political brand identity, political brand image and CBE. Strategists and researchers should adopt the political brand engagement and positioning framework as a mechanism to capture and compare the intended position and actual position. This is turn will reveal coherency or misalignment of intended brand identity and actual brand image, which strategists can respond and develop strategies to maintain alignment or devise repositioning-engagement strategies to help manage and safeguard political brands (Baines et al., 1999; Collins & Butler, 2002; Pich, 2022; Smith, 2005). Therefore, political brand positioning remains a 'two-way communication process' (O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009, p. 239), which focuses on a political brand's intended vision created-communicated by a producer and brought to life in the mind of the voter (Baines, 1999; Gurău & Ayadi, 2011; O'Shaughnessy & Baines, 2009).

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