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**Did political parties in Rossendale and Darwen effectively manage
their party brand during the 2015 General Election?**

Daniel J Chadwick

A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in partial fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Business and Management MA by Research

The University of Huddersfield

November 2017

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ABSTRACT

Political branding is a comparatively new area of research which is becoming of increasing interest to political parties, practitioners and academics. The ever increasing interest around political brands, highlights the importance of furthering the limited understanding of the subject area. This study, using a multi-method qualitative research methodology, determines whether political parties in the marginal constituency of Rossendale and Darwen effectively managed their overall party brand during the 2015 General Election. This research furthers the understanding of political brands and the core elements within it, whilst trying to determine which element, if any, has the greatest influence on voters perceptions of the overall party brand.

The aims, objectives and research questions have been answered by a critical review of the academic literature on the topic and undertaking primary qualitative research; in the form of focus groups with Rossendale and Darwen constituents; and interviews with representatives from the main three political parties which stood for election in Rossendale and Darwen in 2015. The conclusions which have been developed evaluate whether or not the three main political parties, the Labour Party, the Conservative Party and the United Kingdom Independence Party effectively managed their party brand during the election and determines the influence each element of the political offer has on influencing the overall party brand.

The research established that the Conservative Party was the only political party in Rossendale and Darwen that effectively managed their overall party brand during the 2015 General Election. Participants were aware of, understood and positively perceived Conservative policies and the overall party brand which portrayed economic competence and steadfast leadership. The Conservative Party leader, David Cameron, was a crucial element of the party's brand and was integral to the management of the overall image and electorate's perception of the party.

The research concludes that in order to effectively manage the overall party brand, a political party must have a strong political product offering. To be successful, the political offer requires clearly defined and relevant policies; a well positioned and differentiated party brand that the electorate is familiar with and understands; and, finally, the party must have a strong and steadfast leader that possesses prime ministerial attributes and can effectively communicate and engage with voters. The research has concluded that of the three political offer elements, the leader is the most important and has the greatest influence on voters' perception of the overall party brand. The leader is essential in ensuring that the electorate is aware of, understands and is engaged with the party's candidates, leadership, policies and ideology, particularly during an election campaign.

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CONTENTS

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT	i
ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xiii
LIST OF TABLES.....	xv
1. CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Introduction.....	1
1.2 Aim of the study	1
1.3 Rationale for the study	1
1.4 Introduction to the location of the study	2
1.5 Objectives of the study.....	3
1.6 Research Questions.....	3
2. CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
2.1. Introduction.....	4
2.2 Commercial Branding.....	4
2.2.1 Branding Defined	4
2.2.2 The importance of brands.....	5
2.2.3 Consumers and brands	6
2.2.3.1 Symbolic Self Completion Theory.....	6
2.2.4 Brand Architecture	7
2.2.5 Communicating the brand.....	8
2.2.6 Differentiation and Positioning.....	10
2.2.7 Brand Equity	11
2.3 Political Branding.....	14
2.3.1 An Introduction to Political Branding.....	14
2.3.2 History of Political Branding.....	14
2.3.3 The Political Product and Offer.....	15
2.3.3.1 The Political Offer Triangle and Memory Associations	15
2.3.4 Political Consumers	18

2.3.5	Communicating the political brand.....	19
2.3.6	Political Leaders and Human Branding	20
2.3.7	Political Brand Equity.....	21
2.3.8	Political Brand Architecture and Strategic Postures	22
2.3.8.1	Strategic Postures.....	23
2.4	Conclusion and identified research gaps	24
3.	CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY	28
3.1	Introduction.....	28
3.2	Philosophical and research approach.....	28
3.3	Methodological choice, strategy and time horizon	29
3.4	Data Collection and Analysis of Research Question One	31
3.5	Data Collection and Analysis of Research Question Two, Three and Four	32
3.6	Data Collection and Analysis of Research Question Five	34
3.7	Justification for the location of the study	34
3.8	Reliability and Validity	35
3.9	Bias	35
3.10	Limitations and Recommendations for Improvement	36
3.11	Ethical Considerations	38
3.12	Conclusion of Methodologies	38
4.	CHAPTER 4 - PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS	39
4.1	Introduction.....	39
4.2	Party awareness	39
4.2.1	Awareness of political parties.....	39
4.2.2	Awareness of national party leaders.....	39
4.2.3	Awareness of parliamentary candidates	40
4.2.4	Awareness of political party colours.....	40
4.2.5	Awareness of political party logos.....	41
4.2.6	Awareness of political party slogans.....	41
4.2.7	Awareness of the result of the 2015 General Election in Rossendale and Darwen	41
4.3	Political product offering association and image presentation of findings	42
4.3.1	Political product offering associations, perceptions and image - The Labour Party	42

4.3.2	Political product offering associations, perceptions and image - The Conservative Party	49
4.3.3	Political product offering associations, perceptions and image - The United Kingdom Independence Party	56
4.4	Political party desired associations, perceptions and image	63
4.5	Commercial v Political brands	66
4.6	Marketing and communication methods	67
4.7	Conclusion of the presentation of findings	67
5.	CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION	68
5.1	Introduction	68
5.2	Discussion of research question one	68
5.2.1	The Labour Party	68
5.2.1.1	Branding and marketing strategies used by the Labour Party	68
5.2.1.2	Awareness of the Labour Party	68
5.2.1.3	Understanding and association of the Labour Party	69
5.2.1.4	Perceptions and image of the Labour Party	69
5.2.1.5	Labour Party conclusions	70
5.2.2	The Conservative Party	71
5.2.2.1	Branding and marketing strategies used by the Conservative Party	71
5.2.2.2	Awareness of the Conservative Party	71
5.2.2.3	Understanding and association of the Conservative Party	71
5.2.2.4	Perceptions and image of the Conservative Party	72
5.2.2.5	Conservative Party conclusions	73
5.2.3	The United Kingdom Independence Party	73
5.2.3.1	Branding and marketing strategies used by the United Kingdom Independence Party	73
5.2.3.2	Awareness of the United Kingdom Independence Party	74
5.2.3.3	Understanding of the United Kingdom Independence Party	74
5.2.3.4	Perceptions and image of the United Kingdom Independence Party	74
5.2.3.5	United Kingdom Independence Party conclusions	76
5.3	Discussion of research question two	77
5.3.1	The Labour Party	77
5.3.2	The Conservative Party	77

5.3.3	The United Kingdom Independence Party	78
5.4	Discussion of research question three	79
5.4.1	The Labour Party.....	79
5.4.2	The Conservative Party.....	79
5.4.3	The United Kingdom Independence Party	80
5.4.4	Conclusion.....	80
5.5	Discussion of research question four	81
5.5.1	Commercial branding	81
5.5.2	Political branding	81
5.6	Discussion of research question five	83
5.7	Conclusion of discussion.....	83
6.	CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSION	84
6.1	Introduction.....	84
6.2	Conclusion of research question one.....	84
6.2.1	Key findings.....	84
6.2.1.1	The Labour Party.....	84
6.2.1.2	The Conservative Party.....	85
6.2.1.3	The United Kingdom Independence Party	85
6.2.2	Conclusions.....	86
6.3	Conclusion of research question two	88
6.3.1	Key findings.....	88
6.3.1.1	The Labour Party.....	88
6.3.1.2	The Conservative Party.....	88
6.3.1.3	The United Kingdom Independence Party	88
6.3.2	Conclusions.....	89
6.4	Conclusion of research question three	91
6.4.1	Key findings.....	91
6.4.1.1	The Labour Party.....	91
6.4.1.2	The Conservative Party.....	91
6.4.1.3	The United Kingdom Independence Party	91
6.4.2	Conclusions.....	92

6.5	Conclusion of research question four	95
6.5.1	Key findings.....	95
6.5.2	Conclusions.....	95
6.6	Conclusion of research question five	97
6.6.1	Key findings.....	97
6.6.2	Conclusions.....	97
6.7	Reflections.....	98
6.7.1	Research strengths and contribution	98
6.7.2	Limitations	98
6.8	Final conclusion	100
7.	CHAPTER 7 - REFERENCES.....	102
8.	CHAPTER 8 - APPENDICES	118
8.1	Appendix 1: Interview design schedule.....	118
8.2	Appendix 2 - Focus group design schedule.....	120
8.3	Appendix 3: Letter of invitation to take part in the research.....	123
8.4	Appendix 4 - Informed consent form.....	124
8.5	Appendix 5: Open codes, axial codes, selective codes and themes.....	126

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Brand Stimuli.....	10
Figure 2: Aaker's Brand Equity Model.....	12
Figure 3: Keller's Consumer-Based Brand Equity Model.....	13
Figure 4: The Political Offer	16
Figure 5: Associate Memory Network Mode Model	17
Figure 6: The Political Offer and Memory Associations of the Conservative Party	17
Figure 7: Conceptual model of political brand equity.....	21
Figure 8: Generic Postures of Strategic Political Marketing	23
Figure 9: Characteristics of Strategic Postures.....	24
Figure 10: Adaptation of Saunders, et al (2011) Research Onion.....	28
Figure 11: Memory association of the Labour Party's political product offering	42
Figure 12: Word cloud depicting the car brands participants associated most with the Labour Party .	47
Figure 13: Word cloud depicting the reasons of associated car brands - Labour Party.....	48
Figure 14: Memory associations of the Conservative Party's political product offering.....	49
Figure 15: Word cloud depicting the car brands participants associated most with the Conservative Party.....	54
Figure 16: Word cloud depicting the reasons of associated car brands - Conservative Party	55
Figure 17: Memory associations of the United Kingdom Independence Party's political product offering	56
Figure 18: Word cloud depicting the car brands participants associated most with the United Kingdom Independence Party	61
Figure 19: Word cloud depicting the reasons of associated car brands - United Kingdom Independence Party	62
Figure 20: The Labour Party's desired memory associations of their political product offering	63
Figure 21: The Conservative Party's desired memory associations of their political product offering .	64
Figure 22: The United Kingdom Independence Party's desired memory associations of their political product offering	65
Figure 23: Proposed adaptation to the Political Offer Triangle	94

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Rossendale and Darwen Elections Results.....	2
Table 2: Methods of marketing communication	8
Table 3: 6 processes of data analysis in thematic analysis	33
Table 4: Participants awareness of political parties	39
Table 5: Participants awareness of national party leaders	39
Table 6: Participants awareness of parliamentary candidates	40
Table 7: Participants' awareness of colours associated with political parties.....	40
Table 8: Participants awareness of political party logos	41
Table 9: Participants' awareness of political party slogans	41
Table 10: Participants' awareness of the complete result of the 2015 General Election	41
Table 11: Key themes and perceptions - overall Labour Party.....	43
Table 12: Key themes and perceptions - Labour Party policies	44
Table 13: Key themes and perceptions - Labour Party leader	45
Table 14: Key themes and perceptions - Labour Party parliamentary candidate	46
Table 15: Key themes and perceptions - overall Conservative Party	50
Table 16: Key themes and perceptions - Conservative Party policies	51
Table 17: Key themes and perceptions - Conservative Party leader.....	52
Table 18: Key themes and perceptions - Conservative Party parliamentary candidate	53
Table 19: Key themes and perceptions - overall United Kingdom Independence Party	57
Table 20: Key themes and perceptions - United Kingdom Independence Party policies	58
Table 21: Key themes and perceptions - United Kingdom Independence Party leader	59
Table 22: Key themes and perceptions - United Kingdom Independence Party parliamentary candidate.....	60
Table 23: Respondents' responses to how they perceive commercial and political brands	66
Table 24: Marketing and communication methods used	67

1. CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study will seek to determine whether political parties in Rossendale and Darwen effectively managed their overall party brand during the 2015 General Election. The research will attempt to further understand the political offer and the elements within it, whilst trying to determine which element, if any, has the greatest influence on voters perceptions of the overall party brand. The research also hopes to determine whether political and commercial brands are similar and if they are perceived differently by voters. The research will draw conclusions from interviewing marketing and campaign managers from political parties; seeking voter's opinions by undertaking focus groups and through an in depth analysis of the academic literature.

1.2 Aim of the study

The aim of this research is to establish whether political parties in Rossendale and Darwen effectively managed their party brand during the 2015 General Election.

1.3 Rationale for the study

Political branding is described within the literature as a comparatively new area of research and has become of great interest to both political parties and practitioners within the past 20 years (Chadwick 2015; Lees-Marshment, 2009; Lilleker, 2005; Peng and Hackley, 2009; Pich and Dean, 2015; Rawson, 2007; Reeves, Chernatony, and Carrigan, 2006; Robinson, 2004; Van Ham, 2001). The ever increasing internet around political brands, highlights the relevance and importance of the subject and the need to understand political branding in much greater detail (Baines, Lewis and Ingham, 1999; French and Smith, 2010; Needham, 2006; Peng and Hackley, 2009; Pich and Dean, 2015; Phipps, Brace-Goven, and Jevons, 2010; Rawson, 2007; Schneider, 2004; Smith, 2005; Smith and French, 2009; Van Ham, 2001).

The rationale for this study is to determine the effectiveness of branding in politics, particularly within Rossendale and Darwen. The research will endeavour to establish whether branding and marketing strategies used by political parties effectively manage the party brand in the run-up to an election and to determine whether voters view commercial brands differently to political brands. The research will ultimately seek to further understand political brands and the political offer through primary and secondary research. The research will develop conclusions which outline which political brands were most effective during the 2015 General Election and the reasons why.

This study will be of interest to political parties both locally and nationally.

1.4 Introduction to the location of the study

The constituency of Rossendale and Darwen is situated in East Lancashire in the North West of England. The seat covers nearly 220 square miles of deep valleys, moorland and small towns, such as Rawtenstall, Bacup, Whitworth and Darwen. Historically the towns that make up this constituency were at the centre of the textile industry. Only a generation ago, the majority of jobs in this area were in textile and slipper manufacture. There are now just a small handful of small to medium-sized manufacturers left in the area. A third of constituents now commute to Greater Manchester with thousands more leaving the constituency each day to work in bigger neighbouring towns, such as Blackburn and Burnley (Keeble and Straw, 2015). Rossendale, in particular has become home to many commuters due to the excellent motorway links it enjoys via the M66, the gateway to the city of Manchester. Rossendale and Darwen has a largely white population with high numbers of homeowners. Unemployment is below the national average, with the majority of constituents working in wholesale, retail, construction and public services (BBC News, 2015).

Rossendale and Darwen is a marginal seat, one which both main parties need to win in order to form a majority government at a general election. During the 2015 general election, Rossendale and Darwen was the 70th target seat for the Labour Party (Labour Party, 2015) and 77th for the Conservative Party (Conservative Party, 2015). Labour has often held the inner-city wards, mainly competing with the Liberal Democrats. The Conservatives have been much more successful in the leafier rural areas and villages (Keeble and Straw, 2015). The seat was created in 1983 and was held by the Conservatives until 1992 when Labour won with a majority of just 120 votes. The majority increased to over 10,000 in the 1997 election which Labour won nationally in what was dubbed a 'landslide election'. The Conservatives regained control of the constituency in 2010 when they formed a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats and it was held again with an increased majority in the 2015 general election. Table 1 shows the election results since 1983. It is clear that, with the exception of the 1992 election when the majority was extremely small, the party which has won the general election nationally has always won a majority in Rossendale and Darwen.

Table 1: Rossendale and Darwen Elections Results

Election Year	Elected Party	Majority (Votes)	Vote Share (%)	Vote Change (+/-)	Party of Government
2015	Conservative	5654	46.6%	+4.8	Conservative
2010	Conservative	4493	41.8%	+7.1	Con/Lib Coalition
2005	Labour	3676	42.9%	-5.8	Labour
2001	Labour	5223	49.0%	-4.6	Labour
1997	Labour	10949	53.6%	+9.7	Labour
1992	Labour	120	43.9%	+4.5	Conservative
1987	Conservative	4982	46.6%	-0.4	Conservative
1983	Conservative	8821	47.0%	N/A (New Seat)	Conservative
Seat created in 1983					

(Electoral Commission, 2016).

1.5 Objectives of the study

1. Investigate branding and marketing strategies adopted by political parties and determine whether or not these effectively managed voters' understanding, awareness, perceptions and image of the party. (Primary data collection in the form of interviews with marketing and campaign managers).
2. Determine whether voters had an overall positive or negative perception of the parties' political product offering as a result of the branding techniques used by political parties in Rossendale and Darwen during the 2015 General Election. (Primary data collection in the form of focus groups).
3. Determine whether one particular element of the political product offering (party, policy, and leader/candidate) has greater influence in managing voters' perceptions of the overall party brand. (Primary data collection in the form of focus groups)
4. Establish whether or not voters view commercial and political branding differently (primary data collection in the form of focus groups with voters).
5. Analyse the similarities of branding within industry and politics (secondary data collection analysis and conclusions).

1.6 Research Questions

1. What branding and marketing strategies are used by political parties and did they effectively influence voters understanding, awareness, perceptions and image of the party?
2. Did the branding strategies used by political parties in Rossendale and Darwen during the 2015 General Election result in voters having an overall positive or negative perception of the party's political product offering?
3. Is one element of the political product offer more influential and effective in terms of managing voters' perceptions of the overall party than the others?
4. Do voters view commercial branding more positively or more negatively than political branding?
5. What are the similarities between political branding and commercial branding?

2. CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Introduction

The main aim of undertaking an in-depth literature review is to ensure that the researcher identifies and fully understands other studies which are closely associated with this research. A literature review will help to determine key areas of research that require further study and development as well as providing a benchmark to be used to outline comparisons, which will allow clear conclusions to be drawn (Creswell, 2009).

Nightingale (2009) highlights the importance of a 'systematic review' of the literature which aims to identify all research addressing a specific subject in order to give a balanced and unbiased summary and not to only include major studies or those consistent with personal opinion. This literature review has endeavoured to give a complete and unbiased critical analysis of the literature around branding and political branding which, in turn, will ensure that all existing research, theories, models and hypotheses are understood (Chadwick, 2015; Maylor and Blackmon, 2005).

This literature review uses academic journal articles and books, newspaper articles and internet resources to establish a balanced and unbiased understanding of the subject. The comparing, contrasting and critiquing of definitions, theories, models and concepts of branding and political branding from the current literature will allow conclusions to be drawn and potential gaps within the research, which require further development through this study, to be identified.

2.2 Commercial Branding

2.2.1 Branding Defined

Branding has been around for many centuries. It is used as a means of distinguishing the goods and services of one producer from those of another. The actual meaning of the word 'brand' originates from the Old Norse word 'brandr' meaning 'to burn' used by cattle farmers to mark their livestock in order to identify them (Keller, 2013). Brands were, and indeed still are, a way in which businesses can put a mark on their products or services in order to distinguish them.

There are many different definitions of branding in the literature, all of which follow a similar theme. Simply defined, branding is, "a key strategy widely used in commercial marketing to make products more attractive to consumers" (Dolnicar, Hurlimann, and Grün, 2014). The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a, "name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers" (American Marketing Association, 2015). Similarly, a definition offered by Molyneux and Holton (2015) states that branding, "differentiates a product, guaranteeing its origins and quality, forming a relationship with the buyer through a variety of techniques, including both mediated and interpersonal communication" (Molyneux and Holton, 2015, p.228). It is clear from these definitions that when branding a product or entity, it is important to effectively communicate the point of difference, or what unique value is offered when compared with competitors. This will, in turn, make the offering more attractive to consumers while forming a relationship with the buyer. Branding is not a one-time event, however, and includes

ongoing efforts to manage and maintain a product or entity's image and identity (Turri, Smith and Kemp, 2013).

Davies (2009) however, suggests that a brand is much more than just a logo or name. A brand represents the 'personality' of the company and is the interface between a company and its consumers. Consumers experience, evaluate, have feelings towards and build associations with the brand in order to perceive value (Elliot, Percy and Pervan, 2011). It is important for the brand to communicate information, minimize risk or increase trust (Knox, 2004; Stephens Balakrishnan, 2009). Davies (2010) concludes that the ultimate aim of a brand, regardless of the format in which it is presented to the consumer, is to represent the implicit values, ideas and personalities that the intended audience can relate to.

2.2.2 The importance of brands

The importance of developing successful brands is becoming increasingly more important, hence the ever increasing interest towards branding within marketing literature (Anisimova, 2014; Balmer, 2010; Burt and Sparks, 2002; Fetscherin and Usunier, 2012; Herstein and Zvilling, 2011; Kaufmann, Loureiro, Basile, and Vrontis, 2012; Leek and Christodoulides, 2012; Melewar, Gotsi, and Andriopoulos, 2012; van Rekom, 2005). Consumer choice has never been so great. Competition within markets has resulted in infinite choice for consumers, resulting in companies now having to look for ways to compete in increasingly crowded marketplaces. Connecting with consumers on an emotional level, attempting to become irreplaceable and creating lifelong relationships through the development of brands is becoming increasingly important. Consumer 'fall in love' with a successful brand, trust it and believe in its superiority (Wheeler, 2013). The success of a brand can ultimately determine the success of the company as a whole.

Technology is constantly advancing making it much more difficult for companies to compete on quality. Companies can no longer predict whether a product will be successful based purely upon the product's quality (Todor, 2014). Therefore there is now an increasing focus upon the importance of developing and managing a successful brand to ensure success in both the short and long term. Kotler and Armstrong (2014) emphasise that a brand is an important asset to a company and a fundamental factor in successfully competing against competitors. They state that the major enduring asset of a company is the brand, suggesting that the brand will outlast the company's specific products and facilities, concluding that brands are extremely powerful assets.

It is critical in today's global market that businesses can compete in the global economy. A successful brand will ensure the product or service offered stands out and is easily distinguishable from that of competitors. Being different from competitors allows firms to survive, but more importantly remain competitive in dynamic markets (Martin, 2015). De Chernatony, McDonald and Wallace (2011) state that it is important for any business to develop their brand as successful brand-building increases profitability by adding value to the product or service, encouraging customers to buy. They conclude by stating brands are extremely important in helping to transform organisations from faceless bureaucracies into ones which are attractive for all stakeholders to deal with.

2.2.3 Consumers and brands

Brands help to minimise the searching and evaluating that consumers undergo before making a purchase (Klijn, Eshuis, and Braun, 2012; Needham, 2006). Brands which have been successfully supported through marketing activity helps consumers to recall previous relevant information about an organisation's brand, products and services, resulting in minimal effort from the consumer to make a purchase decision (De Chernatony, et al, 2011). When buying a product or service, consumers go through a process of problem solving. The customer is in need of a product (the problem), finds organisations which offers the relevant products and seeks more information before finally opting to invest in a particular product thus solving the customer's problem (De Chernatony, et al, 2011). For example, a customer wanting to book a summer holiday (the problem) will seek out travel agents who can provide a solution to their problem. The customer will seek more information through browsing websites and brochures before finally opting to solve their problem and book a summer holiday. Brands are an important aspect of persuading consumers when they are evaluating solutions to their problems. Keller (2013) argues that they provide a way in which consumers can make simplified decisions when choosing which product or service to invest in.

Brands provide many more important functions to consumers. Brands allow the manufacturer or source of a product to be identified allowing customers to assign responsibility to them. Many brands have special meanings to consumers due to familiarity with the products and services, or perhaps because of previous marketing campaigns. Past experiences with brands results in consumers understanding which brands satisfy their needs and which ones do not (Keller, 2013).

The brand is traditionally aimed mainly at customers, however, the brand is increasingly becoming a central part of the organisation in order to ensure all stakeholders can understand, communicate and connect to the organisation (Merrilees, Miller, and Herington, 2012; Schultz, Hatch, and Larsen, 2001). In order for a brand to be successful it is important that there is interaction with a broader group of stakeholders, rather than just consumers (Hankinson, 2004). Exposure to multiple stakeholders both internally and externally now means that the responsibility for the brand lies with the organisation as a whole rather than solely being the responsibility of the marketing department (Abimbola and Vallaster, 2007; Anisimova, 2014; Roper and Davies, 2007).

2.2.3.1 Symbolic Self Completion Theory

Gollwitzer, Wicklund and Hilton (1982) developed the Symbolic Self Completion Theory which suggests that a combination of social and psychological factors are involved in status projection. People attempt to define themselves in terms of particular valued identifiers (Carr and Vignoles, 2011). Humans are social beings and therefore live within a social environment, rather than independently of others. It is because of this that humans want to be accepted by their peers. They compare themselves to others and they strive for prestige, status and belonging within society, particularly in modern times through the consumption of certain products and brands (Hammerl, Dorner, Foscht and Brandstätter, 2016). There have been many studies which have highlighted the significance of social influence in the decision making process of consumers (Bond and Smith, 1996;

Childers and Rao, 1992; Cialdini and Goldstein, 2004; Ebn, 2009; Fitzgerald and Arndt, 2002; Girard, 2010; Nolan, Schultz, Cialdini, Goldstein and Griskevicius, 2008).

Brands are a way of consumers symbolically communicating with society. Blumer (1969) identified three main propositions of symbolic interaction; firstly, humans react towards brands on the basis of the meaning the particular brand has to them personally; secondly, those particular meanings originate from interactions with others; and thirdly, those meanings are processed in an interpretive process as the consumer is concerned with the symbolic identification of a particular brand (Hammerl, et al, 2016). It is through these symbols that consumers can construct particular attributes about themselves that society will see. A consumer that buys a particular brand or product, which has symbolic meanings attached to them, can more easily communicate to society their desired status, show their individuality, establish belonging or even fulfil role expectations (Goffman, 1961; Richins, 1994). Symbolic Self Completion Theory basically suggests that consumers attempt to distinguish themselves from others through the purchasing of particular brands or products which have specific symbolic attributes attached to them, in order to show off their own identity (Berger and Heath, 2007).

2.2.4 Brand Architecture

The concept of brands was traditionally focused upon products and services, but is now increasingly being applied to the entire organisation (Balmer and Greyser, 2003; Dacin and Brown, 2006; de Chernatony, 2002; Fombrun and van Riel, 2004; Ind, 1998; Muzellec and Lambkin, 2009; Schultz et al., 2001). Corporate and product branding are two very different things. Corporate branding is referred to by Xie and Boggs (2006) and de Chernatony (1997) as a strategy in which brand and corporate name are the same, whereas product branding involves developing separate brand identities for the different products or services a business sells. Product and corporate brands both share the same objective of creating differentiation and preference (Knox and Bickerton, 2003). However, unlike product branding, corporate branding ignores product features and focuses on a well-defined set of values (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000; Muzellec and Lambkin, 2009).

Product brands are essentially restricted to the one product. Examples of product brands include Sprite under the Coca-Cola umbrella and Lux and Dove from Unilever. The imagery can vary from one brand to another in product branding, even though a single company may own more than one product brand (Davies and Chun, 2002). There are many reasons why organisers may choose to product brand over corporate brand, most notably that the brand can be customised, as well as its marketing activity, to meet the needs of a specific targeted group of consumers (Davis, 2010; Keller, 2013).

In contrast to product branding, corporate branding enables a firm to use the vision and culture of the whole organisation in order to identify a unique selling point and differentiate itself from competitors (Balmer, 2001; de Chernatony, 1999; Xie and Boggs, 2006). Bravo, de Chernatony, Matute and Pina (2013) suggest that due to increasing media costs of product advertising, many organisations are now moving towards greater use of corporate branding. Organisations are unifying the product brands within their portfolio, developing clear links and associations with the corporation. As a result of this,

consumers are more likely to select products by assessing the values of competing firms rather than the individual product brands. Corporate brands have the ability to increase and develop an organisation's visibility, recognition and reputation to a much greater extent than product brands. Examples of corporate brands include IBM, Apple, Royal Bank of Scotland and Virgin to name but a few. Keller (2013) identifies a key advantage to corporate branding suggesting that a corporate name or image is more likely to evoke associations towards common products and the shared benefits and attributes; values and programs; relationships and people; and finally, corporate credibility. Such associations can be critical in positively effecting brand equity and marketing performance of both individual products and the company as a whole.

According to Urde (2003) there are four basic "brand architectures" which most branding strategies will follow. These include: corporate branding, product branding, corporate-and-product branding (the corporate brand being most prominently used), and product-and-corporate branding (product brands being most prominently used). Virgin for example focus heavily upon its corporate brand, where others, for example Dove, owned by Unilever focus their strategy upon the product brand. Other organisations however actively swap their strategy between product and corporate to meet the needs and wants of the different markets they seek to target.

2.2.5 Communicating the brand

Brand communications is about the sustaining of the brand in the market (Davis, 2009). Branding requires a significant contribution from advertising and marketing communications. Organisations that cut their brand advertising, for example in times of recession, reduce the significance and power of their brands (Fill, 2013). In order to effectively manage the brand, and in turn consumer's perceptions, effective marketing communication methods must be used in order to provoke positive responses from consumers.

Organisations must develop a marketing strategy, using techniques which will promote, persuade, engage and develop a relationship with consumers. The marketing strategy must be communicated through different mediums to reach the relevant audiences. Table 2 highlights the different mediums of marketing communication and the advantages and disadvantages.

Table 2: Methods of marketing communication

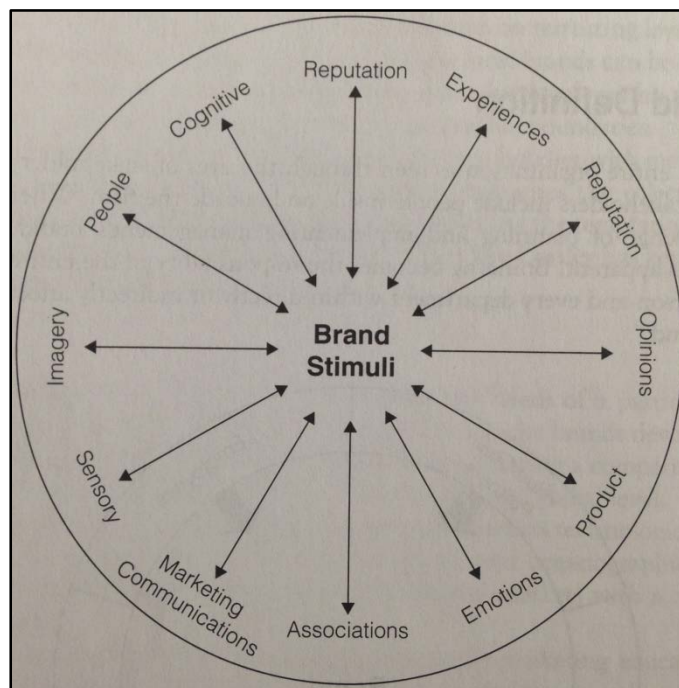
Medium	Advantages	Disadvantages
Television	Mass coverage High reach Impact of sight, sound and image Favourable image Attention grabbing	Low selectivity Short message life High absolute costs High product costs
Radio	Local coverage Potentially low costs High frequency Flexible Low production costs Well-segmented audiences	Audio only Clutter Low attention-getting capabilities Fleeting message

Magazines	Segmentation potential Quality reproduction High information content Longevity Multiple readers	Long lead time for ad placement Visual only Lack of flexibility
Newspapers	High coverage Low cost Short lead time for ad placement Ads can placed in interest sections Reader controls exposure Can be used for coupons	Short life Clutter Low attention-getting capabilities Poor reproduction quality Selective reader exposure
Social Media/Online	Cheaper than traditional advertising activities High coverage Short lead time for ad placement Organisation can interact easily and quickly with consumers	Managing social media adverts / comments / feedback etc can be time consuming Difficult to measure results
Outdoor	Location specific High repetition Easily noticed	Short exposure time therefore requires a short ad Poor image Local restrictions
Direct Mail	High selectivity Reader controls exposure High information content Opportunities for repeat exposure	High cost per contact Poor image (junk mail) Clutter

Armstrong and Kotler (2015) highlight the significance of communicating the brand by stating organisations must manage their brand extremely carefully, first and foremost ensuring the brands positioning is continuously communicated to consumers. It is common for brand marketers of large, international companies to spend huge amounts of money on advertising and marketing communications to create brand awareness and build loyalty amongst consumers. Internationally, "Coca-cola spends \$2.9 billion, annually to advertise its many brands, GM spends \$3.3 billion, and P&G an astounding \$9.3 billion" (Kotler and Armstrong, 2015, p.259).

Davis (2010) suggests that the creation of a positive perception through communication is vital to the overall success of an organisation. Perception is, "simply the process by which we become aware of something, triggered by a variety of stimuli" (Davis, 2010, p.16). Figure 1 depicts the various stimuli by which consumers create associations. It is important that the various advertising and marketing communications methods used by companies successfully assist consumers in creating associations with the brand through the stimuli methods outlined in Figure 1. The ultimate aims being to reinforce the positive qualities of the brand, inspire customers to purchase and build customer loyalty.

Figure 1: Brand Stimuli



(Davis, 2010, p.16)

2.2.6 Differentiation and Positioning

Differentiation involves the creation of a brand that is perceived to be both unique and distinctive in comparison to the competition. (Davcik and Sharma, 2015; Kotler and Keller, 2012, Porter, 1998). The primary objective is to create a set of meaningful differences that makes the offer from one company distinctive from those of its competitors (Kotler and Keller, 2012).

Developing strong product brands is important to successfully obtain differentiation, however, as a result of ever more complex markets and an increase of easily imitated products and services, credible differentiation is becoming difficult to achieve. Because of this, it is now increasingly important that the overall corporate values and images emerge as the key elements of the organisations differentiation strategy (Hatch and Schultz, 2001). It is difficult for any organisation to achieve and sustain differentiation in highly competitive markets, but particularly difficult for low-involvement brands (Elliot, et al, 2011, Shankar, Berry and Dotzel, 2009; Xie and Boggs, 2006). De Chernatony, et al (2011) conclude that differentiation is the foundations upon which a brand will grow, as no brand can exist in the long term unless consumers can distinguish the brand from its competitors, reinforcing the importance of an organisation achieving differentiation.

In order to differentiate a brand from competitors, an organisation needs to position their brand and communicate selected brand associations to customers effectively (Beverland, Napoli and Lindgreen, 2007; Keller, 2013; Maarit Jalkala and Keränen, 2014). Brand positioning is an important strategic decision (Hooley, Piercy, and Nicoulaud, 2007; Keller and Lehmann, 2006) and fundamental to an organisation's marketing management and advertising practices (Blankson and Kalafatis, 2007;

Fuchs and Diamantopoulos, 2010; Keller and Lehmann, 2006; Singh, Kalafatis, and Ledden, 2014). Positioning is defined as, "the act of designing the company's offer and image so that it occupies a distinct and valued place in the target customers minds" (Kotler and Keller, p.396, 2012).

Typically, a successful positioning strategy is linked to an organisation's key capabilities (Fuchs and Diamantopoulos, 2010). The positioning strategy should highlight an organisation's unique way of delivering value to customers (Keller, 2013), aid the process of securing consumers' trust (McQuiston, 2004; Roberts and Merrilees, 2007), promote the quality product or service offered (Bendixen, Bukasa, and Abratt, 2004; Mitchel, King, and Reast, 2001), and, finally, reduce the customer's perceived risk (Glynn, 2011; Homburg, Klarmann, and Schmitt, 2010). The more the brand owner succeeds in creating a brand that is recognizable to consumers and the more he employs marketing activities to support the brand, the more effective the brand will be (Danesi, 2006; Lees-Marshment, 2009; Loken, Ahluwalia, and Houston, 2010).

2.2.7 Brand Equity

Marketing communications, differentiation techniques and effective positioning are ways of developing and sustaining powerful brands. Once an organisation's brand is successfully launched and developed, it is important to monitor the brand's strength and the equity which has been built up by the brand (de Charnatony, et al, 2011). Brand equity is defined as, "stakeholder response in the form of an increase in customers, revenues, and margins that would not be possible without marketing support to build awareness" (Davis, 2010, p.32). Brand equity has been proven to be positively related to, purchase intentions and consumer preference (Cobb-Walgreen, Ruble and Donthu, 1995), price insensitivity (Erdem, Swait and Louviere, 2002), market share (Agarwal and Rao, 1996), shareholder value (Kerin and Sethuraman, 1998) and the product's resilience in harmful situations (Dawar and Pillutla, 2000). The importance of brands is clear from these considerations which in turn explains why a large body of academic literature relates to the measurement of brand equity (Battistoni, Fronzetti Colladon and Mercorelli, 2013).

There are two perspectives of brand equity: firm-based, which focuses upon the value of the brand to the company (Simon and Sullivan, 1993) and consumer-based, which emphasises the measurement and conceptualisation on consumers (Leone, et al, 2006; Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2015).

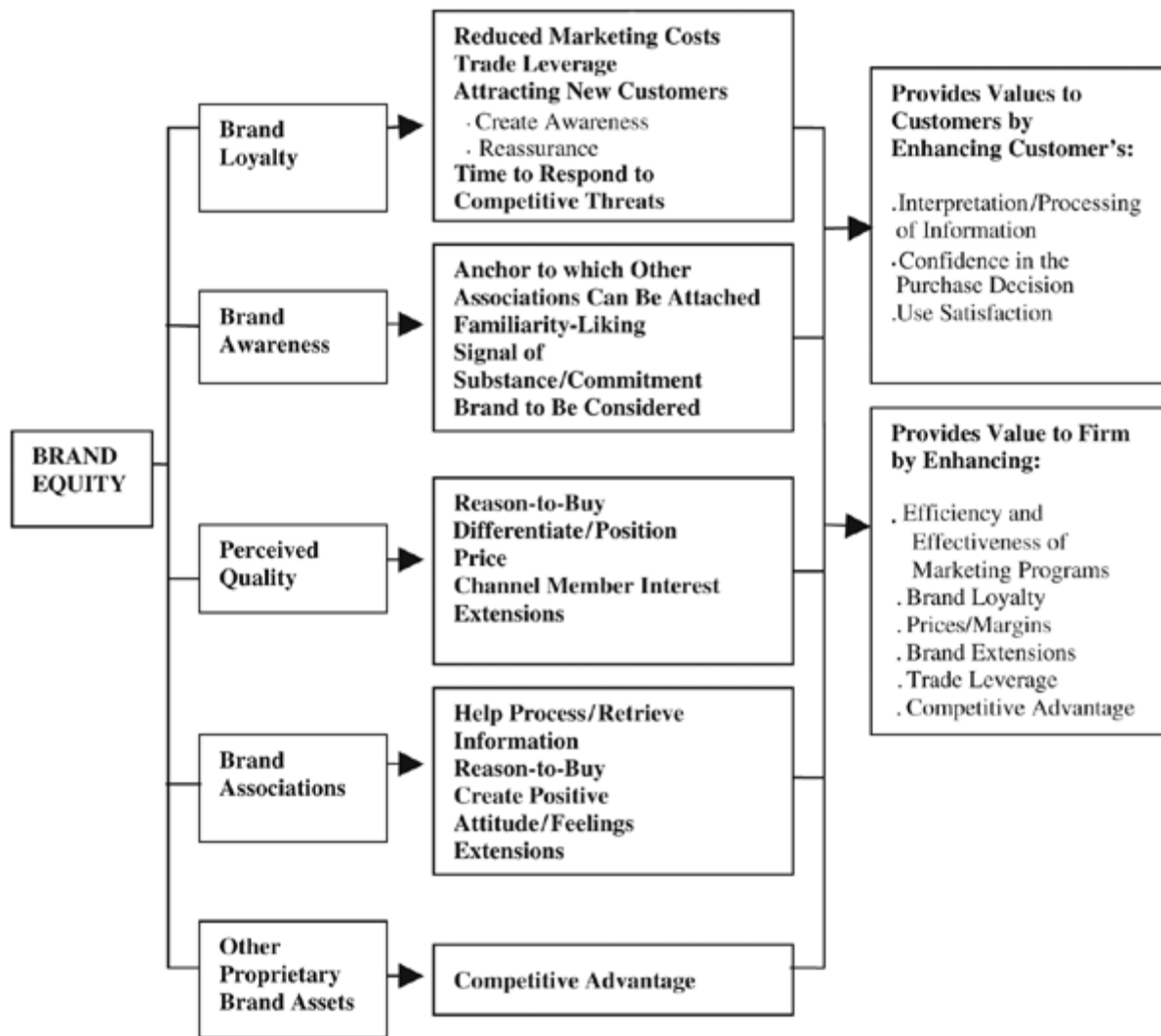
Researchers have yet to reach a consensus about which of the two perspectives provides the best estimate of such a multi-faceted and complex construct (Buil, de Chernatony and Martínez., 2013; de Oliveira, Silveira, and Luce, 2015; Raggio and Leone, 2007).

Consumer-based brand equity, which focuses upon perceptions and consumer behaviour, is of greater relevance to this research. Aaker (1991) defines consumer-based brand equity as, "a set of brand assets and liabilities linked to the brand, its name and symbol, that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm's customers" (Aaker, 1991, p.15). According to Keller (1993), consumer-based brand equity is shaped by both the quality and quantity of brand associations in memory. Brands which develop detailed knowledge structures within the consumer's memory possess greater brand equity in comparison to their competitors (Dwivedi,

Johnson and McDonald, 2015). The consumer-based brand equity approach provides a greater insight into consumer behaviour which can then be converted into actionable strategies (Torres, Augusto and Lisboa, 2015).

The conceptualisation of consumer-based brand equity was developed by both Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993). Conceptual dimensions of brand equity were identified by Aaker (1991) as, brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty and other proprietary brand assets i.e. trademarks and patents. With the exception of proprietary brand assets, which are not significant of consumer based brand equity, the first four dimensions of brand equity however represent consumer perceptions and reactions, see Figure 2. According to the model positive and favourable associations provide value to both the customer and firm.

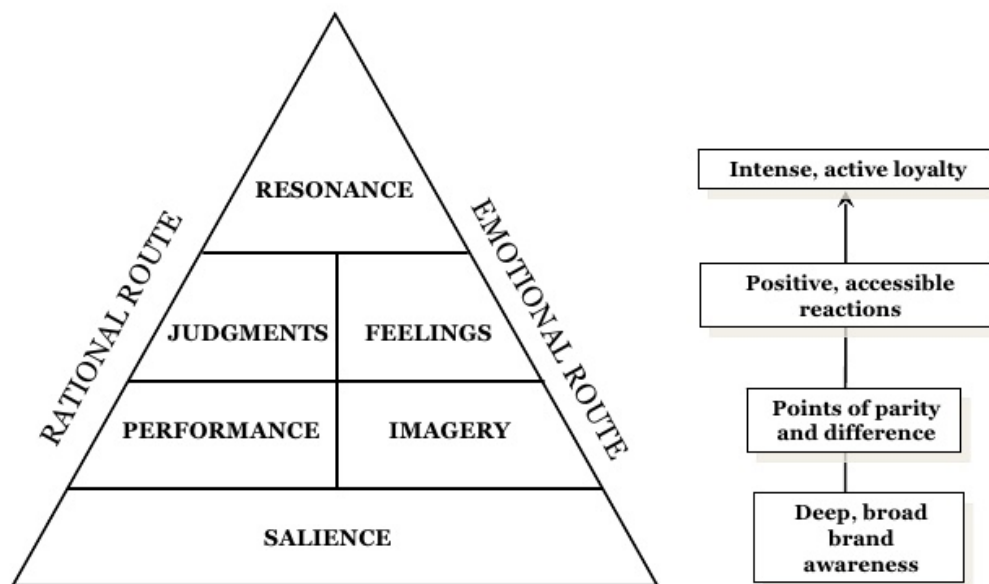
Figure 2: Aaker's Brand Equity Model



(Aaker, 1991, p.33)

According to the conceptualisation of consumer-based brand equity by Keller (1993) brands have a greater positive value if consumers react more favourably to the marketing mix of a product or service which the consumers are familiar with rather than to the marketing mix of an identical product which is unbranded. Keller (1993) measures brand equity by using different dimensions, for example, favourability, and uniqueness (see Figure 3). It is these associations that consumers utilise to construct the basis of knowledge around a particular brand. This knowledge is then structured in the minds of customers in the form of associative links and nodes (Ahmed, Lodhi and Ahmad, 2015). The overall concept behind the model is that in order to develop a strong brand, businesses must build and shape positive thoughts, feelings, beliefs, opinions, and perceptions in customers' minds. This is done through a series of key steps: identification, establishing meaning, eliciting proper customer response and, finally, converting these responses into intense active loyalty (Keller, 2013).

Figure 3: Keller's Consumer-Based Brand Equity Model



(Keller, 2013, p.60)

Despite Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993), and others, conceptualising brand equity, a scale for its measurement was never operationalised. Several methodologies to attempt to quantify the intangible asset have been developed, the majority of which employ very complex statistical procedures (Park and Srinivasan, 1994; Leuthesser, Kohli and Harich, 1995), which in turn makes them difficult to understand and be used effectively by practising marketers. Simpler, more effective, empirical methods of measuring customer-based brand equity include direct approaches and indirect approaches (Christodoulides and de Chernatony, 2010). Direct approaches attempt to measure the phenomenon by focusing on consumers' preferences (Srinivasan, 1979; Park and Srinivasan, 1994), or utilities (Kamakura and Russell, 1993; Swait, Erdem, Louvière and Dubelaar, 1993), whereas indirect approaches measure the brand equity through demonstrable manifestations or through an outcome variable such as a price premium (Yoo and Donthu, 2001; Pappu, Quester and Cooksey,

2005). In order to understand and measure brand equity the organisation must first understand what their customers' value within a particular situational context. It is crucial for both brand managers and market researchers to understand how their brand contributes to the overall product experience (Christodoulides and de Chernatony, 2010) For example, the customers of Aldi and Lidl perceive value in the context of low prices, whereas a customer of Selfridges is less interested in price and more interested in customer service and the overall shopping experience.

2.3 Political Branding

2.3.1 An Introduction to Political Branding

Political branding is described within the literature as a comparatively new area of research and has become of great interest to political parties within the past 20 years (Chadwick 2015; Lees-Marshment, 2009; Lilleker, 2005; Peng and Hackley, 2009; Pich and Dean, 2015; Rawson, 2007; Reeves, Chernatony, and Carrigan, 2006; Robinson, 2004; Van Ham, 2001). The ever increasing research and interest around political brands, highlights the relevance and importance of the subject and the need to understand political branding in much greater detail (Baines, Lewis and Ingham, 1999; French and Smith, 2010; Needham, 2006; Peng and Hackley, 2009; Pich and Dean, 2015; Phipps, Brace-Goven, and Jevons, 2010; Rawson, 2007; Schneider, 2004; Smith, 2005; Smith and French, 2009; Van Ham, 2001).

2.3.2 History of Political Branding

Marketing and branding is now rooted in every election campaign in the UK. From small parish council elections to general elections, political parties are using marketing and branding techniques to influence the electorate. There is no doubt that the birth and early development of marketing and branding in politics has its roots in the history of political communication in the United States (Maarek, 1995). Between the presidential elections of 1952 and 1960, marketing and branding techniques used by political parties to influence the electorate became an incontrovertible practice. These methods were quickly imitated by other western democracies and have now been adopted the world over.

As can be seen by this literature review, there is an increasingly active dialogue between practitioners and academics, both of which have contributed to the theory and practices of political marketing and branding (Harris and Lock, 2010). Within the UK, many believe that the use of marketing and branding has only truly been adopted by political parties within the last two decades (Butler and Ranney, 1992; Franklin, 2004; Gunter, Saltzis and Campbell, 2015; McNair, 2007; Scammell, 1995). The UK is increasing constantly the adoption of marketing and branding within politics but at a much slower and controlled way than in the United States however, where millions of dollars are spent on elections campaigns (Chadwick, 2015).

Wring (1996) developed the standard evolutionary model of political marketing. The model has three states; propaganda, media and marketing orientation approaches. The propaganda stage has been identified in UK politics as early as the first half of the twentieth century. Prior to the Second World War, any form of electioneering or advertising by political parties was seen as 'propaganda'. Although

in a very simple and unsophisticated form, political marketing has been used for many years. The 'media' stage has been identified as starting in the 1950s when popular television and consumer marketing in the commercial sector began to take form. Wring (1996) states that the introduction of such marketing techniques within the commercial sector led to the need for political parties to undertake coherent party image and brand management. The final stage, 'strategic marketing orientation approach', was adopted in the 1970s by both the Conservative and Labour Parties. This was when the use of political marketing and brand management truly began to take form in British politics (Chadwick, 2015, Whitelock, Whitelock and Van-Heerde, 2010; Wring, 1996). Although it is only relatively recently that sophisticated marketing, and party and leader brand management strategies and techniques have been used by political parties in the UK, simplistic methods have been being used for many years. Harris and Lock (2010) believe that these early foundations of political marketing and branding methods were strengthened by the ever growing professionalism of campaign management seen in the United States.

Due to the ever growing interest in political marketing and branding, quality research has been undertaken which has truly helped to shape the current form of the discipline. Newman and Sheth (1987), O'shaughnessy (1990), in his vital work 'Phenomenon of Political Marketing,' increased the interest of both academics and practitioners in this area. Since then, Newman (1999) provided a 'Handbook of Political Marketing'; Henneberg (2004) addressed the challenges faced by the discipline and Butler and Harris (2009) and Ormrod, Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy (2013) helpfully reviewed and further developed the research. Presently academics continue to develop the literature around political marketing and branding, but there is still a long way to go before the discipline is fully understood.

2.3.3 The Political Product and Offer

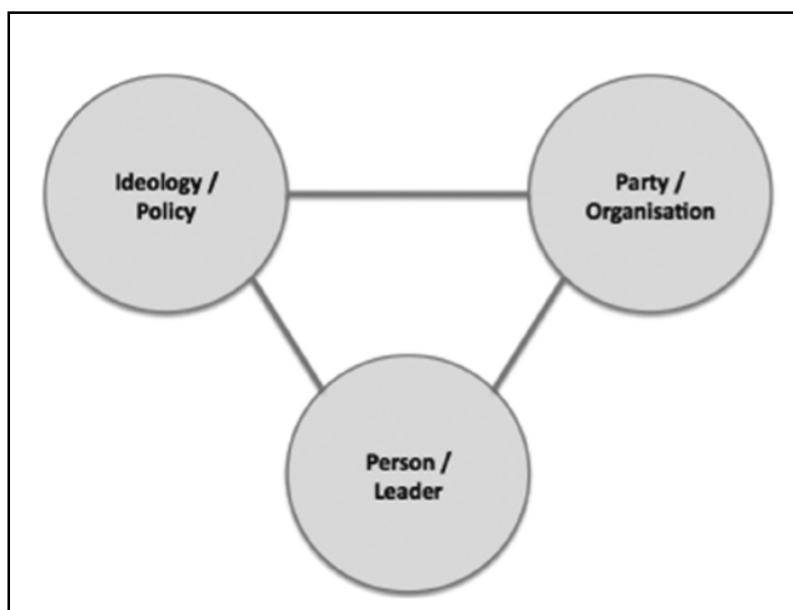
The products and the process of exchange in politics are not as simple as the majority of commercial transactions. There is varying opinion in the literature of what the political product actually is. Butler and Collins (1994) proposed that the political product is best described as a conglomerate consisting of three key parts: the multi-component offer i.e. person, party and ideology; loyalty and whether or not the offering can be changed or transformed post-election. Lees-Marshment (2003) describes different products which are offered in politics, these include: the leader, MPs and candidates, membership, staff, symbols, policies and even activities such as conferences. Harrop (1990) believes that the political party's image and policies are the key products. Farrell and Wortmann (1987) believe party image, leader image and manifesto make up the political product, as does Worcester and Mortimore (2005) who proposed the 'political triangle' based on issues and the image of both the party and leader. Although there are varying opinions, the majority agree that in some form or another, the political product is made up of the party policies, the party's image and finally the party's leadership (Speed, Butler and Collins, 2015).

2.3.3.1 The Political Offer Triangle and Memory Associations

Butler and Collins (1994) proposed an approach to the political offer which has been widely recognised by academics (Baines and Egan, 2001; Hughes and Dann, 2009; Ormrod, Henneberg and

O'shaugnessy, 2013; Ormrod and Savigny, 2012). The proposed approach is a multi-component phenomenon that combines the party, the person and the ideology. The party component refers to the actual political party or organisation which is seeking to win power or retain it. The person component in the model references the specific candidate in an election or the actual party leader. Finally, the ideology component is associated with the principles and policies proposed to the voter, through such things as the party's election manifesto. Figure 4 depicts the three elements which Butler and Collins suggest form the basis of the voter's knowledge and awareness of a political brand. There is agreement within the literature that the tripartite political offer developed by Butler and Collins can be interpreted as a brand (French and Smith 2010; Needham 2006; Smith and French 2009; Speed, et al, 2015).

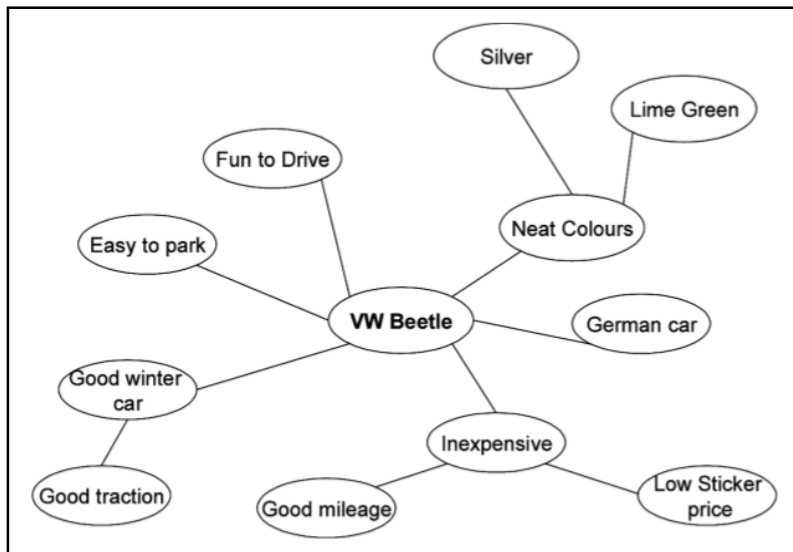
Figure 4: *The Political Offer*



(Butler and Collins, 1994, p.21)

Speed, et al (2015) developed Butler and Collins theory further to combine both the Political Offer Triangle and the Associative Network Memory Mode theories. The Associative Network Memory Mode model is used within contemporary branding analysis and helps to depict and analyse the way in which brand associations are structured in the minds of consumers (Anderson 1983; Keller 1993). A brand is seen as a valuable asset to any organisation, aiding competitive advantage if the memory associations meet the following criteria: are favourably and positively evaluated by the consumer; unique and distinguishable from competitors and strongly held by the consumer. This will ensure that the brand can be accessed easily and repeatedly (Speed, et al, 2015). Figure 5 shows an example of an associate network memory mode developed for a Volkswagen Beetle automobile.

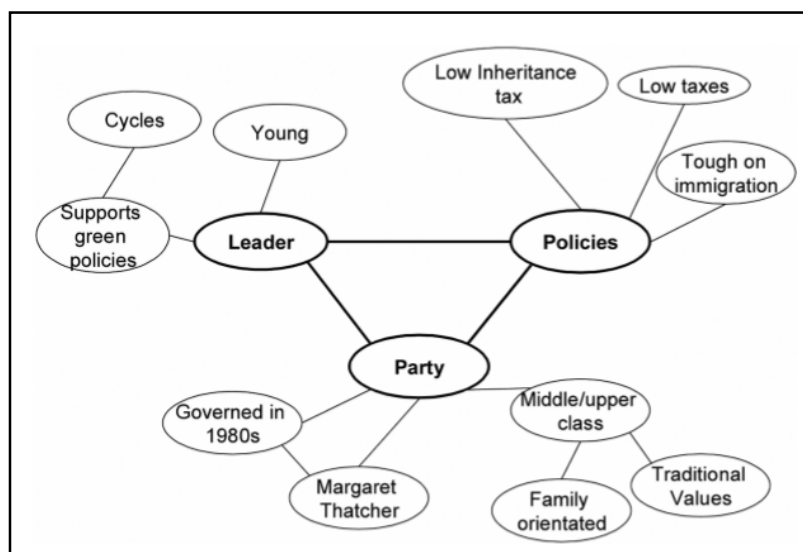
Figure 5: Associate Memory Network Mode Model



(John, Loken, Kim and Basu Monga, 2006, p.553)

French and Smith (2010) developed the framework outlined by Speed, et al (2015) to illustrate the possible set of memory associations of the British Conservative Party which can be seen in Figure 6. The person element of the framework is David Cameron, Leader of the Conservative Party. The party element is the Conservative Party itself. Political parties have associations which arise from the party origins, previous positions on policy and past actions (Evans 2008; de Chernatony and White, 2002). The final element of the framework, ideology, is associated with the manifesto and policy positions of the Conservative Party. Policy positions and manifestos signal to the electorate the ideological position of a political party in terms of left wing-right wing, progressive-conservative, internationalist-nationalist, and so on (Speed, et al, 2015). The framework helps to identify the different components that make up the overall product offering of the Conservative Party.

Figure 6: The Political Offer and Memory Associations of the Conservative Party



(French and Smith, 2010, p.730)

There are two distinct challenges for brand managers to concentrate on. Firstly, the current associations that the electorate holds with the brand must be identified. Secondly, the set of associations must be developed and changed to ensure that they are positive in the minds of the electorate. This can be done in several ways: by adding new associations; developing and strengthening existing positive associations and dropping associations which are unfavourable. This can be achieved through marketing techniques and strategies. To be done correctly, the political party must focus on achieving a particular favourable position in the minds of the electorate through consistent and integrated activities, commonly known as the practice of 'positioning' (Keller, 2013).

In contrast to commercial product offerings, the political product offered to the electorate creates problems for the marketing and brand management of a political party. The nature of the multi-component offer means that the three dimensions cannot be offered to voters separately. This results in the electorate having to undergo a complex cost-benefit analysis, rarely seen in the commercial sector, to determine in which party to invest their vote. Voters, for example, may be supportive of a particular policy or manifesto but not supportive of the party's leader, or supportive of a particular leader but not supportive of the ideological thinking of the party, and so on. This ultimately makes communicating the brand and its promises more problematical for the party as well as making it more difficult for the electorate to make a decision.

2.3.4 Political Consumers

The consumer is central to any exchange process, in politics the consumer is the electorate (Lees-Marshment, 2001; Lilleker and Scullion, 2008; Lock and Harris, 1996; Newman, 1994; Shama, 1976; Smith and Saunders, 1990). The electorate consumes the 'product' when they 'purchase' the political product offered on Election Day by supporting with their vote the party's local candidate, leader and policies (Farrell and Wortman, 1987). The buying process is the act of voting, the actual purchase can only be made on Election Day (Lees-Marshment, 2001; Newman, 1994). This process offers a simple and straightforward relationship, whereby the political consumer (the electorate) purchases a political product (leader, party and policies) on the day of the election (Lilleker and Scullion, 2009).

Lock and Harris (1996) identified several key differences between political products and commercial products or services which impact considerably upon consumer choice and behaviour.

"All voters make their choices on the same day (with a few exceptions, such as postal and proxy voters) while consumers do not. There is no price directly or indirectly attached to voting or the choice of party, which sharply differentiates it from making a purchase. A voter has to live with the collective choice, even though it might not have been his or her own preference, but consumers can often get a refund on their purchase. Winner takes all in the UK "first past the post" system not proportional representation. The political party or candidate is a complex, intangible product which voters cannot untangle. The possibility of introducing a new brand in the form of a new party is far more difficult and unusual than it is in the commercial arena" (Lock and Harris, 1996, p.14)

According to O'Shaughnessy and Henneberg (2002), the electorate view the political product different to commercial products and services. They state that voters look for shared values and deeper symbols which are related to particular political parties or candidates. Consumers buying commercial

products often seek a product which closely meets their wants and needs, such as quality, price brand associations, etc. In politics, party policies, leader and image can all be change significantly between one election and the next in order to ensure that the party has the best chance of winning on Election Day. This is significantly different to commercial brands, which try hard to ensure they are consistent and factually correct in their branding and marketing efforts (Peng and Hackley, 2009). However, both political and commercial consumers will disregard messages within the media, whether political or commercial if they are not felt to be personally relevant (Vakratsas and Ambler, 1999).

Powell (1998) suggests that the electorate's attitude towards political parties is formed by education, family, media usage and peers. Although this may also be true of certain commercial brands, O'Shaughnessy (2002) states that it is important to recognise that the weighting of influencing factors, such as family, religion, ethnicity and social class, vary between commercial brand choice and political allegiance.

2.3.5 Communicating the political brand

Just like commercial organisations, political parties must develop a marketing strategy, using techniques which will promote, persuade, engage and develop a relationship with consumers. Political parties use very similar techniques, like those outlined in Table 2 (Chapter 2.3.5). However, unlike in the commercial sector, political parties often use negative campaigning techniques, i.e. any statement or communication that criticises the opponent (Benoit, 1999; Buell and Sigelman, 2009; Geer, 2006; Lau and Pomper, 2004; Ridout and Walter, 2015) when communicating their product offering and brand, particularly during election periods. Through negative campaigning political parties attempt to become the electorate's preferred party by encouraging voters to feel negatively towards the alternative candidate or party (Budesheim, Houston and DePaola, 1996; Lau, Sigelman, & Rovner, 2007; Westen 2007; Walter and Vliegenthart, 2010). Although it is not unheard of for commercial organisations to use negative campaigning, such a technique is rarely used.

Political parties must decide on one very common and crucial aspect of their election campaign: do they prioritise and promote their assets or do they draw attention to the weaknesses of their rivals'. Within the political science literature this choice is conceptualised under two categories: positive and negative campaigning. Commercial organisations tend to focus upon the positives and benefits of their own products and services rather than focusing on the negative aspects of their competitors'. This is a distinct difference between the marketing and branding strategies of commercial and political markets.

The way in which political parties communicate their brand and product offering during an election is affected by the particular characteristics of the party system in which they operate (Ridout and Walter, 2015). Several studies have documented that negative campaigning strategies in a multi-party system are often used less than in a two-party system (Elmelund-Praestaeker, 2010; Hansen and Pedersen, 2008; Kaid and Holtz-Bacha, 2006; Walter, Brug, and Praag, 2013). Although there are many different political parties in the UK, in recent history there have only generally been two main parties that have

won enough seats to form a majority government, the Labour Party and the Conservative Party. However, it is important to realise that because a multi-party system operates within the UK, negative campaigning may not be a successful strategy. Negative campaigning may result in a decline of support for the 'attacked' party, but does not necessarily result in an increase in support for the 'attacking' party. Voters often identify with more than one party and, therefore, may alternatively vote for a similar party, perhaps one that offers similar policies, or one that may be on the same side of the political spectrum as their first choice (Schmitt, 2002; Tillie, 1995; Van der Eijk and Niemo"ller, 1983).

2.3.6 Political Leaders and Human Branding

Thomson (2006) identifies a human brand as a well-known persona who is the focus of marketing communications efforts. In political marketing the party leader is a major component of the overall party brand. All political leaders are spokespeople for their party and, therefore, are considered to be a key competitive resource that must be utilised (Speed, et al, 2015). Chernatony and White (2002) and Smith (2001) state that a political leader can effectively develop and portray societal and emotional values to an electorate far easier than generic marketing techniques communicated by the political party's marketing department. The party leader can be positioned in such a way that an image of the candidate is created which emphasises specific, positive personality features and, at the same time, presents popular policies and ideas relating to the country's social and economic issues (Cwalina and Falkowski, 2015). The importance that human brands play in the overall branding strategy of a political party is possibly the strongest contrast between commercial and political branding. Although it is not unusual for commercial brands to have a spokesperson, often as a promotional resource, many do not. A spokesperson of a commercial brand is usually an actor or celebrity who does not have any decision-making rights with respect to the brand, unlike political leaders (Speed, et al, 2015).

The leader of a party is extremely important to the overall party brand. A politician's image is associated with how the electorate perceive their personal characteristics, their leadership potential and, often most importantly, the surrounding messages which are communicated through word of mouth in everyday conversation between friends and family and, crucially, the mass media (Cwalina and Falkowski, 2015). A political leader's image is often constructed in a specific way for a specific purpose, usually to increase popularity amongst the electorate and in turn increase vote share at elections. Creating an image of the leader which evokes positive associations and provides the candidate with additional positive values such as friendly and caring personality and ethical principles, contributes immensely to the emotional reaction towards the politician by the electorate (Cwalina, Falkowski, and Kaid, 2000; Cwalina, Falkowski, and Newman 2009). It is not unusual for the constructed image of the leader not to truthfully reflect their 'real' attributes; it is purely designed to evoke a positive reaction from the receiver. However, it is crucial that in order for the constructed image to be convincing, the leader must possess effective personality and oratorical skills (Cwalina and Falkowski, 2015).

There are many risks associated with human branding and this is why many businesses choose not to incorporate such brands into their marketing activities. However, due to the very nature of the

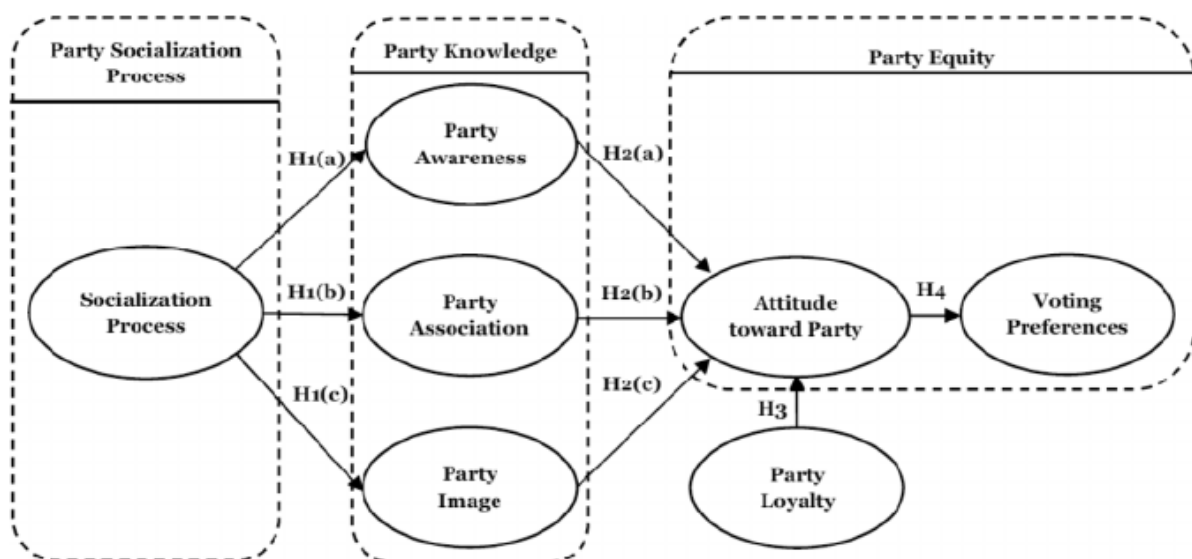
leader's role within a political party, they have no choice but to develop their leader as a brand. Political leaders are real individuals who are interviewed, photographed and challenged on a daily basis. The electorate do not only seek information relating to the leader and their party through the party's own communication efforts but also through media over which the party has little control, such as the radio, television, social media and newspapers.

2.3.7 Political Brand Equity

There are number of ways to measure brand equity (Aaker, 1991; Keller, 2003; Na, Marshall, and Keller, 1999). As previously discussed in section 2.3.1, Aaker (1991) developed the generally accepted model of brand equity within the commercial sector consisting of four dimensions: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty. This can be seen in Figure 2 (Aaker 1991; Gordon et al. 2012; Keller 1993; Muriaas 2013). These dimensions directly impact upon the creation and shaping of the equity of a particular brand (Aaker 1991; Ahmed, et al, 2015; Umar, Mat, Tahir and Alekam, 2012). Aaker (1996) suggested that "modification in the model to fit any particular context and task at hand will often be appropriate" meaning the model is relevant to all customer-based situations. The electorate, who are the consumers in politics, are key to the political system which means that this model can apply (French and Smith, 2010; Phipps, Brace-Govan and Jevones, 2010).

Ahmed, et al (2015), in their research of political brand equity, found that, although Aaker's model can be used to evaluate the brand equity of a political party, many specific political issues are required to be addressed in a particular way. Through adapting Aaker's (1991) brand equity model, Ahmed, et al (2015) developed a conceptual model of political brand equity which is depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Conceptual model of political brand equity



(Ahmed, Lodhi and Ahmad, 2015, p.8)

Ahmed, et al (2015) state that the conceptualised Political Brand Equity model highlights that strong partisan loyalty, a positive attitude towards the party and voting preferences for the party on Election Day are key dependents of political brand equity. The model hypothesises that party awareness; party association, party image and party loyalty all have an extensive and positive impact upon the attitudes of the electorate towards political parties. These four constructs of the Political Brand Equity model highlight the importance of these variables in the development of overall political brand equity (Cwalina, Falkowski, and Newman, 2010). The initial socialisation process in the Political Brand Equity model develops the voters' party knowledge which is based upon party awareness, association and image constructs. At this stage, political parties have the opportunity to develop their positioning and differentiation strategy to best align themselves with the wants and needs of the electorate (Marsh and McConnell, 2010). Effective positioning and differentiation at the initial socialisation stage positively and favourably aids the shaping of the electorates attitudes towards the party. These constructs of party image, as well as party loyalty, ultimately shape the electorate's attitude towards the party, which in turn will impact upon their voting preference (Ahmed, et al, 2015). The model confirms that the voting intention and preference of the electorate are not as a result of short-term efforts by the party. Long-term brand management and marketing efforts are required to build strong and lasting relationships with voters. Research undertaken by Ahmed, et al (2015) concluded that political parties are able to, and therefore in order to be successful must, develop each variable highlighted in the model individually. These variables have the ability to positively contribute significantly to brand equity.

2.3.8 Political Brand Architecture and Strategic Postures

The architecture of a brand is what defines the relationship between products and brand, detailing which of the specific brand elements apply to which products or services. This ultimately helps consumers to understand and organise products and services in their minds with greater ease (Downer, 2015). Within the commercial industry, Urde (2003) states that there are four basic "brand architectures" which the majority of branding strategies will follow. These include: corporate branding, product branding, corporate-and-product branding (the corporate brand being most prominently used), and product-and-corporate branding (product brands being most prominently used). Downer (2015) suggests that brand architecture is similarly used within politics in order to boost the equity and voter knowledge of both party and leader brands.

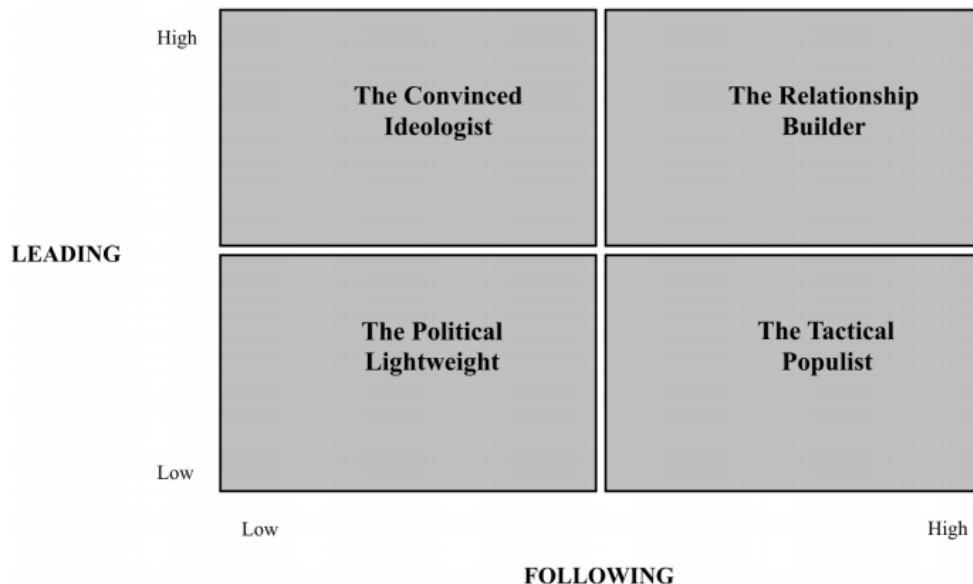
Political parties can use both corporate and product brand architecture strategies. It is usually the case that political parties in the UK use a mixture of the two and change the strategy depending on the circumstances at the time. If a leader is outperforming the party brand, then product branding strategies will be used to promote the leader brand. If, however, the party's leader is unpopular with the electorate but the party's policies and values are popular, then the wider corporate brand of the party will be used with, perhaps, greater emphasis up on the local party or candidate brand being sought (Downer, 2015). Brand architecture is becoming increasingly important in politics due to the many different needs, wants and wide-ranging aspirations of the electorate (Mensah, 2011). The demographics of voters in constituencies in the UK are extremely diverse and thus require different

branding and marketing strategies to ensure as many potential voters are satisfied with the product offering (party, policy and leader) before they invest their vote in the party on election day.

2.3.8.1 Strategic Postures

A good political marketing and branding strategy is considered to be one of the most valuable assets for a political party (Barber, 2005; Chadwick, 2015; Lees-Marshment, 2009; Lynch, Baines and Egan, 2006; Winther, 2012). Henneberg (2006) developed the Generic Postures of Strategic Political Marketing Model (Figure 8). The model helps political parties to understand the four different competitive positions that can be adopted in order to successfully achieve short and long term goals (Aaker, 2001; Chadwick, 2015; Hooley, Broderick and Moller, 1998). The different methods are determined by the extent to which the political party leads or follows the political market. They include The Convinced Ideologists; The Political Lightweight; The Relationship Builder and The Tactical Populist.

Figure 8: *Generic Postures of Strategic Political Marketing*



(Henneberg, 2006, p.33)

The model consists of two dimensions, leading and following, which are overlaid in order to produce a two-by-two matrix of the four potential strategic options available. The model highlights two extreme postures, The Convinced Ideologist, dominated by a leading approach and The Tactical Populist, dominated by a following mentality. The Relationships Builder incorporates both dimensions of the matrix, integrating following and leading elements into the strategy. The final posture, The Political Lightweight, neither follows nor leads and, as such, is considered a 'non strategy'. A political party which follows this strategy does not stand by its own convictions, nor listens to the needs and wants of society (Ormrod, Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2013). Henneberg (2006) outlined the characteristics of the three main strategic postures (Figure 9). The table helpfully outlines an over-generalised description of the different characteristics of each of the three main strategic postures. It

is extremely important for political parties to understand whether they are leading or following when developing a political marketing and brand strategy (Chadwick, 2015).

Figure 9: Characteristics of Strategic Postures

		Strategic Posture		
		Convinced Ideologist Party	Tactical Populist Party	Relationship Builder Party
Characteristics	Proposition development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ content-driven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ outward-driven 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ content-mediated outward looking
	Use of political marketing concepts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ tactical use only 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ strategic and tactical use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ integrated strategic and tactical use
	Generic functions emphasised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ mainly communication, distribution, and news-management functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ product, distribution, communication, news-management, fund-raising, and parallel campaign functions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ co-ordinated fulfilment of all generic functions
	Permanence of political marketing management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ election campaign focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ permanent campaigning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ permanent relationship building
	Party organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ "professional" party organisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ reliance on "outside groups"/advisors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ mix of outside and professional elements

(Henneberg, 2006, p.40)

Once the strategic posture has been set marketing tools and techniques and, more importantly, the brand strategy can be developed in order to convince key stake-holders of the utility of the offering. It is crucial that the brand architecture and strategic posture is understood by the political party in order to, "provide the political organisation or actor with an opportunity to derive a clear strategic position that translates directly into a clear product offering" (Ormrod, Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy, 2013, p.141). The four brand architecture strategies and the strategic postures outlined by Hennerberg (2006) will help political parties to develop a clear and consistent product offering through marketing communications and effective brand management.

2.4 Conclusion and identified research gaps

There are many different definitions of branding within the literature, all of which follow a very similar theme. Branding is about making products and services more attractive to consumers and differentiating the product offering from competitors. This is achieved through effective communication highlighting the point of difference or unique value offered in comparison with competitors (American Marketing Association, 2016; Dolnicar, et al, 2014; Molyneux and Holton, 2015). There is agreement within the literature that a brand is much more than just a logo or name. It represents the 'personality', values and ideas of an organisation that consumers can easily relate to (Davies, 2010; Elliot, et al, 2011). Ultimately, effectively communicating the brand will lead to consumers being more aware of products, minimise the risk of investing in a product or service and build a relationship of trust between the company and the consumer (Knox, 2004; Stephens Balakrishnan, 2009).

In both the commercial and political sector, consumers are central to any exchange process. In politics, the consumer is the electorate (Lees-Marshment, 2001; Lilleker and Scullion, 2008; Lock and Harris, 1996; Newman, 1994; Shama, 1976; Smith and Saunders, 1990). The consumers of both sectors consume the product when they purchase it. The only difference being that in the political market, the process of buying is the act of voting on Election Day. This is a simple and straightforward process of the consumer (the voter) purchasing a political product (leader, party and policies) on the day of an election (Lilleker and Scullion, 2009). However, the literature highlights some key differences between commercial and political consumers. Unlike consumers in the commercial sector, all voters make their purchase on the same day and, potentially, may not receive the product that they purchased, i.e. a party other than the one they voted for may form a majority government (Lock and Harris, 1996). O'Shaughnessy and Henneberg (2002) identified another key difference between the two sectors. Commercial consumers seek products which closely meet their wants and needs, which may include quality, price or brand associations. Political consumers tend to look for shared values and deeper symbols which may be related to particular parties or leaders.

The literature has identified two different branding strategies organisations can adopt: product and corporate branding (De Chernatony, 1997; Xie and Boggs, 2006). There is agreement that the difference between that two is that corporate branding ignores product features and focuses more on a well-defined set of values (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 2000; Hatch and Schultz, 2001; Muzellec and Lambkin, 2009). Urde (2003) identified four basic brand architectures which most branding strategies will follow: corporate branding, product branding, corporate-and-product branding where the corporate brand is most prominently used, and product-and-corporate branding where the product brand is most prominently used. Although the product offering is different between the two sectors, the way in which the different brand architectures are used is the same. If an organisation's name is a popular household name, then it is likely that it will be a corporate brand. In the same way, a political party will use its corporate name when promoting all aspects of the brand, leader, policies, and party both nationally and locally. Product branding is likely to be used both commercially and politically when there is a desire to meet the needs of a specific targeted group of consumers (Davis, 2010; Keller, 2013).

In both the commercial sector and political sector it is crucial to manage the brand through effective communication (Kotler and Armstrong, 2015). Davis (2010) suggests that creating a positive perception through communication is vital to the overall success of an organisation. This is true of every organisation, regardless of the market in which they operate, if they require consumers to purchase the products or services offered. There are many mediums by which this can be achieved, for example: television, radio, direct mail and social media. It is clear from the literature that, unlike in the commercial sector, political organisations often use negative campaigning techniques, i.e. any statement or communication that criticises the opponent, when communicating product offering and their corporate brand during election periods (Benoit, 1999; Buell and Sigelman, 2009; Geer, 2006; Lau and Pomper, 2004; Ridout and Walter, 2015). Negative campaigning is used to attempt to become the electorate's preferred party by encouraging voters to feel negatively towards the

alternative candidate or party (Budesheim et al. 1996; Lau et al. 2007; Westen 2007; Walter and Vliegthart, 2010). This technique is rarely used by commercial organisations that tend to communicate the positive and distinguishing features of their product or service.

There is agreement within the literature that the leader of a political party is extremely important to the overall party brand (Chernatony and White, 2002; Cwalina and Falkowski; Smith, 2001; Speed, et al, 2015). The importance of human brands within the overall branding strategy of a political party is possibly the strongest contrast between commercial and political branding. Some commercial organisations do have a spokesperson, often as a promotional resource and usually an actor or celebrity. However, they do not have any decision-making rights with respect to the brand, unlike political leaders (Speed, et al, 2015). A party leader can effectively be positioned in such a way that an image of the candidate is created which emphasises specific, positive personality features which reflect the party's policies and ideas on social and economic issues (Cwanlina and Falkowski, 2015).

It is important to monitor a brand's strength and equity (Battistoni, et al, 2013; de Chernatony, et al, 2011). Brand equity is defined in the literature as, "stakeholder response in the form of an increase in customers, revenues and margin than would not otherwise be possible without marketing support to build awareness" (Davis, 2010, p.32). There is a rich amount of literature on both firm-based equity, which focuses upon the value of the brand to the company (Simon and Sullivan, 1993) and consumer-based brand equity, which emphasises the measurement and conceptualisation on consumers (Leone, et al, 2006; Schivinski and Dabrowski, 2015). The conceptualisation of consumer-based brand equity was developed by both Aaker and Keller. Aaker (1991) identified conceptual dimensions of brand equity; brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality, brand loyalty and other proprietary brand assets. The first four dimensions represent consumer perceptions and reactions. The model developed by Aaker (Figure 2) suggests that positive and favourable associations provide value to both the consumer and the organisation. Ahmed, et al, (2015) have developed a conceptual model that can be used to evaluate political brand equity and provide a framework for effective political brand management (Figure 7). The model suggests that political conceptual dimensions of a brand that must be managed effectively are; party awareness, party association, party image and party loyalty. The model hypothesises that each of these dimensions, like in Aaker's model, have the ability to positively contribute to the overall brand equity. Butler and Collins (1994) highlight in their model of the political offer that there are three key elements of a political brand; the person, party and policy elements of the political brand are all equally important. These three elements require equal effective management of awareness, association and image in ensuring overall positive political brand equity.

It is clear from the in-depth review of the literature that political branding is an important, relevant and comparatively new area of research that has become of great interest to political parties (Chadwick 2015; Lees-Marshment, 2009; Lilleker, 2005; Peng and Hackley, 2009; Pich and Dean, 2015; Rawson, 2007; Reeves, Chernatony, and Carrigan, 2006; Robinson, 2004; Van Ham, 2001). The ever increasing interest in the field, and the need to properly understand branding within the political market, highlights the relevance and importance of the subject (Baines, et al, 1999; French and

Smith, 2010; Needham, 2006; Peng and Hackley, 2009; Pich and Dean, 2015; Phipps, et al, 2010). Political branding is rooted in every election campaign in the UK, from small parish council elections, to national general elections. Many academics believe that it is only within the last 20 years that political branding techniques and strategies have fully been adopted by UK political parties (Franklin, 2004; Gunter, et al, 2015; McNair, 2007). Due to the fact that it is a relatively new area of research, there have been few studies which determine the effectiveness of political brand image and perception management in the UK. This is particularly true of the effect on voters' association and image perceptions of political parties in key, marginal constituencies like Rossendale and Darwen. It is important to understand the effectiveness of branding in such constituencies due to the importance of winning such a seat in forming a majority government. It is also important to further understand the conceptual model of political brands developed by Ahmed, et al (2015) , particularly the elements party image, awareness and associations which ultimately inform the political consumers overall attitude towards the party. It is also important to further understand the three key elements of the political offer which make up the political brand as outlined by Butler and Collins (1994). It is crucial to understand the three elements further in order to determine how best to effectively manage the overall political brand. Research must now focus on developing knowledge in these areas.

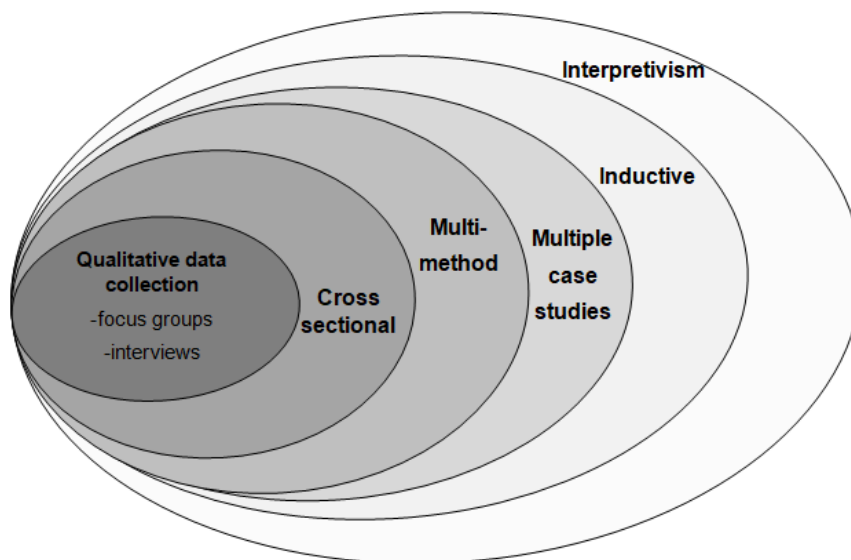
3. CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The methodology is the plan and framework which outlines the way in which data will be collected to support the research (Chadwick 2015; Feather 2013). This chapter will outline the methodology of the philosophical approach, the research approach, methodological choice, strategy, time horizon and the data collection methods that were adopted in order to answer and draw conclusions from the research questions outlined in chapter one, providing rational justification for the choice of data sources, collection methods and analysis techniques (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2016).

In order to formulate an effective and clear methodology the researcher utilised Saunders, et al (2011) 'research onion' which clearly states the different stages through which the researcher must pass. Figure 10 clearly shows the 6 research stages with the specific approach adopted for this research. This chapter will outline and justify the reasoning behind the adoption of the research approaches which have enabled conclusions to be drawn and the research questions to be answered.

Figure 10: Adaptation of Saunders, et al (2011) Research Onion



3.2 Philosophical and research approach

Quinlan and Zikmund (2015) state that research projects are underpinned by a philosophical framework, which evidences the world within which the research is situated and can be seen in every step of the research.

This research adopted an interpretivist philosophical approach, which is often associated with qualitative research in fields such as marketing, organisational behaviour and human resource management (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Saunders, et al, 2016). The central claim in the Verstehen sociology of Weber (1978) suggests that "the aim of understanding the subjective meanings of

persons in studied domains is essential in the interpretive paradigm" (Goldkuhl, p.137, 2012). The core principles of interpretivism is to work with these subjective meanings that exist in the social world. This research has endeavoured to acknowledge the existence of such subjective meanings during the data collection, striving to understand them, to reconstruct them, to avoid distorting them and to use them as building-blocks in theorising (Goldkuhl, 2012). Further to the acknowledgement of subjective meanings empathetic stance was adopted throughout the data collection in order to attempt to understand the world from the point of view of the participants, Thornhill, et al (2016) suggest this is crucial to the interpretivist philosophy.

The researcher adopted an inductive research approach where observations are the starting point and patterns and themes are looked for in the data (Beiske, 2007). An inductive research approach is often used in research that adopts an interpretivist philosophy and commonly used within qualitative data collection methods (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This research specifically uses qualitative data methods in the form of focus groups and interviews to observe and develop themes in order to further understand the subject area allowing conclusions to be drawn and the potential for new theory to be developed.

3.3 Methodological choice, strategy and time horizon

In terms of methodological choice, this research adopted a multi-method qualitative approach in the form of interviews and focus groups in order to provide answers to the research questions. Qualitative research approaches emphasise words rather than quantification when collecting and analysing data (Bryman and Bell, 2015). Primary qualitative data collection was undertaken in the form of focus groups made up of the electorate of the Rossendale and Darwen constituency and interviews with representatives from the three main political parties in the area in order to address research questions one, two, three and four. Secondary qualitative data collection in the form of an in-depth review of the current academic literature was utilised in order to address research question five. This methodological choice is closely associated with an inductive research approach as more in-depth, qualitative methodologies allow for patterns and themes to emerge from the data collection which will in turn allow for a greater understanding of the research subject.

The researcher adopted multiple case study approach. The research specifically focused up on three political parties during the 2015 General Election. Each political party was assessed to establish key features and draw generalisations (Bryman, 2012). A case study methodological approach offers insight into the specific nature of the political brands in Rossendale and Darwen allowing greater understanding and themes to be developed than if only one case study was adopted (Silverman, 2013). Case study methodological approaches provide information richness and aid the ability to answer how and why questions which is why this approach was adopted to help answer the fundamental question of this study, did political parties effectively manage their party brand during the 2015 election? (Blome and Schoenher, 2011; Eisenhardt, 1989; Ellram, 1996; Yin, 2009).

Like most research projects undertaken time constraints meant that the researcher specifically concentrated on researching political brands in Rossendale and Darwen at a snapshot in time. A

cross-sectional 'snapshot' time horizon was adopted which allowed the researcher to look at a political brands specifically during the 2015 General Election ensuring a thorough and detailed study was undertaken within the time constraints of undertaking an MA by Research (Saunders, et al, 2016).

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis of Research Question One

Research question one: *What branding and marketing strategies are used by political parties and did they effectively influence voter's understanding, awareness, perceptions and image of the party?*

To effectively answer this research question, a multi-method qualitative research method approach, in the form of an interview with a representative from each of the three main political parties in Rossendale and Darwen and focus groups with voting age and older Rossendale and Darwen constituents were held. Interviews allowed for the researcher to gain a more detailed and descriptive understanding of how the political parties wanted to be perceived by the electorate and what methods they used to manage their brand image. The interviews were semi-structured which means that the same questions were asked at each interview in a consistent and systematic manner interposed with probes designed to elicit more elaborate responses from the interviewees (Qu and Dumay, 2011). Due to the flexible, accessible and intelligible nature of semi-structured interviews, they are often seen as the most effective means of gathering important, and often hidden, facets of human behaviour (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009; Qu and Dumay, 2011). To ensure the researcher was fully prepared and consistent the interviewee in each interview was asked the same questions in a systematic order in accordance with an interview design schedule, see Appendix 1 - Interview design schedule. The Conceptual Model of Political Brand Equity (Ahmed, et al, 2015) and the Political Product Offer model (Butler and Collins, 1994) were both used to inform the structure of the interview and the specific questions that were asked. The interviews were ultimately designed to help the researchers understand the image of the individual political brand elements the political parties wanted to portray during the 2015 General Election.

In order to answer the research question effectively an idiographic approach was adopted and a sample size that was small, yet sufficient, was chosen, that is a representative from each of the three political parties. By adopting an idiographic approach it ensured that each interviewee had a locatable voice within the study and a more pertinent analysis of the interviews could take place without becoming bogged down in irrelevant data (Robinson, 2014). The researcher chose to use purposive sampling as a clearly defined sample was required (Clark-Carter, 2010) in the form of a representative from each of the three main political parties in Rossendale and Darwen. The researcher contacted each of the political parties via email, inviting them to take part in the research. The party then selected an appropriate representative to participate.

The interviews were all recorded and then transcribed to enable the researcher to code and analyse the data. Thematic analysis, a qualitative descriptive approach, was used throughout the research to assist in identifying, analysing and reporting patterns and themes (Vaismoradi, et al, 2013). Appendix 5 - Open codes, axial codes, selective codes and themes, outlines the open, axial and selective codes, detailing how the main themes from the transcripts were derived. The themes identified from the analysis of the transcripts were then used to understand the similarities and differences between the brand image the political parties wanted to portray to the electorate and the perceptions that the electorate actually had during the 2015 General Election.

Focus groups with constituents who were of voting age or older at the time of the 2015 General Election were undertaken in order to effectively answer the research question. Tasks one and two of the focus group schedule (see Appendix 2 - Focus group design schedule) were developed to ascertain the participants understanding, awareness, perceptions and image of the three political parties. This allowed the researcher to firstly understand participants awareness of the political parties brand and product offering and secondly directly compare the desired perceptions and image of the political parties against those held by participants. The data collection and analysis method of the focus groups is outlined in greater detail in the next section of this chapter, section 3.5 Data Collection and Analysis of Research Question Two, Three and Four.

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis of Research Question Two, Three and Four

Research question two: *Did the branding strategies used by political parties in Rossendale and Darwen during the 2015 General Election result in voters having an overall positive or negative perception of the party's political product offering?*

Research question three: *Is one element of the political product offer more influential and effective in terms of managing voter's perceptions of the overall party than the others?*

Research question four: *Do voters view commercial branding more positively or negatively than political branding?*

In order to obtain and understand voters views and perceptions of political party brands, five focus groups were held. A focus group is a small panel of people led by a moderator, to focus discussion on the topic in hand and usually lasts for between one and two hours. Focus groups allow the moderator to focus and guide the group in an exchange of perceptions, feelings, ideas and experiences on the specific topic of branding in politics (Blumberg, Cooper and Schindler, 2014). Focus groups also enable the moderator to observe interactions between respondents thus gaining richer, more in depth, information on the subject matter (Bryman and Bell, 2015) as well as allowing data to be gathered in a more economical and time effective manner (Blumberg, et al, 2014) These advantages were the primary motivation for undertaking qualitative focus groups rather than using other methods such as interviews or quantitative questionnaires.

Each focus group had between six and eight participants, the suggested amount for effective data collection (Stewart and Shamdasani, 2015). The focus groups were split into age categories; ages 18-30, 31-40, 41-50, 51-60 and 61+. This allowed the researcher to, firstly, divide the participants into manageable group sizes and, secondly, to determine if age is a factor in the way voters respond to political branding.

Every focus group was held in the same location with the room set up in the same way. Identical materials, hand outs and focus group schedules were used for each group. The focus group was designed to last between 60 and 90 minutes and split into four different tasks, outlined in the focus

group design schedule, see Appendix 2 - Focus group design schedule. Similar to the interview design schedule, the conceptual model of political brand equity (Ahmed, et al. 2015) and the political offer model (Butler and Collins, 1994) were both utilised in the structuring of the tasks and questions. The focus groups were designed to help understand how effectively the three key elements of the political brand were managed during the 2015 General Election by seeking to understand awareness, image and perception to understand brand strength and equity.

In order to ensure that the most valid and appropriate sample of participants was used in the research, 'self-selection' and 'purposive' sampling methods were used. Self-selection sampling is a volunteer sampling technique which allows participants to identify their desire to take part in the research (Saunders, et al, 2016). The researcher used social media, email and leaflets to publicise the research to potential participants (see Appendix 3 - Letter of invitation to take part in the research). Participants then contacted the researcher by the email or phone number provided expressing their desire to take part. Purposive sampling was used to ensure the sample would best enable the researcher to answer the research question. Purposive sampling required the researcher to use their judgment to ensure that the research used a clearly defined sample (Clark-Carter, 2010), in this case people who lived in the constituency of Rossendale and Darwen at the time of the 2015 general election and were of voting age or above. The research is specifically focused on voters in Rossendale and Darwen and therefore it was extremely important that the sample reflected this.

The discussions within the focus groups were all recorded and then transcribed to enable the researcher to code and analyse the data. Thematic analysis, a qualitative descriptive approach, was used throughout the research. Thematic analysis is a useful method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns and themes (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013). The researcher followed the 6 processes of data analysis in thematic analysis developed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This involves firstly becoming familiar with the data through transcription and reading; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing the themes; naming the themes and, finally, writing, discussing and concluding the results. Appendix 5 outlines the open, axial and selective codes which were used to develop the overall themes that are discussed in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5.

Table 3: 6 processes of data analysis in thematic analysis

Process	Methodology
1.) Familiarising with data	Transcribing data, reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas
2.) Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3.) Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering

	all data relevant to each potential theme.
4.) Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic map.
5.) Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis for refining the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6.) Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a report of the analysis.

(Braun and Clarke, 2008)

3.6 Data Collection and Analysis of Research Question Five

Research question four: *What are the similarities between political branding and commercial branding?*

In order to effectively answer this research question secondary, qualitative research methods were used. A thorough and detailed review of the current literature was undertaken. Academic journals, books, conference papers, websites, and the like were used to determine the similarities and differences between branding theory within the commercial and political markets. Conclusions were drawn from comparisons of previous research and academic literature that has been written around the subject area.

3.7 Justification for the location of the study

Rossendale and Darwen is a marginal seat, one which both the Labour and Conservative Party need to win in order to form a majority government at a general election. During the 2015 general election, Rossendale and Darwen was the 70th target seat for the Labour Party (Labour Party, 2015) and 77th for the Conservative Party (Conservative Party, 2015). Labour has often held the inner-city wards, mainly competing with the Liberal Democrats. The Conservatives have been much more successful in the leafier rural areas and villages (Keeble and Straw, 2015). Rossendale and Darwen has characteristics of both area types. The seat was created in 1983 and was held by the Conservatives until 1992 when Labour won with a majority of just 120 votes. This majority increased to over 10,000 in the 1997 election which Labour won nationally in a 'landslide election'. The Conservatives regained

control of the constituency in 2010 when the Conservative Party formed a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats and was held with an increased majority in the 2015 general election.

Because of its strategic importance both major parties spend large amounts of money on marketing materials and resources within the constituency. High profile members of parliament from both parties come to Rossendale and Darwen to assist in canvassing and to create greater awareness of their candidate's campaign. Rossendale and Darwen was chosen for this study because of the marginality of the seat and its strategic importance in winning the race to Downing Street. The amount of marketing and resource focused on winning the seat also makes this constituency interesting and relevant to this study.

3.8 Reliability and Validity

It is important that throughout the research reliability and validity is taken into consideration. Validity refers to the integrity and application of the chosen research methods and, importantly, how accurately the findings reflect the data collected. Reliability is concerned with the consistency of the employed analytical procedures (Long and Johnson, 2000).

Qualitative research is often criticised for the lack of scientific rigour and transparency in the analytical procedures. Often much of the data collected is personal opinions tailored to fit the researchers bias (Rolfe, 2006). Noble and Smith (2015) outline a framework for ensuring reliability and validity in qualitative research. This includes triangulation; rich and detailed transcriptions; acknowledging potential bias and ensuring different opinions are expressed throughout and consistency in data collection. All of these factors have been considered and incorporated into the research, whenever possible.

In order to ensure that the research was credible and reliable a triangulation validation technique was utilised. Triangulation involves using more than one data and method collection source in order to confirm authenticity, credibility and validity of the data collection, analysis and finally interpretation (Saunders, et al, 2016). The researcher opted to use a multi-method qualitative study adopting both primary and secondary data collection methods. Denzin (2012) suggests that in interpretivists studies, such as this, triangulation adds richness, complexity, breadth and depth to the research.

This research has benefited greatly from the flexibility of non-standardised, semi-structured qualitative data collection methods due the complexity of understanding the electorate's perceptions and opinions of political brands. Non-standardised research can often be accused of being unreliable, however, without such flexibility it would not be feasible or realistic to undertake this research effectively. The reasoning for using each data gathering method has been carefully designed and explained in this methodology chapter to ensure the research remains both valid and reliable throughout.

3.9 Bias

It is important to understand that bias exists in all research designs. Outlining any potential sources of bias allows for greater critical evaluation of both the research findings and conclusions. No matter

how hard researchers try to be unbiased they all have ideas, experiences, prejudices and personal philosophies which must be accounted for in advance to improve the transparency of any possible research bias (Smith and Noble, 2014). Thus, it is important that the methodology of each research question highlights why the research design is appropriate and reinforces the justification for using particular research methods, philosophies and sampling and analytical approaches, all of which have been outlined in this chapter.

In qualitative research that utilise human beings as the experimenters, 'demand characteristics', 'social desirability bias' and 'experiment expectancy effects' are the biggest influences of bias that may manipulate the data collection (Bryman and Bell, 2015; Chadwick, 2015; Robson, 2011).

When participants are aware they are being observed, they know that certain things are expected or demanded of them, often resulting in the participants responding in a particular way which could ultimately manipulate the final data and conclusions (Robson, 2011; Strohmets, 2008). For example, during research around politics participants may make statements about particular parties or politicians that show them in a positive light. Participants often hide their true beliefs in fear of being judged by others if their point of view is deemed controversial or unpopular. This is described as social desirability bias by Bryman and Bell (2015) who state that respondents often give answers to a question which is related to their perception of the social desirability of those answers. In order to minimise social desirability bias the researcher created a relaxed and informal environment where participants felt able and comfortable to give honest answers. The researcher also allowed participants who did not agree with the majority a chance to express their point of view to the group without being overshadowed by more confident speakers with opposing views. It was crucial that all points of view were heard and discussed to eliminate any bias.

The title of this study is a question and, therefore, may result in experiment expectancy effects which could influence the researcher. The researcher may, often unwittingly, influence the participant's response to the research questions in order to coincide with the researcher's preconceived answer to the study question. It is important to attempt to minimise this potential bias. This was achieved by the researcher ensuring each focus group and interview followed the same predetermined structure and question set, ensuring no suggestions or bias was present in the questioning.

3.10 Limitations and Recommendations for Improvement

Several limitations of this study have been identified:

1.) Location of focus group venue:

The constituency of Rossendale and Darwen is split between two areas in East Lancashire that are separated by moorlands. The researcher opted to hold the focus groups in a venue in Rossendale. This resulted in potential participants from the Darwen area of the constituency opting not to take part due to the inconvenience and possible cost of travelling. The researcher was unable to provide a financial incentive to participants and therefore could not entice participants to take part by paying expenses. The researcher recommends that focus groups are held in both areas of the constituency

to ensure that participants from both the Rossendale and the Darwen area have an equal opportunity to take part. The recommendation would be to hold 5 focus groups in a central venue in Rossendale and then another 5 in a central venue in the Darwen area. This should result in each area of the constituency being equally represented ensuring the data collected is reliable and valid.

2.) Researcher's political bias:

The researcher is a member of a political party which has been used in this research. Although every effort has been made by the researcher to be politically impartial, unconscious bias can often occur in the way questions or responses are worded in focus group sessions and interviews. All interviews and focus groups were structured the same and the same questions and tasks were used in order to avoid leading questions or responses. It is crucial that the researcher remained, as far as possible, politically neutral. Anything other than political neutrality by the researcher could lead to the distortion of the results or to threaten the validity of the study (Bergold and Thomas, 2012). The focus groups and interviews were transcribed in full. However, these were not validated by the participants as a true record of events. It is the recommendation of the researcher that, in future studies, transcripts should be shown to the participants to allow them to confirm they are a true record of what was said and provide validation that the transcripts being used in the thematic analysis are reliable and valid. However, the researcher did make an audio recording of every focus group and interview which have been stored in accordance to the Data Protection Act. These are available on request should they be needed.

3.) The sample of focus group participants:

Self-selection and purposive sampling methods were used when undertaking primary research in this study. Although the sample provided participants from a good mixture of different demographics, political bias was never taken into consideration. The criteria outlined in the information sent out with the invitation to participate in the study was that they must live in the constituency of Rossendale and Darwen and be of voting age or above. However, political neutrality was never taken into consideration. In order to allow participants to keep their political views private, the researcher never asked if participants were a member of, or supported a particular political party. This may have allowed biased viewpoints to be put forward during focus group sessions and may have resulted in unreliable and biased conclusions being made by the researcher during analysis. It is important that political neutral participants are allowed to bring their experiences, their everyday knowledge, and their ability into the research process in order for the researcher to gain a reliable and valid insight into the way the electorate interpret and perceive political brands (Russo, 2012). The recommendation is to ask participants to complete a very short prescreening questionnaire before they are accepted to take part in a focus group. This would ensure all participants live in Rossendale and Darwen, are of voting age or older and are politically neutral.

3.11 Ethical Considerations

It is important that ethical issues are considered throughout the entirety of the research, with specific consideration given to the differences, similarities and links between ethics, morals, ethical frameworks, ethical approaches and ethical regulation (Wiles, 2013). The researcher particularly focused upon two key aspects of ethical considerations. Firstly, the values of the researcher in relation to honesty, frankness and personal integrity and, secondly, focusing upon informed consent, confidentiality, courtesy and anonymity (Walliman, 2010).

Ethical considerations which were considered by the researcher were as follows:

- An ethical review form was completed and signed off by the researcher's supervisor.
- A letter of invitation detailing the study, location, time of focus group and the researchers contact details were sent to every person that expressed an interest in taking part. This ensured participants had an opportunity to discuss any queries or concerns before taking part. A copy of this form can be found in Appendix 3 - Letter of invitation to take part in the research.
- Participants of both the focus groups and interviews were given a full description of the study and briefed about what will be expected of them in the focus group or interviews. An informed consent form with all the relevant ethical information was provided for participants to sign. A copy of this form can be found in Appendix 4 - Informed consent form.
- Participants will remain anonymous and have been anonymised in the transcriptions.
- Participants have been provided with the contact details of the researcher, the researcher's supervisor and the Huddersfield Business School Ethics Committee should they have any questions or concerns about the research during or after the research has taken place.
- All data collected will be stored securely, safely and in accordance with Data Collection Act (1998).

3.12 Conclusion of Methodologies

The methodology outlined has been followed in order to effectively, reliably and ethically answer each of the research questions. The outlined plan and framework ensured that the required data was collected in order to answer each of the research questions effectively. Identification of potential bias, consideration of ethics and reliability and validity reflections ensured that the researcher carried out the research ethically throughout, while ensuring that the research was both valid and reliable.

4. CHAPTER 4 - PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The findings relating to the research, in particularly research questions one, two, three and four, are presented in this chapter. The analysis of results consists of memory association diagrams of the different parties' political product offering, tables highlighting key themes and perceptions and word clouds to assess the most frequently used responses and reasons to particular questions during the primary research. The key themes and possible explanations will be discussed in Chapter 5 – Discussion.

4.2 Party awareness

4.2.1 Awareness of political parties

Table 4: Participants awareness of political parties

Table 4 highlights participants' awareness of the political parties which stood in the constituency of Rossendale and Darwen at the 2015 General Election.

Political party	Age group				
	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Conservative	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Labour	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
UKIP	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Green	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Liberal Democrat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Independent	x	✓	✓	x	✓
TUSC	x	x	x	x	x
Northern Party	x	x	x	x	x

4.2.2 Awareness of national party leaders

Table 5: Participants awareness of national party leaders

Table 5 highlights participants' awareness of the leaders of the national parties which stood for election in the constituency of Rossendale and Darwen at the 2015 General Election.

Party leader	Age group				
	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
David Cameron (Conservative)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ed Miliband (Labour)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nigel Farage (UKIP)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Natalie Bennett (Green)	x	x	x	x	x
Nick Clegg (Liberal Democrat)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Steering committee (TUSC)	x	x	x	x	x
Michael Dawson (The Northern Party)	x	x	x	x	x

4.2.3 Awareness of parliamentary candidates

Table 6: Participants awareness of parliamentary candidates

Table 6 highlights participants' awareness of parliamentary candidates which stood for election in the constituency of Rossendale and Darwen at the 2015 General Election.

Parliamentary candidate	Age group				
	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
Jake Berry (Conservative)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Will Straw (Labour)	✓	✗	✓	✓	✓
Clive Balchin (UKIP)	✗	✗	✓	✓	✗
Karen Pollard-Rylance (Green)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Afzal Anwar (Liberal Democrat)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Kevin Scranage (Independent)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Simon Thomas (TUSC)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Shaun Hargreaves (The Northern Party)	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

4.2.4 Awareness of political party colours

Table 7: Participants' awareness of colours associated with political parties

Table 7 highlights participants' awareness of the colour associated with the political parties which stood for election in the constituency of Rossendale and Darwen at the 2015 General Election.

Party colours	Age group				
	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
The Conservative Party	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Labour Party	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
United Kingdom Independence Party	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Green Party	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Liberal Democrats	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Independent candidate	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
The Northern Party	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

4.2.5 Awareness of political party logos

Table 8: Participants awareness of political party logos

Table 8 highlights participants' awareness of the logos of the political parties which stood for election in the constituency of Rossendale and Darwen at the 2015 General Election.

Party logo	Age group				
	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
The Conservative Party	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Labour Party	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
United Kingdom Independence Party	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
The Green Party	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Liberal Democrats	✓	✗	✗	✓	✗
Independent candidate	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
The Northern Party	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

4.2.6 Awareness of political party slogans

Table 9: Participants' awareness of political party slogans

Table 9 highlights participants' awareness of the slogan of the political parties which stood for election in the constituency of Rossendale and Darwen at the 2015 General Election.

Party slogan	Age group				
	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
The Conservative Party	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
The Labour Party	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
United Kingdom Independence Party	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
The Green Party	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Liberal Democrats	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Independent candidate	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
The Northern Party	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

4.2.7 Awareness of the result of the 2015 General Election in Rossendale and Darwen

Table 10: Participants' awareness of the complete result of the 2015 General Election

Table 10 highlights participants' awareness of the result of the 2015 General Election in the constituency of Rossendale and Darwen.

Rossendale and Darwen election	Age group				
	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61+
	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗

4.3 Political product offering association and image presentation of findings

4.3.1 Political product offering associations, perceptions and image - The Labour Party

Figure 11: Memory association of the Labour Party's political product offering

A memory association diagram to highlight the key themes identified by participants of the political product offering of the Labour Party at the 2015 General Election. This consists of the overall party, the party's policies, party's leader and parliamentary candidate.

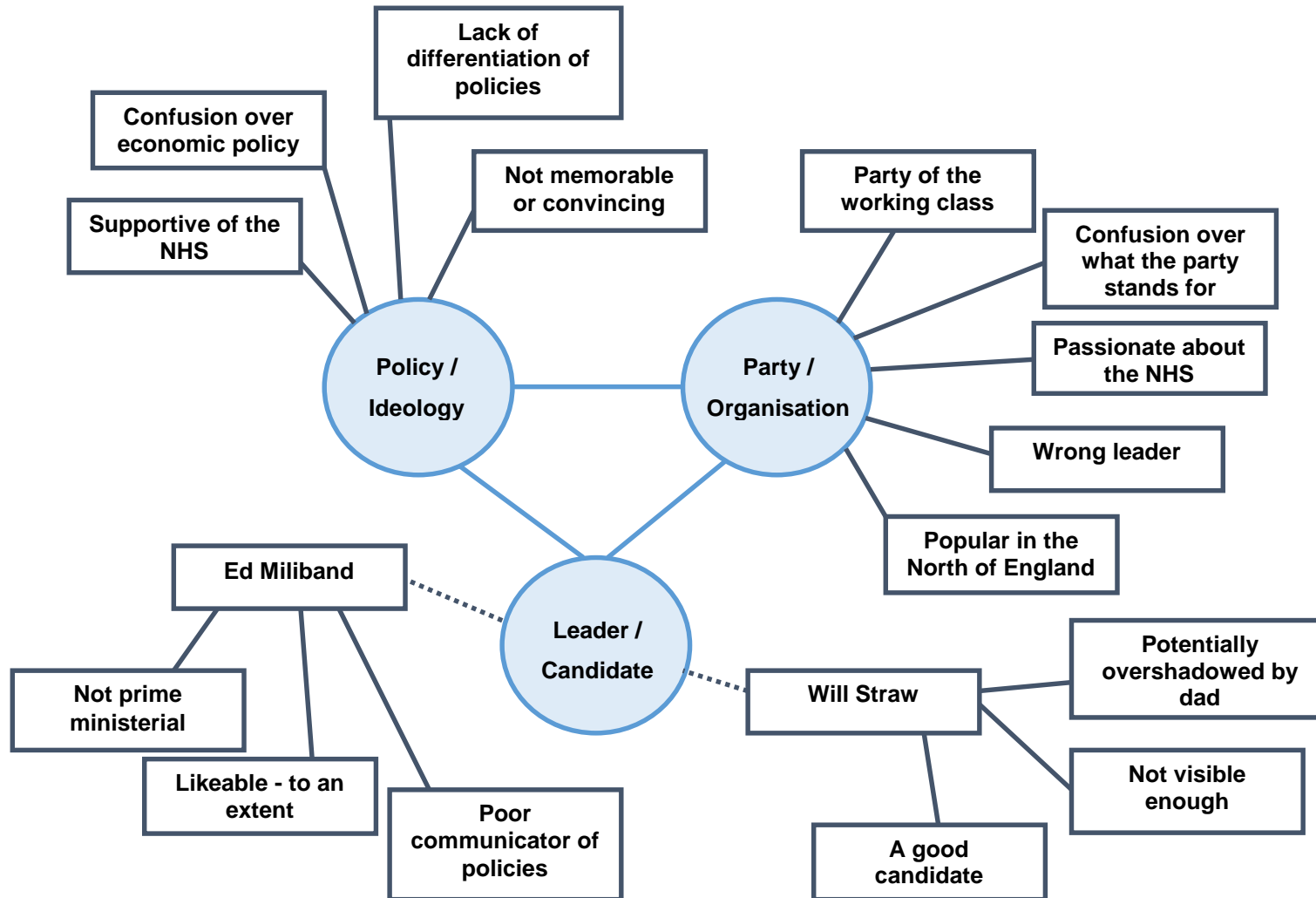


Table 11: Key themes and perceptions - overall Labour Party

Key themes and perceptions identified by participants of the overall Labour Party at the 2015 General Election.

The Labour Party		
The party		
Key themes identified	Sample of responses from transcriptions	Explanation
Traditionally a party for the working class	Working people Working families Working man, albeit less so now Working class, albeit to a lesser extent Originally the working man's party Originally a working class party	The Labour Party as a whole was perceived to traditionally be the party of the working class both historically and in the 2015 General Election. However, participants highlighted their perception that the Labour Party is the party of the working class is to a much lesser extent now than in the past.
Confusion around what the Labour Party now stands for	Too similar to the Conservative Party Policies similar to the Conservative Party	Participants highlighted the confusion they felt about what the Labour Party actually stood for at the 2015 General Election. Originally a left-wing party of the working classes, some participants felt that the Labour Party and its policies are too similar to the Conservative Party's. It is clear that the Labour Party failed to effectively differentiate itself from the Conservatives in this election.
Passionate about the NHS	The NHS Introduced the NHS Trying to save the NHS	The Labour Party enjoyed positive perception with regard to the NHS across all focus groups. Participants highlighted that the Labour Party introduced the NHS and stood on a platform of 'trying to save the NHS' during this election.
Wrong Leader	Wrong leader Undemocratic. Yes, the way in which they elect their leader Ed Miliband	Perception that Ed Miliband was the wrong leader and the way in which he was elected was undemocratic. This is discussed in greater detail when participants were specifically asked about their perceptions of the Labour leader.
Popular in the North of England	North of England North of Birmingham	Perception that the Labour Party is popular in the North of England. This is an area that is traditionally working class where much of the employment, traditionally, was blue collar, jobs in manufacturing and heavy industries. In the 2015 General Election there was a perception that the Party's heartland is still in the North of England.

Table 12: Key themes and perceptions - Labour Party policies

Key themes and perceptions identified by participants of Labour Party policies at the 2015 General Election.

Labour policies		
Key themes identified	Sample of quotes from transcriptions	Explanation
Policies are supportive of the NHS	Saving the NHS Keep the NHS Support the NHS	Participants identified the Labour Party as keen to keep, save and support the NHS in this election.
Confusion over economic policy	The economy Going to sort the economy out Anti-austerity Spend money to make jobs as opposed to cutting Slower austerity Austerity, but slower than the Conservatives proposal Eventually going to reduce the deficit	Many participants highlighted the Labour Party's economic policies. However, there was clear confusion as to what they actually were. Some participants thought their policies were anti-austerity, others suggested that they supported austerity measures, others thought austerity but at a slower rate than the Conservative Party was proposing. There is a clear confusion amongst participants about what the economic policy actually was at this election.
Confusion over and lack of differentiation of policies	Confused How can they reduce the deficit without cutting Similar to Conservative policies	Participants highlighted their confusion over what the Labour Party's policies as a whole actually were. It was felt that they were unclear and lacked clear differentiation from the Conservative Party.
Policies not memorable or convincing	[Participants struggled to remember any policies] Not memorable Policies designed just to win Not convincing	Participants failed to remember any clear, specific proposed policies. They felt the policies were just designed to win the election and therefore not convincing.

Table 13: Key themes and perceptions - Labour Party leader

Key themes and perceptions identified by participants of Ed Miliband, the leader of the Labour Party.

Labour leader - Ed Miliband		
Key themes identified	Sample of quotes from transcriptions	Explanation
Not prime ministerial	Poor leader Not a strong leader No confidence in his leadership Weak Wrong leader Union stooge Brother should have been leader Brother would have made a better leader Back stabber [beating brother in leadership race] Lack of charisma No charisma Not polished No presence Gawky Wet Spineless Flaky Bland Dishonest [two kitchens interview] Devious [two kitchens interview] Less confident than Cameron Seemed too young Not prime ministerial Would not make a good Prime Minister Couldn't see him running the country	The majority of perceptions of Ed Miliband were negative. Negative leadership and personality traits were perceived by the participants, all of which are opposite to what is expected of a good, strong leader. There was a clear perception of poor leadership and lack of confidence in Ed Miliband being Prime ministerial material. Many participants alluded to the fact that his brother, who came second to Ed Miliband in the leadership race prior to this election, would have made a better leader.
Poor communicator of policies	Nothing positive to say Negative campaigning Childish campaigning Empty promises Overshadowed the policies Confusion over cutting and spending	Perception that Ed Miliband didn't effectively or coherently communicate the policies to the electorate. Participants felt that the leader used negative and childish campaigning techniques. His negative perception overshadowed the effective communication of policies.
Likeable	Relatable Too nice for politics Pleasant Genuine	Ed Miliband's negatively perceived leadership traits did work in his favour to an extent. Some participants felt he was a relatable and pleasant leader, although perhaps too nice for politics

Table 14: Key themes and perceptions - Labour Party parliamentary candidate

Key themes and perceptions identified by participants of Will Straw, the parliamentary candidate for the Labour Party in Rossendale and Darwen.

Labour parliamentary candidate - Will Straw		
Key themes identified	Sample of quotes from transcriptions	Explanation
A good candidate	Really nice Pleasant Intelligent Hard working Decent Could talk well to ordinary people	An overall perception from participants that Will Straw was a good candidate. Positively perceived personality and candidate traits. A nice, intelligent, hardworking candidate.
Not visible enough	Didn't know who he was until I researched him Can't remember his name Can remember who he was Not overly visible Not as visible as Jake Berry Only visible towards the end of the election race No connection to Rossendale and Darwen	Lack of knowledge amongst certain participants. Some participants could remember Will Straw to a certain extent but struggled to remember his name. There was a clear perception that he lacked visibility, particularly in comparison to the Conservative Party candidate. It was felt Will Straw only became visible towards the end of the election race.
Potentially overshadowed by his father	His dad Jack Straw His dad went against him Jack Straw's speaking for money claims Jack Straw speaker circuit fiasco	Participants immediately thought of Will Straw's Dad, Jack Straw. Jack Straw is a former Labour Party Member of Parliament and government minister. Will Straw was potentially overshadowed by his father's time in government. Some participants mentioned the fact the candidate's father had been embroiled in a speaker circuit scandal in the run up to the election.

Figure 12: Word cloud depicting the car brands participants associated most with the Labour Party

A word cloud diagram to highlight the car brands participants associated the most with the Labour Party at the 2015 General Election.



Figure 13: Word cloud depicting the reasons of associated car brands - Labour Party

A word cloud diagram to highlight the reasons behind the associations participants have of the car brands they associated with the Labour Party at the 2015 General Election.



4.3.2 Political product offering associations, perceptions and image - The Conservative Party

Figure 14: Memory associations of the Conservative Party's political product offering

A memory association diagram to highlight the key themes identified by participants of the political product offering of the Conservative Party at the 2015 General Election. This consists of the overall party, the party's policies, the party's leader and parliamentary candidate.

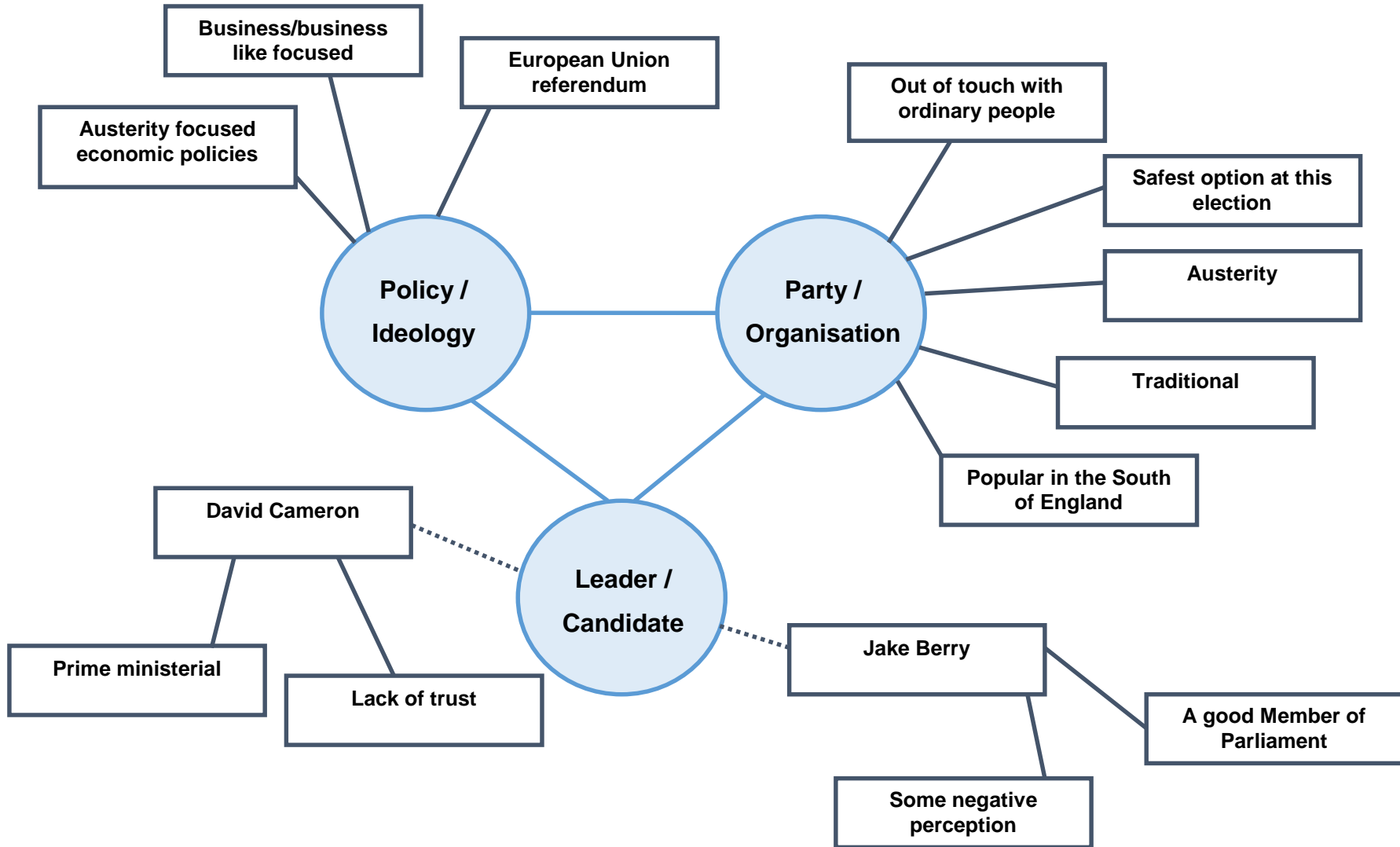


Table 15: Key themes and perceptions - overall Conservative Party

Key themes and perceptions identified by participants of the overall Conservative Party at the 2015 General Election

The Conservative Party		
The party		
Key themes identified	Sample of quotes from transcriptions	Explanation
Out of touch with the ordinary working person	Rich richer, poor poorer Protectionism Greed Corporations Out of touch Middle to upper class Private education Eton Private education Traditionally elite Elitist	The perception of being the party being run by Eton elite, for the Eton elite results in a perception of being out of touch with the ordinary working person. Perceptions such as 'rich richer, poor poorer', 'private education' and 'greed' suggest that there is a perception of the Conservative Party being the party of the rich.
Safest option at this election	More united than the Labour Party Competent The safe option Safe hands Strength Radical in a controlled way No viable alternative in this election	Participants perceived the Conservative Party to be steadfast and a safe, competent pair of hands at the 2015 General Election.
Austerity	Austerity measures Austerity Privatise the NHS	Some participants had perceptions of austerity measures when they thought of the Conservative Party as a whole. This is linked to the economic policy that was widely communicated at the General Election. This is discussed in more detail when participants were asked about their thoughts and perceptions of Conservative Party policies.
Traditional	Historic Old fashioned Conservative Right wing	Perception amongst participants of being a historic party. Participants also felt that the views of the party were old fashioned, conservative - traditional.
Party popular in the South of England	South of Birmingham Southerners	In contrast to the Labour Party, a perception that the Conservative Party is popular in the South of England.

Table 16: Key themes and perceptions - Conservative Party policies

Key themes and perceptions identified by participants of Conservative Party policies at the 2015 General Election

Conservative policies		
Key themes identified	Sample of quotes from transcriptions	Explanation
Austerity focused economic policies	Claw back the debt Reducing the deficit Belts and braces type policies Cuts Clamp down on benefits Cutting benefits Major spending cuts 'Easy' cuts Guarded about where the cuts will be Ruining the NHS Halfway there, let's finish the job Basically economic	Participants highlighted that the Conservative Party's policies were austerity focused. They had a clear understanding that the Conservatives were offering policies that would reduce the deficit through austerity measures. There was no confusion amongst participants that this was the economic policy offering of the Conservatives at the 2015 General Election.
Business focused policies	Business friend Big on business Business like All about making money Focus on apprenticeships	Perception that the Conservative Party's policies are both business friendly and business like. Their policies are perceived to be cutting costs and generating more income.
EU referendum	Immigration Europe Referendum	Some participants linked the EU and the referendum to the Conservative Party. This was not a unanimous perception of Conservative policies.

Table 17: Key themes and perceptions - Conservative Party leader

Key themes and perceptions identified by participants of David Cameron, the leader of the Conservative Party.

Conservative leader - David Cameron		
Key themes identified	Sample of quotes from transcriptions	Explanation
Prime ministerial	Seemed to know what he was talking about You believed him Good subject knowledge Could get his point across Articulate Good speaker Could 'talk the talk' Came across well Felt he could lead the country Statesmanlike More of a presence than Ed Miliband Trusted more than Ed Miliband Stronger leader than Ed Miliband Had an easy time against Ed Miliband Charismatic Good looking Polished Slick Confident A family man Lost child before coming Prime Minister Family holidays in Britain	Participants perceived David Cameron as a good communicator. There was a perception of positive leadership and personality traits which would be associated with a good leader. Many participants highlighted that David Cameron was trusted more and perceived to be a stronger leader than his opponent, Ed Miliband. In conclusion, David Cameron was seen to be prime ministerial by participants.
Lack of trust	Two-faced Slimy Good at avoiding the question A fraud Pig's head	Some participants did however distrust David Cameron. But overall the perception was positive.

Table 18: Key themes and perceptions - Conservative Party parliamentary candidate

Key themes and perceptions identified by participants of Jake Berry, the parliamentary candidate for the Conservative Party in Rossendale and Darwen.

Conservative parliamentary candidate - Jake Berry		
Key themes identified	Sample of quotes from transcriptions	Explanation
A good Member of Parliament	<p>Been around for ages</p> <p>Visible</p> <p>More out there</p> <p>In the Free Press a lot</p> <p>In the Rossendale Free Press</p> <p>Local</p> <p>Knew who he was. Didn't know who Will Straw was</p> <p>Always appeared to be out and about</p> <p>Seen out and about</p> <p>Community spirited</p> <p>Seen walked his dog</p> <p>Done well for the constituency</p> <p>Done a good job</p> <p>A good MP</p> <p>Competent</p> <p>Pleasant</p> <p>He would listen</p> <p>A people person</p> <p>Approachable</p>	<p>Many participants had a positive perception of Jake Berry. He was perceived to be competent, approachable and a people person. All key components of a parliamentary candidate.</p> <p>In contrast to Will Straw, participants felt Jake was extremely visible in both the local press and 'out and about' in the community.</p> <p>Both the perception of being visible, combined with the positive personality traits meant participants felt that Jake Berry was a good Member of Parliament.</p>
Negative perceptions	<p>Invasion of privacy using emails for marketing</p> <p>No conviction</p> <p>Hypocrite. Voting for cuts but supporting anti-cut movements</p> <p>A 'typical' MP</p> <p>Puffed up</p>	<p>There was a negative perception of Jake Berry amongst some participants. Perceptions of him being 'a hypocrite' and 'a typical MP' were discussed. Jake at this election was the current sitting MP and therefore such perceptions are to be expected. These perceptions did not, however, overshadow the overwhelmingly positive perception that participants had of Jake.</p>

Figure 15: Word cloud depicting the car brands participants associated most with the Conservative Party

A word cloud diagram to highlight the car brands participants associated the most with the Conservative Party at the 2015 General Election.



Figure 16: Word cloud depicting the reasons of associated car brands - Conservative Party

A word cloud diagram to highlight the reasons behind the associations participants have of the car brands they associated with the Conservative Party at the 2015 General Election.



4.3.3 Political product offering associations, perceptions and image - The United Kingdom Independence Party

Figure 17: Memory associations of the United Kingdom Independence Party's political product offering

A memory association diagram to highlight the key themes identified by participants of the overall party, policies and leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party at the 2015 General Election.

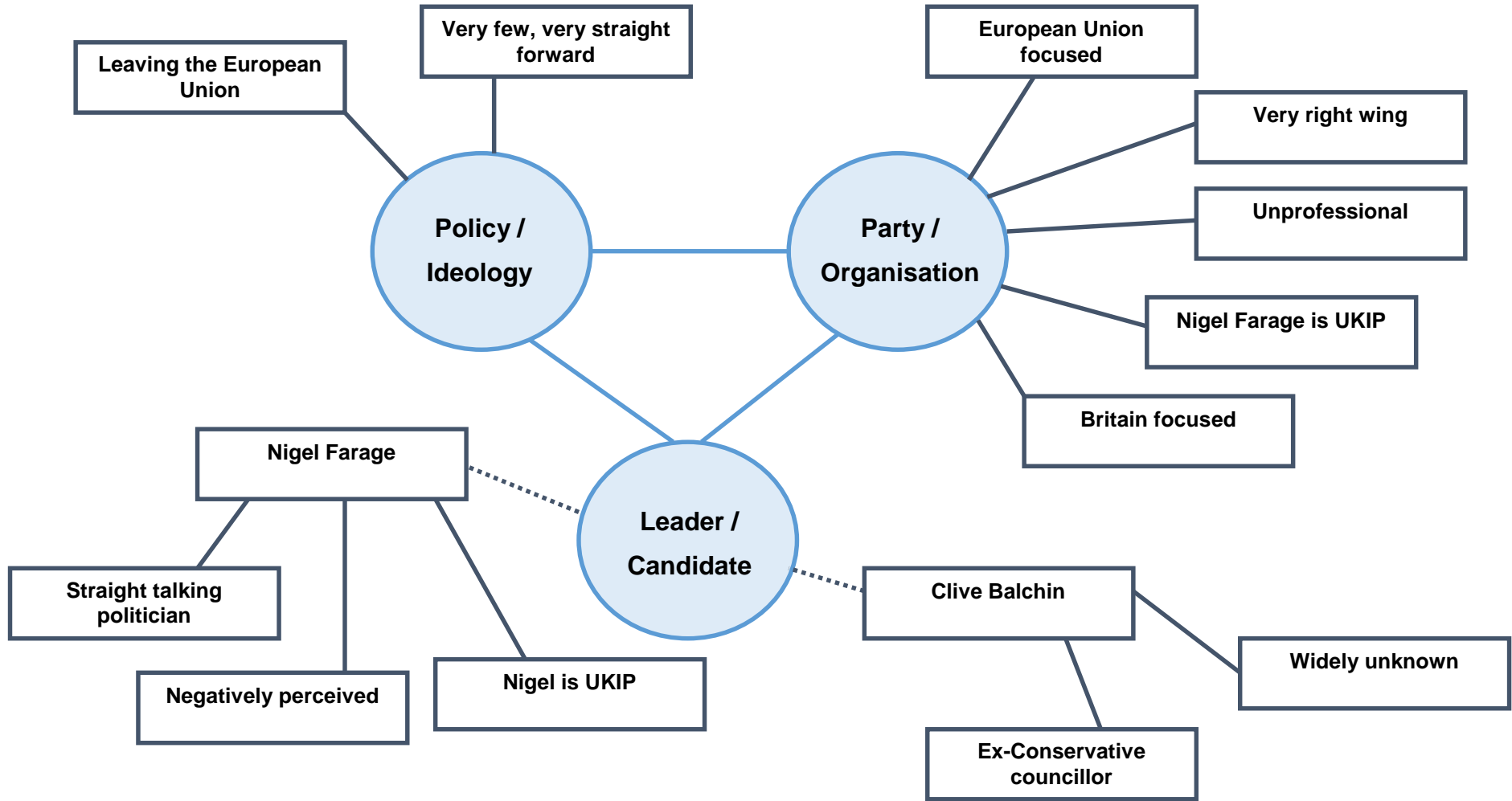


Table 19: Key themes and perceptions - overall United Kingdom Independence Party

Key themes and perceptions identified by participants of the overall United Kingdom Independence Party at the 2015 General Election.

The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)		
The party		
Key themes identified	Sample of quotes from transcriptions	Explanation
European Union focused. Leaving will solve all problems	Single policy Single platform Single minded Single focused Single policy focused Out of Europe Immigration focused Immigration	Participants perceived UKIP to be focused on a single issue: leaving the European Union.
Very right wing	Extreme right wing Born from the BNP and National Front The acceptable face of the BNP Thinly veiled racism Racist Racism	Some participants perceived UKIP to be right wing. Comparisons were made to far right political parties such as the British National Party and the National Front. Participants perceived UKIP to be linked with racism and racist views.
Unprofessional	They say what people think No 'grey' areas Clumsy Disorganised	Unlike Labour and the Conservatives, UKIP was perceived to be unprofessional by participants. There was a clumsy, disorganised and 'say it how it is' perception amongst participants.
Nigel Farage is UKIP	Nigel Farage Nigel is UKIP Dominated by a single personality	There was a perception amongst many of the participants that Nigel Farage dominated UKIP. The leader's big personality often over shadowed the party.
Britain focused	The pound sign [logo] Keep Britain British Proud to be British Proud of the British flag	Perception of being 'Britain for Britain'. Participants highlighted the logo and patriotic views in their perceptions of the overall party.

Table 20: Key themes and perceptions - United Kingdom Independence Party policies

Key themes and perceptions identified by participants of United Kingdom Independence Party policies at the 2015 General Election.

UKIP policies		
Key themes identified	Sample of quotes from transcriptions	Explanation
Leaving the European Union	Leaving the EU The EU Anti EU Out of Europe Campaigned for referendum Immigration Send them back Dover billboard Close the doors Close the borders A handle on immigration Jobs for Britain's Britain for Britain's British jobs for British people Give the country back to the British people Patriotic British manufacturing policies	The perception from participants around UKIP policies was 'Britain for Britain'. Participants clearly understood UKIP's policy on the European Union and immigration - leave the EU and reduce immigration.
Very few, very straight forward policies	All eggs in one basket Very few policies Very limited Never specific Lacking in detail Straightforward The party of fear	Participants lacked understanding of any other issues or policies UKIP raised at the election. There was a perception amongst participants that UKIP had very few, very straightforward policies i.e. leave the EU and close the borders.

Table 21: Key themes and perceptions - United Kingdom Independence Party leader

Key themes and perceptions identified by participants of Nigel Farage, the leader of the United Kingdom Independence Party

UKIP leader - Nigel Farage		
Key themes identified	Sample of quotes from transcriptions	Explanation
Straight talking politician	Just himself True to himself Genuine He knows what he wants Very strong opinions Passionate Determined He doesn't care what people think He doesn't care Says it how it is Says what people want to hear A 'black and white' politician	Participants perceived Nigel Farage as a straight talking politician. This wasn't necessarily a negative perception. Many participants perceived him to be genuine, passionate and true to himself because of his 'say it how it is' nature.
Negatively perceived	Racist Blinkered One track mind - immigration The acceptable face of the BNP Not a nice man Manipulative Plays upon people's fears Mad as a hatter A joke Annoying Doesn't keep his party together	In contrast to other leaders, Nigel Farage was perceived much more negatively. Many participants had perceptions of racism and negative personality traits when they thought of Nigel Farage.
Nigel is UKIP	Good at what he does - being a leader A very strong personality He seems to know what he is talking about Good at dealing with the media A wonderful show man A good promoter A good speaker A good marketer for UKIP One person party, Nigel is UKIP A bit of a lad A bloke in the pub A pint and a fag	There was an overwhelming perception by participants that Nigel Farage is UKIP. They perceived him as being a promoter, communicator and speaker. He is perceived as being good at what he does, i.e. being the spokesperson and face of UKIP. Although many participants negatively perceived Nigel Farage, there was a perception that he is a dominant and crucial part of the UKIP brand.

Table 22: Key themes and perceptions - United Kingdom Independence Party parliamentary candidate

Key themes and perceptions identified by participants of Clive Balchin, the parliamentary candidate for the United Kingdom Independence Party in Rossendale and Darwen.

UKIP parliamentary candidate - Clive Balchin		
Key themes identified	Sample of quotes from transcriptions	Explanation
Widely unknown	No idea who is he Don't know who he is Not well known Widely unknown Limited knowledge of him	Many participants did not know who Clive Balchin was. Those who could identify him knew very little about him. Compared to the other two parliamentary candidates, Clive Balchin was the least known.
Local ex Conservative councillor	Used to be a Conservative Used to be a local councillor A turncoat Local man Local business man	Participants who could identify the candidate perceived him as being a local businessman. They also identified that he had moved from the Conservative Party to UKIP, this wasn't positively perceived, some participants described him as a 'turncoat'.

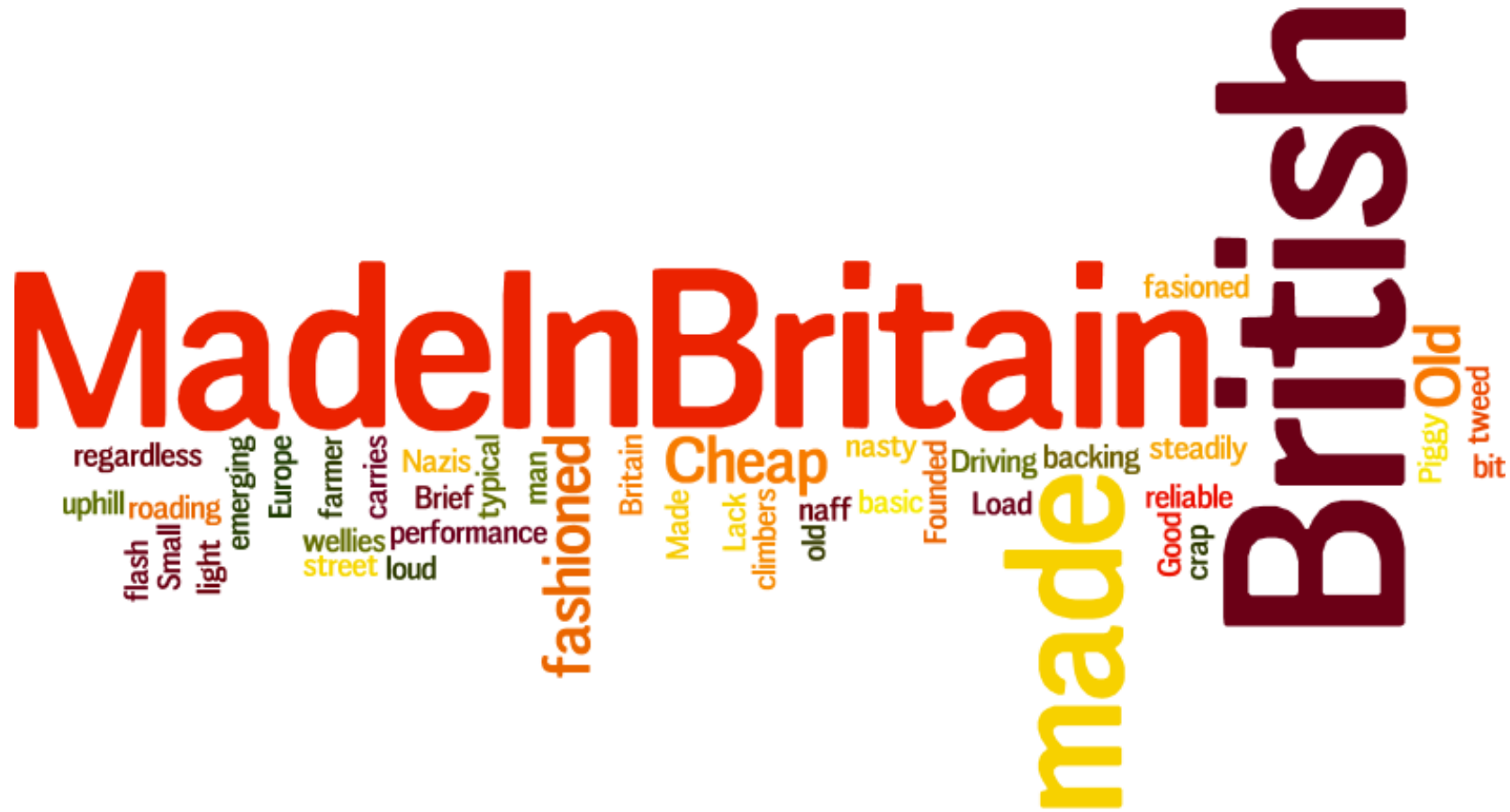
Figure 18: Word cloud depicting the car brands participants associated most with the United Kingdom Independence Party

A word cloud diagram to highlight the car brands participants associated the most with the United Kingdom Independence Party at the 2015 General Election.



Figure 19: Word cloud depicting the reasons of associated car brands - United Kingdom Independence Party

A word cloud diagram to highlight the reasons behind the associations participants have of the car brands they associated with the United Kingdom Independence Party at the 2015 General Election.



4.4 Political party desired associations, perceptions and image

Figure 20: The Labour Party's desired memory associations of their political product offering

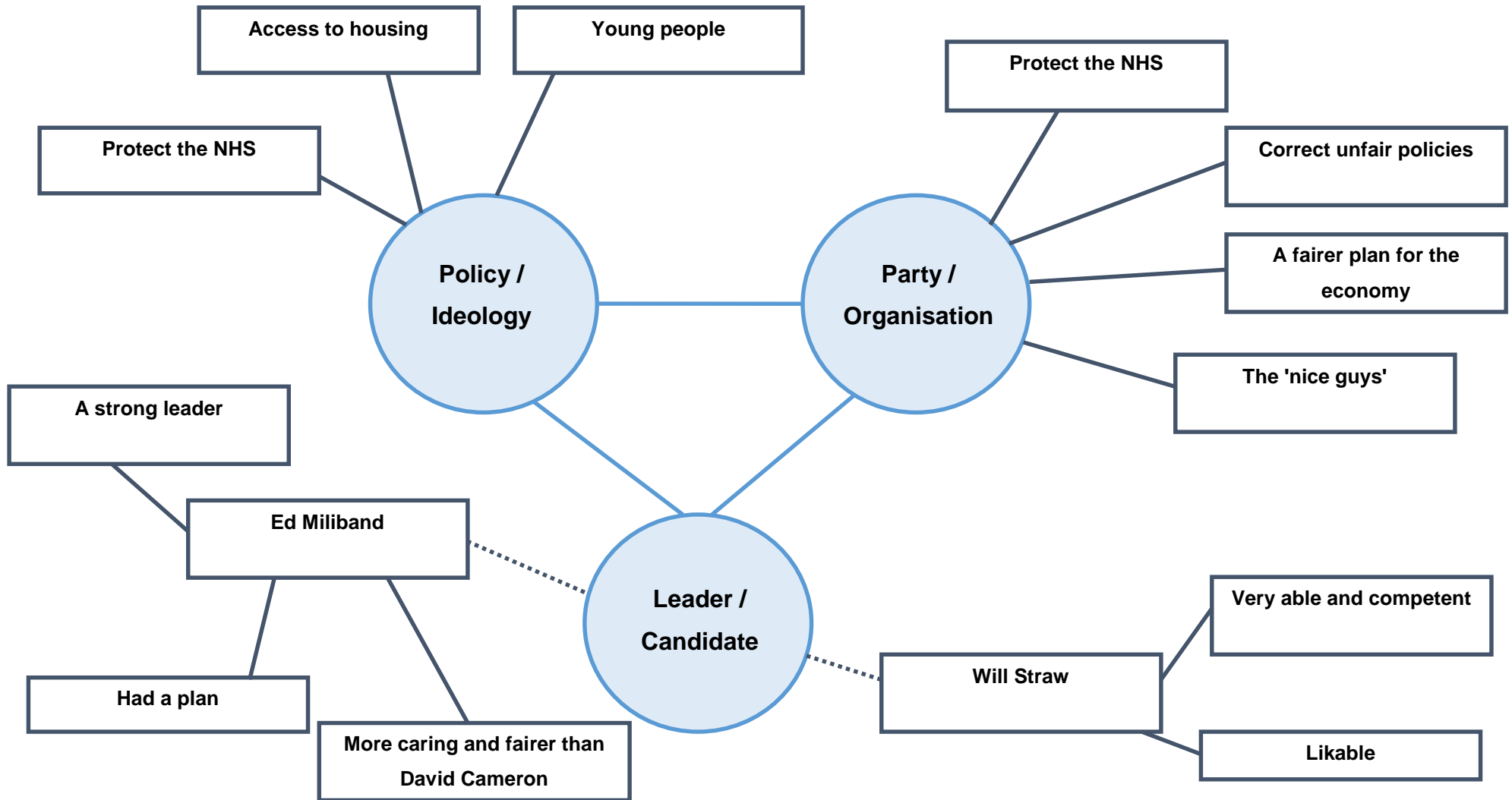


Figure 21: The Conservative Party's desired memory associations of their political product offering

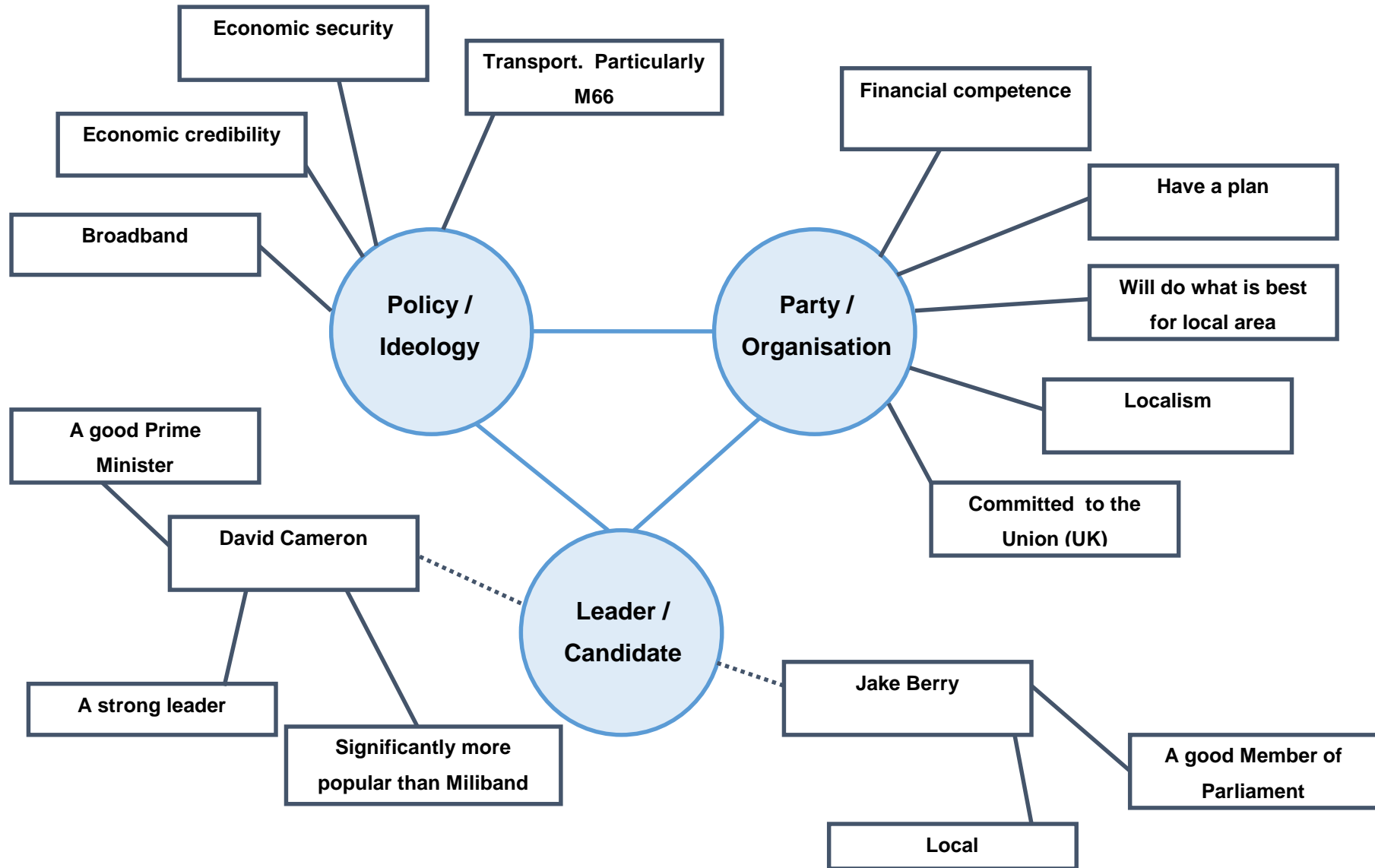
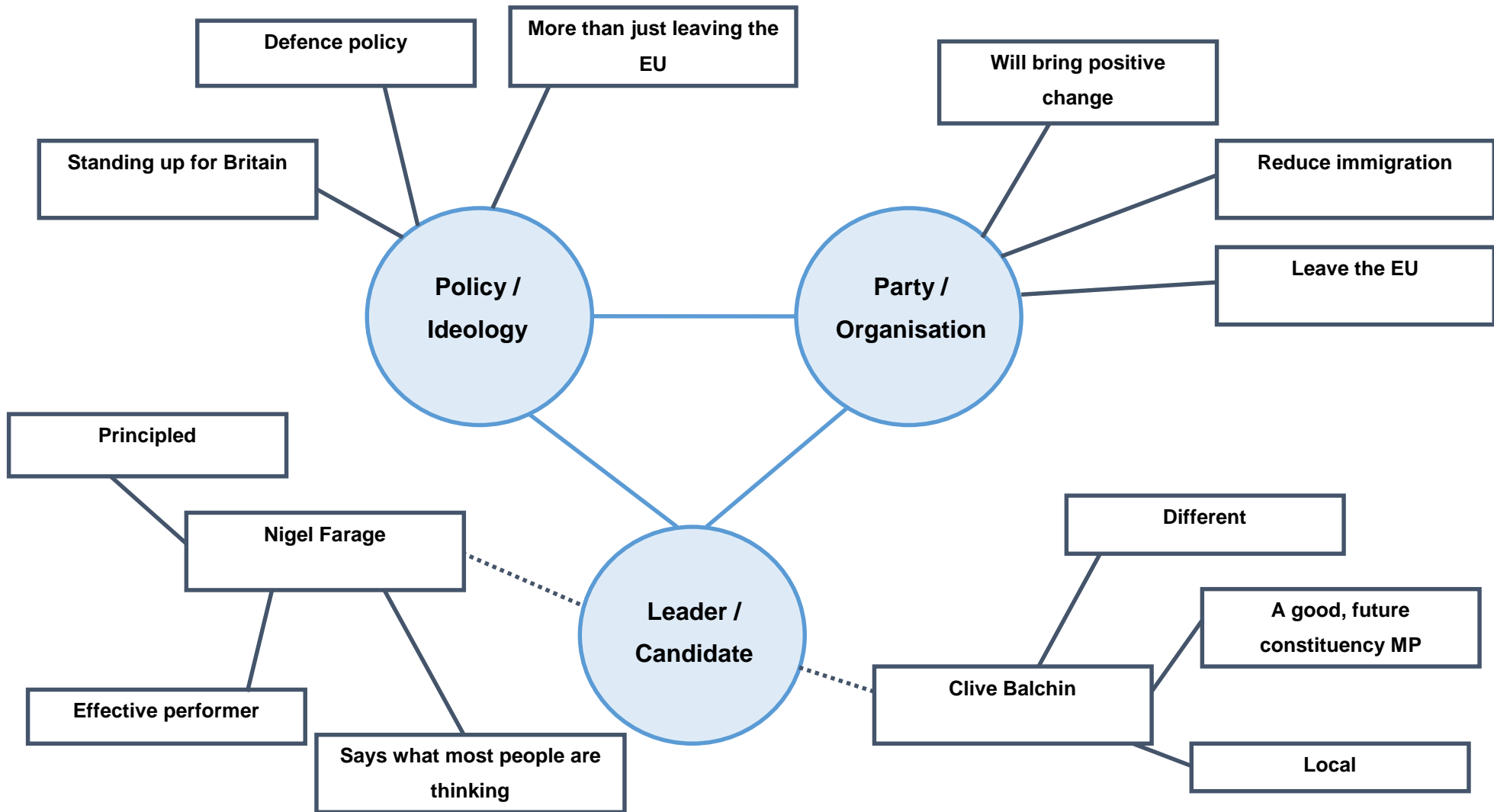


Figure 22: The United Kingdom Independence Party's desired memory associations of their political product offering



4.5 Commercial v Political brands

Table 23: Respondents' responses to how they perceive commercial and political brands

Commercial		Political	
Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Reputable	Exploitable	Colourful logos	Samey
You know what you are getting	Tax evasion	Steadiness of some	Boring
Repeat purchase	Monopolising	A lot of history	Untrustworthy
Consistent	Very big - can't get away from them	Struggling to think of any	Just talk the talk
Visible	Tax avoidance	Very few	Reactive
Recognisable	Expensive	Very little	Lack lustre
Categorise them easily	Elitism		Mistrust
Colourful logos	Commercialism		Bad selling - doesn't say what it does on the tin
Reliable	Previous experience		Always changing
Quality	Consumerism		Inconsistent
A range	Profit focused		Not relatable
Convenience	Tax not always paid within the UK		Old fashioned
Previous experience	Not obtainable worldwide		Never deliver on anything
Exclusivity	Tax - how little they pay		Misleading
Marketing	Monopolies		Spinner and Spads
Leadership			Distrust
Success			Don't know what you are getting
Identifiable			Party you vote for might not win
Trustworthy			Only interested in getting into power
Recognisable			All the same
Strong products			Dishonest
Distinctiveness			Broken promises
			Associated with politics
			Some non-existent i.e. BNP
			Unsure of product offering
			"My heart sinks when I see them"
			Image doesn't matter, leader does

4.6 Marketing and communication methods

Table 24 lists the marketing and communication methods used by the three main parties during this 2015 General Election in the constituency of Rossendale and Darwen.

Table 24: *Marketing and communication methods used*

The Labour Party	The Conservative Party	The United Kingdom Independence Party
Social media (main focus)	Direct mail (targeted)	Website
Online (main focus)	Mass leafleting	Social media
Direct mail	Social media	Video blog
Data capture techniques	Data capture techniques	Leaflet
Canvassing	Canvassing (for data capture)	Email to personal contacts only
		One street stall

4.7 Conclusion of the presentation of findings

The findings relating to the research, in particularly research questions one, two, three and four, have been presented in this chapter. Memory association diagrams of the different parties' political product offering, tables highlighting key themes and perceptions and word clouds to assess the most frequently used responses and reasons to particular questions have been utilised throughout this chapter in order to clearly present the key findings from the primary research. The most significant and relevant findings that have been presented in this chapter, in relation to the objectives and research questions of this study, will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, Chapter 5 – Discussion.

5. CHAPTER 5 - DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

Research question one has been addressed by conducting primary research in the form of interviews with campaign and marketing managers of the three main political parties in Rossendale and Darwen at the time of the 2015 General Election. Research questions two, three and four have been addressed by undertaking primary research in the form of focus groups completed by participants who lived in the constituency of Rossendale and Darwen and were of voting age or older at the time of the 2015 General Election. Finally, research question five has been answered by undertaking secondary research through a thorough review of the existing academic literature which can be found in Chapter 2. This chapter will discuss the most significant and relevant findings from the research in relation to the objectives and research questions of this study.

5.2 Discussion of research question one

What branding and marketing strategies are used by political parties and did they effectively influence voter's understanding, awareness, perceptions and image of the party?

5.2.1 The Labour Party

5.2.1.1 Branding and marketing strategies used by the Labour Party

The Labour Party used several key marketing and communication methods during the 2015 General Election in Rossendale and Darwen. Table 24 highlights the variety of methods used which covered online and social media, direct mailing and door to door canvassing. Participant A (P1PA), representing the Labour Party in the research suggested that during the election the party locally, “used social media more than ever before and data capture for people who filled in surveys online – we stored their emails” (P1PA)¹. As highlighted by Fill (2013,) focusing upon social media and online methods means the costs are lower than traditional advertising activities yet coverage is still high. P1PA highlighted that the Labour Party, “had a massive disadvantage to the Tories... we didn't have the money they had” and therefore the party adopted marketing communication methods which had the potential to reach as many voters as possible for as little cost as possible.

5.2.1.2 Awareness of the Labour Party

The research shows that every focus group was aware that the Labour Party fielded a candidate in Rossendale and Darwen during the 2015 General Election. Ahmed, Lodhi and Ahmad (2015) highlight the importance of party awareness and state that it is a crucial element of achieving positive political brand equity. All participants could identify that the party stood in the 2015 Election General Election; the leader's name; the colour associated with the party and its logo. All focus groups except one could identify the name of the parliamentary candidate. However, not one participant could identify the party slogan or tag line that was used during the election. Overall, with the exception of the 31-40 focus group not being aware of the candidates name participants were aware of the Labour

¹ P1PA = The Labour Party, Participant A

Party during the 2015 General Election and this is the first crucial step towards achieving positive brand equity.

5.2.1.3 Understanding and association of the Labour Party

Participants of all ages struggled to understand what the Labour Party truly stood for at the last election. Although participants identified that the party was historically left wing, many participants highlighted that the party had lost its way, appeared confused and had moved to the centre ground, away from its traditional socialist policies. Although participants identified that the party represents the working class, many pointed out that this is to a much lesser extent now than in the past. It is evident that the Labour Party did not effectively differentiate itself in 2015 General Election, particularly from the Conservative Party. In order to differentiate a brand from competitors, an organisation needs to position their brand and communicate selected brand associations to customers effectively (Beverland, Napoli and Lindgreen, 2007; Keller, 2013; Maarit Jalkala and Keränen, 2014). The political product offering was evidently not communicated effectively. The failure to effectively communicate and highlight what differentiates the Labour Party from its competitors caused the electorate to be confused and doubtful of the product offering, a key reason why the Labour Party did not win the election. The party leader can be positioned in such a way that an image of the candidate is created which emphasises specific, positive personality features and at the same time presents popular policies and ideas on the country's social and economic issues (Cwalina and Falkowski, 2015). Many participants perceived the Labour Party leader as weak and inadequate. This was a significant contributing factor to why the party struggled to communicate what it represented and its differentiating policies and values during the election campaign.

5.2.1.4 Perceptions and image of the Labour Party

Participants highlighted that the overall Labour Party was traditionally the party of the working class. Although this perception still holds, many believe that it is to a much lesser extent now than historically. Themes emerged throughout the focus groups of the Labour Party being confused over their economic policy. P1PA highlighted that the party's desired perception of Labour's economic policy was that it "would introduce a fairer plan for the economy". This did not resonate with the electorate. Participants were confused as to how the deficit would be reduced if the party was also promising to spend and invest at the same time. Participants could not clearly describe the Labour Party's economic policy and the desired 'fairness' perception was not achieved.

The Labour Party did, however, enjoy a positive perception of being the party of the NHS and this theme ran through all of the focus groups. P1PA explained that this was a desired perception, the Labour Party wanted to be known as the party "who would protect the NHS" (P1PA). The party also stated that "Labour focused on the NHS" (P1PA) as a way of differentiating itself from its competitors. P1PA explained that the party lacked economic credibility because the financial crash that happened in 2008 when Labour was in government. This forced them to focus on another area of policy which would resonate well with the electorate.

A reoccurring theme emerged of Ed Miliband, the Labour Party leader being completely inadequate and non-prime ministerial. The party's leader was definitely perceived by the focus group participants as being big issue for the party during the election. Many believed Ed Miliband was a weak leader, and a poor communicator and they could not see him running the country. The well documented, often seen as controversial, leadership election in which Ed Milliband beat his brother was mentioned by many participants. Many felt like Ed Miliband was inadequate and David Miliband would have made a much better leader. A politician's image is associated with how the electorate perceive their personal characteristics, leadership potential, and often most importantly, the surrounding messages which are communicated through word of mouth in everyday conversation between friends and family and crucially, the mass media (Cwalina and Falkowski, 2015). The poor leadership was a big issue for the Labour Party at 2015 General Election. The desired perception of Ed Miliband which the Labour Party attempted to communicate was, "to be seen as strong leader, he's got a plan, can lead the country and be a bit more caring than Cameron" (P1PA). There is a significant difference between the desired image and the actual perception held by the electorate.

The Labour Party's parliamentary candidate, Will Straw was overall positively perceived by participants. The impression that they had of him was being a good candidate who seemed a nice person and came across well. However, participants agreed that the candidate was not visible enough. Some couldn't remember his name and others commented on his lack of visibility in the constituency until the last few weeks of the election race. P1PA stated that the desired perception that the Labour Party tried to communicate was that Will Straw was a very able and likeable candidate. This certainly resonated with the participants but the lack of visibility compared with the sitting MP, Jake Berry was a problem for many.

5.2.1.5 Labour Party conclusions

Although to a lesser extent, participants still associated the Labour Party as the party that best represented the everyday, working person. However, a key theme of the party being confused and not quite knowing who they represent or what they stand for anymore emerged. There is a distinct difference between the desired perceptions of the party and those that the participants in the focus groups held. However themes did emerge from the focus groups of the Labour Party protecting the NHS, which was in line with the party's desired perception. The lack of effective communication of the party's economic policy however caused great confusion amongst the electorate. Ahmed, et al (2015) development of the conceptualised Political Brand Equity model reinforces the need for political parties to ensure that they effectively communicate with the electorate to achieve party awareness and desired party associations and image in the minds of the electorate. Failure to do so will result in confusion amongst the electorate and a lack of credibility for the party. This was something the Labour Party struggled to do successfully during the 2015 election.

5.2.2 The Conservative Party

5.2.2.1 Branding and marketing strategies used by the Conservative Party

The Conservative Party used several key marketing and communication methods during the 2015 General Election in Rossendale and Darwen. Table 24 highlights the variety of methods utilised including direct mailing, mass leafleting, social media and door to door canvassing, however this was mainly for data capturing purposes. Participant A from the Conservative Party highlighted that the party used two key methods. Firstly, “we used old fashioned knocking on the doors. That wasn’t so much for getting the message out that was for getting the information in. So we put a huge amount of effort first of all into getting as much information as we could about the people who lived there” (P2PA²). Using the information gained, “very much lead to what information we gave out. Everything that was put out there was as targeted as we could do it through the information we had got from people” (P2PA). Targeting specific groups within the electorate enables careful management of the party brand, first and foremost through relevant and continuous communication with consumers as stated by Kotler and Armstrong (2015).

5.2.2.2 Awareness of the Conservative Party

Unlike the Labour Party and the United Kingdom Independence Party participants of all focus groups were aware of the party stood in this election, the name of the party leader and the name of the fielded a candidate. Ahmed, Lodhi and Ahmad (2015) state in their conceptualised Political Brand Equity model that party awareness has an extensive and positive impact upon the attitudes of the electorate towards the political party. The Conservative Party successfully managed to ensure the majority of the electorate were aware of their party and product offering during the election. All participants from each of the focus groups could identify that the Conservative party stood in Rossendale and Darwen, they could also name the leader and parliamentary candidate and identify the party colours and its logo. However, similarly to the Labour Party, not one participant could identify the party's slogan or tag line during the election.

5.2.2.3 Understanding and association of the Conservative Party

Participants understood the Conservative Party to be right wing, conservative (with a small 'c') and traditional in their views. Participants also had associations of the party as being out of touch with the ordinary working person and the Conservatives being the party of the rich. Participants expressed an association of the Conservative Party having privately educated, elitist Members of Parliament.

Participants were very clear that the Conservative Party stood on a platform that promoted spending cuts, an austerity focused economic policy and financial competence. Unlike the Labour Party, participants fully understood what the Conservative Party's policies and ideas were at the last election. This understanding was perfectly in line with the desired associations that the Conservative Party wanted to communicate during the election race. P2PA stated when the electorate thought about the Conservative Party, they wanted them to think, "financial competence and having a plan to do what is best for the local area where they live". By communicating effectively with the electorate,

² P2PA = The Conservative Party, Participant A

the Conservatives managed to ensure voters understood what the party would do if elected to Government. Although many might not agree with them, the electorate was clear what a vote for a Conservative candidate would mean - an important key element of the political brand equity model (Ahmed, et al, 2015).

5.2.2.4 Perceptions and image of the Conservative Party

The overall perception of the Conservative Party at the 2015 General Election was that the party was out of touch with ordinary working people. Participants stated that the party looked after the rich, represented the upper classes and was full of privately educated MPs who had been to Eton. However, this said, participants agreed that the party was financially competent and a safe option at this election. The Conservatives successfully communicated their policies; particularly economic policies as highlighted by participants' full understanding. Participants understood that the Conservatives would reduce the deficit through cuts and austerity measures, policies which, although unpopular, were felt to be necessary. P2PA stated that the party wanted the electorate to "recognise that the last 5 years have been tough and there have been a lot of decisions that have not been universally popular, but the reason they have been done is because the country was on the brink of bankruptcy". Kotler and Armstrong (2015) highlight the significance of communicating the brand by stating organisations must manage their brand extremely carefully, first and foremost ensuring the brands positioning is continuously communicated to consumers. The Conservative Party wanted to position themselves with voters as the party that would offer "financial stability" (P2PA), a clear perception that participants had of the Conservative Party.

David Cameron, the Conservative Party leader enjoyed a relatively positive perception by participants. The perceptions and image that participants had of David Cameron are very much aligned to the desired perceptions that the Party wanted the electorate to have of the leader. P2PA stated that, "We were finding that a least a third of Labour voters would still prefer David Cameron over Ed Miliband. So one of our messages was specifically to those people, To Labour supporters and undecided people to reinforce that David Cameron has been a good Prime Minister, a strong leader and is more competent than Ed Miliband". David Cameron was perceived as being prime ministerial, an essential trait for gaining public trust in the ability of the leader to actually lead the country, not just their party. Participants described him as articulate, a good speaker and able to get his point across. His ability to effectively communicate formed an image of being prime ministerial evoking positive associations and providing the candidate with additional positive values i.e. being a strong leader and an effective communicator, contributes immensely to the positive emotional reaction to the politician by the electorate (Cwalina, Falkowski, and Kaid, 2000; Cwalina, Falkowski, and Newman 2009).

The perception of the Conservative Party Parliamentary Candidate, Jake Berry was also in line with the desired perceptions of the party. Similarly to the leader of a party, the candidate is an effective communication channel and poorly perceived candidates can impact on the electorate's perception of the overall party brand (Speed, et al, 2015). P2PA explained that the desired perception they wanted the electorate to have of Jake was, "he's local, he lives in Rossendale and Darwen and he has

worked his absolute arse off the last 5 years to try and get a better deal for the people up here in Rossendale and Darwen" (P2PA).

5.2.2.5 Conservative Party conclusions

Although participants still had an overarching association of the Conservatives being the party of the rich elite, the perceptions participants had of the Conservative Party at the 2015 General Election are very much aligned to desired, communicated messages the party sent out. Participants perceived the party to be economically competent, and therefore the 'safest option' at the election. Although not all participants were positive towards the austerity-focused economic policies, the fact that the party was very clear and had a plan for the economy helped the party to appear competent and steadfast to the electorate.

Both The leader, David Cameron, and Parliamentary Candidate, Jake Berry, were, generally positively perceived by participants. Davis (2010) suggests that the creation of a positive perception through communication is vital to the overall success of an organisation. David Cameron was widely perceived by participants as an effective communicator and a strong leader. The party utilised Cameron as an effective communication channel. Participants perceived the Conservative leader "knows what he was talking about" and participants, "believed him". This allowed the political product offering to be effectively communicated to the electorate through messages communicated by the leader himself.

5.2.3 The United Kingdom Independence Party

5.2.3.1 Branding and marketing strategies used by the United Kingdom Independence Party

The United Kingdom Independence Party used several key marketing and communication methods during the 2015 General Election in Rossendale and Darwen. Table 24 highlights the methods used which included a website, social media, leaflets and videos. The party had very little funding, "I think we spent £10,000 and it was all my bloody money as well. I heard Jakes was about £60,000 so, you can't fight against that" (P3PA³). The party, therefore, focused on utilising communication methods that had the potential to reach a large portion of the electorate cheaply. The lack of resource meant communicating the brand and product offering effectively was extremely difficult. P3PA explained, "if the constituency had been just Rossendale I would have done much better. We didn't have enough resources to target both, so much of our work was here in Rossendale". Effective branding and communication of the product offering requires a significant contribution from advertising and marketing communications. Organisations that reduce their brand advertising, for example in times of recession, reduce the significance and power of their brands (Fill, 2013). The United Kingdom Independence Party had very little resource to utilise within the constituency and this resulted in poorly communicated product offerings and brand image.

³ P3PA = United Kingdom Independence Party, Participant A.

5.2.3.2 Awareness of the United Kingdom Independence Party

Despite the lack of financial resource, participants had some awareness of The United Kingdom Independence Party. Participants were aware that the party had stood in Rossendale and Darwen, they could name the party leader and identify the party colours and logo. However, only a minority of participants from two focus groups could identify the parliamentary candidate and, similarly to the other two parties, not one participant could identify the party's slogan. Knox (2004) and Stephens-Balakrishnan (2009) reinforce that effectively communicating the brand will lead to consumers being more aware of products, minimises the risk of investing in a product or service and builds a relationship of trust with the consumer. The relatively low level of resources available to the United Kingdom Independence Party to communicate with the electorate locally in Rossendale and Darwen may be, in part to blame for lack of awareness of the parliamentary candidate.

5.2.3.3 Understanding of the United Kingdom Independence Party

All participants had a very clear understanding in their minds of what the United Kingdom Independence Party stood for at the 2015 General Election. All participants identified that the party supported the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from membership of the European Union. Some participants also understood that the party was right-wing with comparisons being made to the British National Party and National Front. Some participants also had an understanding perception that the party had racist views.

Although participants clearly understood the party's stance on the European Union, participants held the view that the party was very single minded, fighting the election on a single policy and single platform. Participants struggled to understand what else the party stood for other than their desire to have an independent United Kingdom. P3PA explained the desired understanding that the party wanted the electorate to have was, "we would bring about positive change" and "didn't want to just bang on about immigration and the EU" (P3PA). Although participants only had an understanding of one policy area, this was an area in which both the Labour Party and Conservative Party failed to communicate a clear message. The Conservatives suggested they would offer a referendum and the Labour Party failed to make clear if or when a referendum on EU membership would be offered to the electorate. This policy area was key in differentiating the United Kingdom Independence Party from the other parties during the 2015 General Election. It is difficult for any organisation to achieve and sustain differentiation in highly competitive markets, but particularly difficult for low-involvement brands (Elliot, et al, 2011, Shankar, Berry and Dotze, 2009; Xie and Boggs, 2006). The United Kingdom Independence Party certainly achieved this on this policy area. However, they did not clearly communicate what else the party stood for, particularly on key policy areas such as the economy, health and defence. Participants understood the party to be too single-minded and, therefore, less likely to trust the brand or product offering enough to vote for it.

5.2.3.4 Perceptions and image of the United Kingdom Independence Party

There was one significant perception that participants held of the United Kingdom Independence Party at the 2015 General Election that they were anti-European Union, wanted to reduce immigration and promoted 'Britain for Britain's'. All this contributed to the perception of the party

fighting the election on a single policy, the United Kingdom to withdraw from the European Union. Participants also noted that the party had very few, very straightforward policies that lacked detail and were non-specific and vague. These perceptions were not aligned to the desired perception that the party wanted to communicate. P3PA explained the party wanted the electorate to think, "they were [about] more than immigration and getting out of Europe. We did have a view on many other things" (P3PA). P3PB⁴ explained that the United Kingdom Independence Party's, "defence policy is very good", however not one participant picked up on this.

There were many different perceptions of Nigel Farage within the participants. He is definitely a Marmite character and participants had very mixed perceptions of the leader. Many agreed that Nigel Farage was a good communicator, had a strong personality and was a good leader. He basically is UKIP and without him the party would not be as popular as it is. However, with this said, participants did have many negative perceptions of the leader. He was perceived as racist, manipulative and unprofessional by some participants. Others, however, praised the fact that he was straight-talking, had strong opinions and desires and did not pretend to be anything he was not. Although the party did not want the leader to be perceived negatively, P3PA admitted Nigel Farage, "is definitely a marmite character"(P3PA). The party's desired perceptions of the leader was, "a principled person. Somebody who will say things that you think but perhaps wouldn't say. He isn't afraid to put things on the table just because people might be a bit touchy about them" (P3PB). Participants' perceptions of the leader were pretty much aligned with the party's desired perceptions. Nigel Farage is such a strong personality and a Marmite character it is difficult for the party to manage the negative perceptions that some voters held. However, the party leader can be positioned in such a way that an image of the candidate is created which emphasises specific, positive personality features and, at the same time, presents popular policies and ideas on the country's social and economic issues (Cwalina and Falkowski, 2015). Nigel Farage has effectively been positioned and perceived as a principled man, a strong communicator and not afraid to talk about unpopular or taboo issues, all of which gains a certain amount of respect from a significant portion of the electorate.

The United Kingdom Independence Party really struggled to ensure that the electorate was aware of their parliamentary candidate, Clive Balchin. Butler and Collins (1994) proposed the Political Product Offer approach to the political offer, a multi-component phenomenon that combines the party, the person and the ideology. It is crucial that each component has a strong offering to the electorate in order for the party to win or retain power. It was clear from the research that only a very small number of participants knew anything about the candidate. The parliamentary candidate was widely unknown and therefore participants did not have an opinion or perception of him. The UK parliamentary system requires the electorate to vote for their local Member of Parliament in general elections and not the leader. Although Nigel Farage is extremely well known, the local parliamentary candidate that stood in Rossendale and Darwen was practically unknown and this was certainly a weak link in the party's overall product offering

⁴ P3PB - United Kingdom Independence Party, Participant B

5.2.3.5 United Kingdom Independence Party conclusions

Despite the lack of resource available to the local party during the 2015 General Election, participants had awareness of the United Kingdom Independence Party and its leader. The party, however, was widely perceived by participants as single-minded and focused on one policy area, the European Union. Participants were very clear that the United Kingdom Independence Party fought for the United Kingdom to become independent from the European Union. This was an area where the party effectively differentiated itself from its competitors and created a meaningful difference that made UKIPs offer distinctive from that of its competitors (Kotler and Keller, 2012). Although this created differentiation and alignment with the desired party perception, the party wanted the electorate to associate the party with more policy areas than just the European Union. They wanted to be perceived as a viable alternative to the main parties that would bring change, with strong policies in areas such as defence and the economy. However, the electorate did not perceive that the party's product offering was anything more than withdrawal from the European Union and participants did not understand what else the party stood for.

The perception of the party and its leader was very mixed amongst participants. Both were perceived by some participants as racist, with the party being compared to far right parties such as the British National Party and the National Front. However, many did perceive the leader as being effective, a good communicator, and somebody with strong, genuine opinions. This was very much aligned with the desired perceptions that the party wanted to communicate.

5.3 Discussion of research question two

Did the branding strategies used by political parties in Rossendale and Darwen during the 2015 General Election result in voters having an overall positive or negative perception of the party's political product offering?

5.3.1 The Labour Party

Participants had two key overarching perceptions of the Labour Party during the 2015 General Election. Firstly, The Labour Party, although perhaps to a lesser extent than in the past, is still very much perceived by the electorate to be the party of the working class and supportive of families. This was specifically highlighted by participants when asked to compare the Labour Party to a car brand. Figure 11 identifies that the majority of participants likened the Labour Party to Ford. Reasons included, "car of the people", "working class" and "family friendly". Participants also compared the Labour Party to car brands such as Vauxhall and Land Rover, citing reasons such as "hard working", "affordable" and "family friendly", again reinforcing the perception of representing workers and families. Previous experience of brands results in consumers understanding which brands satisfy their needs and which ones do not (Keller, 2008). These comparisons are positive and highlight that the Labour Party, as a brand, has particularly associations rooted in the electorate's collective consciousness.

However, the second overall perception that participants held of the party was of "confusion" and the fact that the party had "lost its way". Although positive perceptions associated with what and who the Labour Party historically stood for are still present in the minds of the participants, they highlighted that they are becoming increasingly confused and disillusioned with the Labour Party brand and its product offering. If the electorate fails to understand the brand and how its product offering will solve their problems there will be doubt in their minds over whether the party will be worth investing in on polling day (De Chernatony and McDonald, 2011).

Participants still have positive associations with the historical Labour Party and these are still in the forefront of their minds. However, during the 2015 General Election a poorly communicated and weak product offering resulted in confusion and lack of understanding of what the party actually stood for on the part of the participants. The positive associations of the past were not enough to give the electorate confidence that the product offering at the 2015 General Election would satisfy the needs and wants that they held at that time, particularly economic competence.

5.3.2 The Conservative Party

Similar to the Labour Party, there were two overarching perceptions of the Conservative Party. Firstly, participants perceived the party to be "elitist" and "for the rich". Figures 14 and 15 outline the car brands participants compared the Conservative Party to and the reasoning why. The majority of participants likened the Conservatives to Jaguar because of the common associations of, "British", "expensive" and "rich people" to both brands. Other car brands, including BMW and Mercedes-Benz, were associated for reasons such as "expensive", "upper-class" and "looks good". Keller (2008) outlines the importance of the past experience consumers have with brands. Participants, not only

during the 2015 General Election but over a period of time, have come to perceive the Conservatives as the party of the rich.

The second perception participants held, and arguably the one which proved decisive in the election, was of economic competence and stability and the ability to provide steadfast leadership. Although participants held negative perceptions about the Conservative Party they had trust and faith in the product offering during the election. Participants believed that the party would provide the economic stability that much of the electorate was seeking at that time. By persuading the electorate that they could meet their needs more than the opposition parties meant that, on polling day, more of the electorate was willing to entrust their vote to the leadership of David Cameron and the party's policies. This reinforces the findings of De Chernatony and McDonald (2011) who state that consumers ultimately opt to invest in a particular product which will solve the customer's problem.

Although the Conservative Party is tarred with the perception of being the party of the rich, at the 2015 General Election their product offering, particularly the leader and policy elements, resulted in participants positively perceiving the party to be "economically competent", "stable" and the "most steadfast" option. This appeared to outweigh the negativity around the associations of being linked to primarily serving the needs of the more affluent members of society.

5.3.3 The United Kingdom Independence Party

The perception participants had of the United Kingdom Independence Party at the 2015 General Election were very clear. Figure 17 depicts the car brands participants most likened to the party. Land Rover was the most popular choice because of the, "British made" and "tweed" associations with both the car and party brands. Skoda was another car brand likened to the party: "cheap", "basic" and "lacking performance" were the association here. The overall perception that participants held of the United Kingdom Independence Party were negative. The party was perceived to have only one agenda and one policy - leaving the European Union, with very little else to say. Other perceptions, although not unanimous, related to "Britain for Britons", "white males" and "thinly veiled racism" that many participants felt the party promoted.

5.4 Discussion of research question three

Is one element of the political product offer more influential and effective in terms of managing voter's perceptions of the overall party than the others?

Butler and Collins (1994) proposed an approach to the political offer which has been widely recognised by academics, i.e. that it is a multi-component phenomenon that combines the party, the person and the ideology. (Baines and Egan, 2001; Hughes and Dann, 2009; Ormrod, Henneberg and O'shaugnessy, 2013; Ormrod and Savigny, 2012). There is agreement within the literature that the tripartite political offer developed by Butler and Collins can be interpreted as a brand (French and Smith 2010; Needham 2006; Smith and French 2009; Speed, et al, 2015). The Literature also agrees that equal importance is given to each of the elements of the political brand as depicted in Figure 4. The research undertaken in this study, however challenges the idea that each element of the political brand has equal importance and themes have emerged which suggest the human brand (the leader and/or parliamentary candidate) is the most significant element of the political brand.

5.4.1 The Labour Party

Ed Miliband was negatively perceived by the majority of participants. He was described as a poor leader and was perceived as lacking both charisma and presence. This perception of his personal characteristics impacted negatively on how the electorate evaluated his leadership potential (Cwalina and Falkowski, 2015). This ultimately led to the perception by participants that Ed Miliband was not prime ministerial, an essential trait to possess when leading a party in a General Election. It is no coincidence that the most significant themes that emerged from participants' perceptions of Labour policies during the 2015 General Election were of confusion and that overall policies were not memorable or convincing due to unsuccessful differentiation. The lack of trust and faith the electorate had in the leadership of Ed Miliband, together with his inability to clearly communicate Labour Party policies and to differentiate them from competitors' resulted in the electorate being confused and, ultimately, distrusting of the Labour Party's product offering. Participants' poor regard for the Labour Party leader made it difficult for him to effectively develop and portray societal and emotional values to the electorate. Although the party tried to compensate for this by means of other marketing communication methods, the most effective method is through the face of the party, the leader (Cherantony and White, 2002; Smith, 2001).

5.4.2 The Conservative Party

David Cameron was positively perceived by the majority of participants. Unlike Ed Miliband, he was perceived overall to be prime ministerial, with participants commenting specifically on his good understanding of key subjects; his ability to effectively communicate with the electorate and his possession of specific traits of a natural leader, such as being statesman like, charismatic, polished and confident. The party leader is a major component of the overall party brand. All political leaders are spokespeople for their party and are, therefore, considered to be a key competitive resource that must be utilised in order to be successful (Speed, Butler and Collins, 2015). The Conservative Party successfully managed David Cameron's image and perception by the electorate throughout the election campaign. Participants felt that he was stronger and more trusted than Ed Miliband. The

party used this to their advantage by not shying away from using their leader as a communication method to promote key pledges and policies. Although the policies that the Conservative Party put forward at the 2015 General Election may not have been popular with everybody, thanks to the leader's effective communication methods and positive image, the electorate clearly understood the Conservative Party's product offering and trusted David Cameron's ability to lead the country and implement the policies successfully.

5.4.3 The United Kingdom Independence Party

Like David Cameron, Nigel Farage is positively perceived to be a strong leader and an effective communicator by the majority of participants, but at the same time has many negative perceptions and associations linked to him. Participants perceived Nigel Farage, not necessarily negatively, as a straight talking politician. Many participants perceived him to be genuine, passionate and true to himself because of his 'say it how it is' nature. However, Nigel Farage was also perceived much more negatively by some participants. Many associated him with racism and other negative personality traits. There was an overwhelming perception by participants that Nigel Farage is UKIP. They perceived him as being a good promoter, communicator and speaker. He is perceived as being good at what he does, i.e. being the spokesperson and face of UKIP. Although many participants had negative opinions of Nigel Farage, there was a strong perception that he is a dominant and crucial part of the United Kingdom Independence Party's brand.

5.4.4 Conclusion

Both David Cameron and Nigel Farage were perceived as strong leaders and good communicators. Although both did have some negative perceptions, the perception that each had leadership strength and the ability to communicate their opinions, policies and arguments effectively to the electorate was crucial in ensuring that the electorate was aware of, and understood, the party brand and its political product offering. The negative perceptions associated with Ed Miliband such as poor leadership and communication skills in turn impacted upon the awareness, understanding and trust the electorate had in his leadership and the policies being promoted by his party.

Ultimately, the perception by the electorate is paramount to the overall success of the party: "the image of the party doesn't really matter, it's the leader that is important" (F5PB); "people voted for the leader rather than the party at the last election" (F1PB) and it was a "waste of money doing anything else" (F5PD) if the party had an ineffective leader. The leader is the face of the party and the main communication method between the party and electorate. A politician's image formed by the electorate's perception of their personal characteristics and leadership potential. This is crucially reinforced by the surrounding messages which are communicated through word of mouth in everyday conversation between friends and family and crucially, the mass media (Cwalina and Falkowski, 2015). A negatively perceived leader, with poor communication skills and lack of charisma, will not connect or effectively communicate party policies with the electorate and, therefore, diminish the impact of the overall political brand.

5.5 Discussion of research question four

Do voters view commercial branding more positively or negatively than political branding?

5.5.1 Commercial branding

It is clear from Table 23 that participants view commercial brands much more positively than political brands. Participants primarily highlighted that they could identify with commercial brands. They felt that they were reliable, recognisable and consistent. Participants agreed that when investing in a commercial brand, because they were consistent, they knew in advance exactly what they were going to get every time. The consistency and reliability of commercial brands leads to consumers gaining trust in the brand and believing that its quality and reliability are greater than its competitors. This ultimately means that consumers 'fall in love' with the brand, trust the brand, and believe in its superiority (Wheeler, 2013), something which successful, internationally known, commercial brands have achieved and they, in turn, benefit from brand loyalty and repeat purchase.

Participants did express some negative association with commercial brands, although to a lesser extent. Participants did not like the exploitative nature and profit-driven ethos of some commercial brands, particularly monopolies.

5.5.2 Political branding

In contrast to the mainly positive perceptions that were held about commercial brands, the research highlighted that participants had a generally negative perception of political brands. Participants were often unsure of the product offering and agreed that when investing your vote in a particular party it is not always clear what you are voting for. The electorate often feels misled by political parties and this results in a lack of trust towards political brands. This is often because of the lack of clear, detailed communication by political parties when campaigning to ensure that they do not 'over promise'. However, in order to be successful, it is important for sufficient information relating to a brand to be communicated clearly in order to minimize risk and increase trust with consumers (Knox, 2004; Stephens Balakrishnan, 2009).

There is a feeling amongst the majority of participants that political brands are dishonest and misleading. This is at least in part due to the fact that the manifesto that political parties campaign on are not always put into action once the party is in government. Unlike investing in a commercial brand, participants highlighted the fact that the party in which they invest on Election Day is not always the party that wins and, therefore, they do not necessarily receive the product in which they invested in. It is important that the brand, regardless of the format in which it is presented to the consumer, represents the implicit values, ideas and personalities that the intended audience can relate too, invest in and ultimately, enjoy after purchase (Davies, 2010).

Participants highlighted the inconsistency of political brands. As the political landscape and societal trends change political parties adapt their policies and messages to persuade and engage as much of the electorate as possible in the attempt to win the election. This has given participants the perception that political brands are inconsistent and only interested in getting into power. This, ultimately, leads

to the electorate distrusting political brands, even before they have been exposed to the latest incarnation of the brand and its message.

5.6 Discussion of research question five

What are the similarities between political branding and commercial branding?

A successful political or commercial brand aims to ensure that the product or service offered stands out and is easily distinguishable from that of competitors. Being different from competitors is crucial for any brand to remain competitive in dynamic markets (Martin, 2015). Political and commercial brands endeavour to minimise the searching and evaluating that consumers undergo before making a purchase (Klijn, Eshuis, and Braun, 2012; Needham, 2006). This is done in both the commercial and political markets by utilizing effective marketing communication methods outlined in Table 2. Ultimately, both political and commercial brands provide a way in which consumers can make simplified decisions when choosing which product or service to invest in (Keller, 2008), whether it be a political party on Election Day or buying a smart phone.

Political and commercial consumers are central to the exchange process. Political consumers invest their vote on Election Day in the party they feel will best meet their wants and needs (Lees-Marshment, 2001; Lilleker and Scullion, 2008; Lock and Harris, 1996; Newman, 1994; Shama, 1976; Smith and Saunders, 1990). Consumers in the commercial sector are individuals who buy goods or services for personal use to meet specific wants or needs.

The success of both political and commercial brands is reliant upon the creation of differentiation, which involves the creation of a brand that is perceived to be both unique and distinctive in comparison to the competition (Davcik and Sharma, 2015; Kotler and Keller, 2012, Porter, 1998). It is crucial for brands in both sectors to create a set of meaningful differences that makes the offer from one political party or commercial company distinctive from those of its competitors (Kotler and Keller, 2012). Brands in both sectors must also position themselves in such a way that ensures the product offer and image occupies a distinct and valued place in the target customer's or voter's mind (Kotler and Keller, 2012). Political and commercial brands both strive to develop a positioning strategy that highlights the organisation's unique way of delivering value to customers (Keller, 2013); aids the process of securing consumers' trust (McQuiston, 2004; Roberts and Merrilees, 2007); promotes the quality of products or services offered (Bendixen, Bukasa, and Abratt, 2004; Mitchel, King, and Reast, 2001), and reduces the customer's perceived risk (Glynn, 2011; Homburg, et al, 2010). Political and commercial consumers require a brand that meets their wants and needs but, at the same time, is an investment that is of value but with little associated risk.

5.7 Conclusion of discussion

The most significant and relevant findings from the research in relation to the objectives and research questions of this study have been discussed within this chapter. The discussion has been in relation to the research questions and objectives which are outlined in Chapter 1. The following chapter, Chapter 6 – Conclusion, will outline the key findings and draw final conclusions from the research.

6. CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The ultimate aim of this research was to establish whether or not branding strategies used by political parties in Rossendale and Darwen during the 2015 General Election were effective. Five research questions, outlined in Chapter 1, informed the primary and secondary research which has been undertaken in this study. The key findings and final conclusions for each of the five research questions are outlined in this chapter. The strength, contribution and limitations of the research, as well as recommended future research areas are also outlined.

6.2 Conclusion of research question one

What branding and marketing strategies are used by political parties and did they effectively influence voters understanding, awareness, perceptions and image of the party?

6.2.1 Key findings

6.2.1.1 The Labour Party

- A variety of marketing communications methods utilised covering online and social media, direct mailing and door-to-door canvassing. The greatest focus was given to social media and online methods which yielded high coverage at a lower costs than traditional advertising methods.
- All participants could identify that the party stood in the 2015 General Election; the leader's name; the colour associated with the party and its logo. All focus groups except one (ages 31-40) could identify the name of the parliamentary candidate. However, not one participant could identify the party slogan or tag line that was used
- Labour Party did not effectively differentiate itself in 2015 General Election, particularly from the Conservative Party. This resulted in the electorate failing to understand fully what the Labour Party truly stood for. Although participants identified that the party was historically left wing, many participants felt that the party had lost its way and appeared confused and had moved to the centre ground, away from its traditional socialist policies.
- The Labour leader was overwhelmingly perceived as weak, inadequate and non-Prime-Ministerial.
- Themes did emerge from the focus groups of the Labour Party protecting the NHS, which was in line with the party's desired perception. The lack of effective communication of the party's economic policy however caused feelings of confusion and a lack of confidence amongst the electorate.
- The parliamentary candidate was perceived as a nice person and came across well. However, participants agreed that he was not visible enough. Some could not remember his name, others commented on his lack of visibility in the constituency.

6.2.1.2 The Conservative Party

- The Conservative Party used a variety of marketing methods including direct mail, mass leafleting, social media and door to door canvassing. However, these were mainly used for data capturing purposes. The party tried to ensure that everything that was sent out to voters was as targeted as possible, using the information gathered through data collection, in order to maximise impact.
- The party successfully managed to ensure the majority of the electorate were aware of their party and product offering during the election. All participants from each of the focus groups could identify that the Conservative party stood in Rossendale and Darwen. They could name the leader and parliamentary candidate and identify the party colours and logo. Similarly to the Labour Party, not one participant could identify the party's slogan or tag line utilised during the election.
- Participants understood the Conservative Party to be right wing, conservative (with a small 'c') and traditional in their views. Participants also had an understanding of the party being out of touch with the ordinary working person, being the party of the rich, representing the middle and upper classes by privately educated, elitist Members of Parliament.
- Participants were very clear that the Conservative Party stood on a platform that promoted spending cuts, an austerity focused economic policy and financial competence. This understanding was perfectly in line with the desired associations that the Conservative Party wanted to communicate during the election race.
- Participants agreed that the party was financially competent and a safe option at this election. The Conservatives successfully communicated their policies which was highlighted by participants displaying a good understanding of their economic policies.
- The perceptions and image that participants had of David Cameron were very much aligned to those desired by the Party. He was perceived as being prime ministerial and had the ability to lead the country, not just the party. Participant described him as articulate and praised his ability to effectively communicate with the electorate.
- The perception of the parliamentary candidate by the local electorate was successfully managed by the party. Participants perceived Jake Berry as a hard-working MP who has represented the people of Rossendale and Darwen well.

6.2.1.3 The United Kingdom Independence Party

- Marketing communication methods used included a website, social media, leaflets and videos. The party had very little funding locally and therefore focused on utilising communication methods that had the potential to reach a large proportion of the electorate relatively inexpensively. The lack of resource meant that communicating the brand and product offering effectively was extremely difficult.
- Despite the lack of financial resource, participants had a relatively good level of awareness of The United Kingdom Independence Party. Participants were aware that the party stood in

Rossendale and Darwen and they could identify the party leader, the party colours and the party logo. However, only a minority of participants from two focus groups could identify the parliamentary candidate. Also, similarly to the other two parties, not one participant could identify the party's slogan.

- All participants identified that the party supported the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from membership of the European Union. Participants generally understood that the party was right-wing with some participants likening them to other far-right organisations.
- Participants could only name two party policies: withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union and reducing immigration. Participants noted that the party had only a few simplistic policies that lacked detail and were never specific. These perceptions were not aligned to the party's desired perception.
- Participants viewed the leader very differently. Many agreed that Nigel Farage was a good communicator, a strong personality and a good leader. He basically is UKIP and, without, the party would not be as popular as it is. However participants also had negative perceptions of the leader. He was perceived by some as racist, manipulative and unprofessional. He is described as a 'Marmite' leader.
- The United Kingdom Independence Party struggled to make the electorate aware of their parliamentary candidate, Clive Balchin. He was widely unknown and consequently participants did not have an opinion or perception of him. Although Nigel Farage is extremely prominent, the Rossendale and Darwen parliamentary was practically unknown and this was certainly a weakness in the party's overall product offering.

6.2.2 Conclusions

Research question one was developed in order to focus the research on understanding which branding and marketing strategies are used by political parties and if they effectively influenced voters understanding, awareness, perceptions and image of the party. Primary data collection methods in the form of focus groups made up of Rossendale and Darwen constituents, who were of voting age and older at the time of the 2015 General Election and interviews with representatives from the political parties were undertaken. This allowed the researcher to understand the actual understanding, awareness, perceptions and image participants had of political parties and compare them to those which the parties endeavoured to cultivate.

It is evident from the literature that political parties must effectively communicate with the electorate to achieve desired party awareness, associations and image, all of which are crucial elements to achieving positive political brand equity. This is reinforced by The Political Brand Equity model developed by Ahmed, et al (2015) and is vital in order to successfully differentiate the party brand from its competitors'. A political party needs to position their brand and communicate selected brand associations effectively in order to achieve positive political brand equity and, as a result, persuade the electorate to invest their vote on polling day (Beverland, Napoli and Lindgreen, 2007; Keller, 2013; Maarit Jalkala and Keränen, 2014).

All three parties used a mixture of traditional and online marketing communication methods. The Conservative Party, and to a lesser extent the Labour Party, used data collection methods to target voters by direct mail and email. The United Kingdom Independence Party had less financial and human resource and, consequently, their ability to use targeted communication was limited. For the first time all three parties used social media as a main communication channel during this General Election. The relatively low costs and ability to reach a wide audience efficiently meant that the United Kingdom Independence Party and to an extent, the Labour Party, focused their marketing efforts on social media and online methods, moving away from more traditional marketing communication methods. The Conservative Party was the most successful of the three parties in terms of effectively aligning voters' understanding, awareness, perception and image to those desired and outlined by the party. They successfully collated enough data to ensure that messages within emails, direct mail and leaflets were well targeted and as relevant to the recipient as possible.

Unlike the Labour Party and the United Kingdom Independence Party, the Conservative Party successfully influenced the electorate's perception and image of their political product offering. Participants perceived David Cameron and the Conservative Party as the only viable option to lead the country and offer financial stability through an economically challenging time. This was not to say that the Conservative Party had the most popular policies or was particularly liked by a good proportion of the electorate. Despite this, they managed to effectively communicate a perception and image of a strong product offering which consisted of clear policies and a strong, effective leader. This, formed a strong political brand that could meet the needs of the electorate whilst, at the same time, minimising any risk the political consumer may feel when investing their vote.

The Labour Party's product offering was not effectively communicated and had many flaws, particularly the poorly perceived leader. The lack of clear, effective communication from the Labour leader was a major factor in the party's failure to differentiate themselves from the Conservative Party. The United Kingdom Independence Party also failed to successfully align participants' perceptions with those desired by the party. The party's product offering was weak. It was focused on a very limited policy area: the leader was a 'Marmite' character, praised for his leadership and communication abilities but criticised for the controversial, potentially racist views he held and, finally, the parliamentary candidate was widely unknown. Overall, the political product offering was not strong enough to persuade the electorate that their overall product offering was worth their investment.

Of the three parties, only the Conservative Party effectively influence the electorate's understanding, awareness and perceptions in line with their desired image. The Labour Party and United Kingdom Independence Party failed in this respect due a weak product offering and ineffective communication for reasons already discussed.

6.3 Conclusion of research question two

Did the branding strategies used by political parties in Rossendale and Darwen during the 2015 General Election result in voters having an overall positive or negative perception of the party's political product offering?

6.3.1 Key findings

6.3.1.1 The Labour Party

- An overall negative perception was held by participants of the Labour Party's political product offering.
- Two key overarching perceptions of the Labour Party during the 2015 General Election:
 - Although to a lesser extent in recent times, it is still very much perceived by the electorate to be the party of the working class and supportive of families.
 - Perceptions of "confusion" and the fact that the party had "lost its way" with participants becoming increasingly confused and disillusioned with the Labour Party brand and its product offering.
- Participants had very positive associations with the history of the Labour Party. However, during the 2015 General Election, a poorly communicated and weak product offering resulted in negative perceptions of confusion and lack of understanding of what the party actually stood for.

6.3.1.2 The Conservative Party

- An overall positive perception was held by participants of the Conservative Party's political product offering.
- Similarly to the Labour Party, the Conservative Party had two overarching perceptions during the 2015 General Election:
 - the party was "elitist" and "for the rich" run by privileged and wealthy Members of Parliament for privileged and wealthy members of the electorate.
 - the party possessed the economic competence and steadfast leadership which would provide the economic stability that much of the electorate was seeking at this election.
- The political product offered by the Conservative Party at the 2015 General Election, particularly the leader and policy elements, resulted in positive perceptions of the party as being "economically competent", "stable" and the "most steadfast" option. This ultimately outweighed the negative associations of being the party that only represented the rich.

6.3.1.3 The United Kingdom Independence Party

- The predominantly negative perceptions that participants held of the United Kingdom Independence Party's political product offering were clear:
- The party was focused on one particular policy area, the European Union, which, ultimately, led to the perception of the party as having a basic and narrow-minded product offering.

- It was the party for Britons and, in particular, white males and had associations with thinly veiled racism.

6.3.2 Conclusions

Research question two was specifically developed to determine if the branding strategies used by political parties in Rossendale and Darwen during the 2015 General Election resulted in voters having an overall positive or negative perception of the political product offering. A primary data collection method in the form of focus groups made up of Rossendale and Darwen constituents who were of voting age and older at the time of the 2015 General Election were undertaken. Specific questions were asked around participants overall perceptions and associations of the political parties, as well a task which asked participants to pick a car brand that best described the political party and give a justification. This allowed the researcher to determine if participants had an overall positive or negative perception of the political brands and their product offerings.

The literature suggests that when political consumers develop an overall perception of a political party they take into consideration both the past experiences of the brand and the current political product offering. If the electorate fails to understand the brand and its current product offering then voters will hesitate to invest their vote because they are unsure that the product offered will meet their wants and needs (De Chernatony and McDonald, 2011). Past experiences with brands results in consumers understanding which brands historically satisfy their needs and which ones do not (Keller, 2008). This combination ultimately develops the overall perception of the political party in the minds of the electorate.

Generally, the Labour Party was negatively perceived during the 2015 General Election. The Labour Party had suffered a heavy defeat in the 2010 General Election after being in government for 13 consecutive years and the legacy of the Blair and Brown years, particularly the financial crisis of 2008, was very much still in the forefront of the electorate's mind. This impacted significantly on the electorate's perception of economic competency of the Labour Party. The research found that participants still had very positive associations with the historical Labour Party but the poorly communicated and weak product offering, together with associations with the party's fairly recent 13 years of power, resulted in participants being confused and lacking understanding of what the party was actually standing for during the 2015 General Election. The historic positive associations with the Labour Party was insufficient to persuade participants that the political product offering was enough to satisfy their current and future wants, needs and desires.

Overall, the Conservative Party was positively perceived during the 2015 General Election. They had been part of a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats between 2010 and 2015 and, although they had not been solely responsible for the decisions that had been made over the previous five years, the participants were very clear on their record. They noted that the Conservative Party had made difficult, unpopular, but in their minds, necessary decisions in order to attempt to 'balance the books' and steady the country's finances after several very economically turbulent years. Their political product offering very much reflected this. They presented their leader as being strong,

effective and competent; their policies were clear, concise and resonated with the electorate; and the overall party was seen to be the safest and the most competent option at this election.

Unlike the Labour and Conservative Party, the United Kingdom Independence Party has not previously been a party of government and therefore the electorate was unable to judge the party on past experience. This could have been an advantage to the Party in this election, however, the political product offering was poorly communicated and this impacted greatly on the overall perception. Although the leader was perceived to be strong and effective, he also suffered from negative perceptions, such as being unprofessional, racist and manipulative, which impacted greatly upon some participants' overall view of both him and the overall party brand. The lack of clearly defined, comprehensive and varied policies was also a major flaw in the United Kingdom Independence Party's product offering. Participants were not confident that the overall product offering, which was often seen as very narrow-focused and singular, was a strong enough alternative to competitors' offerings. All this resulted in the United Kingdom Independence Party being generally negatively perceived during the 2015 General Election.

The failure to present a well-rounded, effective and prime ministerial leader, combined with a weak and poorly communicated political product offering resulted in both the Labour Party and the United Kingdom Independence Party being overall negatively perceived by participants. In contrast, the Conservative Party, although not always the most popular amongst participants, had an overall positive perception. The Conservative Party presented a strong and well-defined political product offering which consisted of a credible, strong and effective leader; clear, concise policies – particularly economic; and, finally, a perception of the party as being the most competent and safest option within the context of the time of the election.

6.4 Conclusion of research question three

Is one element of the political product offer more influential and effective in terms of managing voter's perceptions of the overall party than the others?

6.4.1 Key findings

6.4.1.1 The Labour Party

- Ed Miliband was perceived to be a poor leader and had associations of lacking both charisma and presence. These poorly perceived personal characteristics impacted on how the electorate perceived his leadership potential.
- The research found that participants perceived Ed Miliband to have an inability to clearly communicate Labour Party policies. Unclear communication resulted in a lack of differentiation from competitors and the electorate being both confused and distrusting of the Labour Party's product offering.
- Although some policies were positively perceived by participants, particular the perception that the Labour Party would protect the NHS, the poor regard in which the Labour Party leader was generally held made it difficult for him to effectively develop and portray societal and emotional values to the electorate.
- The poorly perceived leadership of Ed Miliband and his inability to effectively communicate the political product offering impacted greatly on the party's attempt to differentiate their product offering and persuade the electorate that the Labour Party was worth investing their vote in on polling day.

6.4.1.2 The Conservative Party

- The leader element of the political brand was overwhelmingly positively perceived by participants.
- David Cameron was perceived to be prime ministerial and to possess the traits of a natural leader, such as being statesman like, charismatic, polished and confident. Unlike Ed Miliband, David Cameron was perceived to have a good understanding of subject matter and had a natural ability to effectively communicate policies, ideas and values to the electorate.
- The research found that the policies the Conservative Party presented at the 2015 General Election may not have been popular with everybody, for example, austerity measures and cuts in services which would potentially impact upon the most vulnerable in society. However, thanks to the leader's charisma and effective communication methods, the electorate clearly understood the Conservative Party's product offering and trusted David Cameron's ability to lead the country and implement the policies successfully.

6.4.1.3 The United Kingdom Independence Party

- The research found that participants had negative perceptions of the United Kingdom Independence Party's policy offering. Participants could only identify one policy area, withdrawal from the European Union and control of immigration. The very few, simplistic and

limited policies resulted in participants doubting the party's ability to effectively lead the country.

- Participants perceived Nigel Farage as being a good promoter, communicator and speaker. He is perceived as being good at what he does, i.e. being the spokesperson and face of the party.
- There was an overwhelming perception by participants that Nigel Farage is UKIP. Although many participants had negative perceptions of Nigel Farage, there was an acknowledgement that he is a dominant and crucial part of the United Kingdom Independence Party's brand.

6.4.2 Conclusions

Research question three was developed to understand if one element of the political product offer, which ultimately makes up the political brand, was more influential and effective in terms of managing the perceptions of the overall brand. A primary data collection methods consisting of focus groups made up of voting age and older Rossendale and Darwen constituents and interviews with representatives from the political parties were undertaken. Within the focus groups, participants were asked specifically about their perceptions of each element of the political offer of all three parties. Representatives from the political parties were specifically asked which element of the political offer they thought was the most influential and whether they utilised one over the other during the election campaign. This allowed the researcher to, firstly, understand participant's perceptions of each of the political product elements and determine their relative importance and, secondly, determine if political parties themselves understood what the strongest element of their political brand was and whether they exploited this.

Within the literature, Butler and Collins (1994) proposed an approach to the political offer which has since been widely recognised by academics. The political offer is described as a multi-component phenomenon that combines the party, the person and the ideology which ultimately form the basis of voter's knowledge and awareness of a political brand. (Baines and Egan, 2001; Hughes and Dann, 2009; Ormrod, Henneberg and O'shaughnessy, 2013; Ormrod and Savigny, 2012). The concept depicts the political offer in a triangular diagram which links all three elements together and gives equal importance to the party, policy and leader elements. The literature, however, does suggest that the face of the party, i.e. the leader, is an effective channel through which to communicate a political brand (Cherantony and White, 2002; Smith, 2001). All political leaders are spokespeople for their party and are, therefore, considered to be a key competitive resource that must be utilised in order for the overall brand to be successful (Speed, Butler and Collins, 2015). The research undertaken in this study has developed conclusions which challenges the idea that each element of the political brand has equal importance as outlined in Butler and Collins' tripartite political offer model. Themes within this research have emerged which suggest that the person element (the leader and/or parliamentary candidate) is the most significant and influential element of the political offer and the overall party brand.

It is clear from the research that the leader of the political party is the most crucial element of the political product offer. The leader is not only the face of the party but a key communicator and influencer. The remaining two elements of the political product offer, policies and party, are reliant upon the leader's ability to connect with voters in order to effectively communicate and differentiate the overall party brand from those of competitors. With help from other marketing communication methods, the leader must present a rounded, comprehensive and appealing proposition that clearly differentiates the product offering to the electorate before polling day.

The Labour Party leader, Ed Miliband was negatively perceived by participants. Themes of him being a poor leader, weak and non-prime ministerial emerged, which impacted greatly on the overall party brand. He failed to connect with the electorate which, in turn, resulted in the policies and the overall party brand being miscommunicated. This ultimately resulted in participants failing to understand or be convinced about what the party truly stood for, the political product offering or the leaders' ability to successfully lead the party or the country.

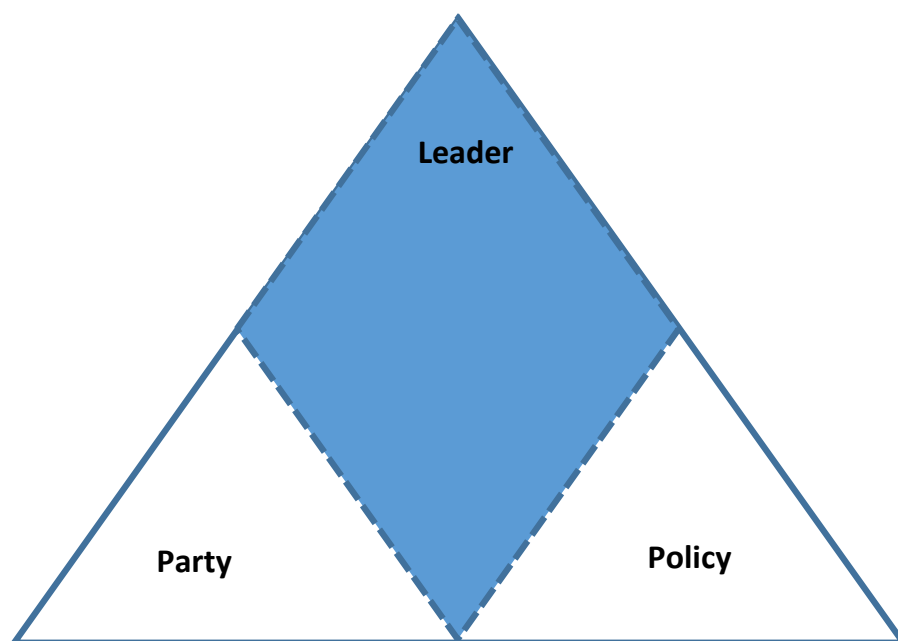
In contrast, the leader of the Conservative Party, David Cameron was positively perceived by participants. Themes emerged of perceptions of the leader being an effective communicator, having good understanding of subject matter and being prime ministerial. Participants were very clear on what the Conservative Party stood for at the last election, particularly their economic policies, which proved decisive during the 2015 General Election campaign. David Cameron successfully managed to communicate the policy and party elements of the political product offer. Participants were aware of key policies and believed that the party was competent and steadfast enough to lead the country, particularly with David Cameron at the helm.

The United Kingdom Independence Party's product offering was negatively perceived by participants mainly because of the lack of any detailed and comprehensive policies other than the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union. However, the party's leader Nigel Farage was acknowledged by the participants as being a straight talking politician, who is a good communicator and a strong leader. His ability to effectively communicate meant that participants had a very clear understanding of what the party stood for and what it represented, regardless of how singular and narrow this was perceived to be. Although the policy offering was weak and, in truth, inadequate, Nigel Farage's charisma and often showman-like communication methods meant that the participants were very clear on key aspects of the United Kingdom Independence Party's brand and product offering. He was a key communication channel and an extremely influential element of the political product offering at the 2015 General Election.

It is evident from the research that the leader element of the political product offer is the most influential and effective in terms of managing voter's perceptions of the overall party. The leader is the face of the party, the main communicator of policies and ideology and the element of the product offer which gains most media attention. It is apparent from the research that if the leader does not possess prime ministerial attributes, as perceived by the electorate, and lacks effective communication skills then the overall party brand will suffer. The leader is imperative in ensuring that the electorate is

aware, understands and is engaged with the party's candidates, leadership, policies and ideology, particularly during an election campaign. Butler and Collins (1994) proposed a multi-component phenomenon that is the political offer and brand. This is depicted in a triangular diagram which suggests that each element of the political offer is of equal importance, see Figure 4. The findings from this research suggest that, although all three elements are important and directly linked, the core, most important and influential element, is the leader. Although a more detailed study would be required in order to completely understand this under-researched area of political branding, Figure 23 shows the proposed adaptation to the model by Butler and Collins (1994) which is suggested by the findings of this research. Figure 23 shows the leader element of the political offer as the most important, the diamond within the triangle, which touches every other aspect of the political offer. This highlights that the leader directly impacts upon the party and policy elements of the political offer and has the greatest influence over the overall party brand and how it is communicated to and perceived by the electorate.

Figure 23: *Proposed adaptation to the Political Offer Triangle*



6.5 Conclusion of research question four

Do voters view commercial branding more positively or negatively than political branding?

6.5.1 Key findings

- The research found that participants view commercial brands much more positively than political brands.
- Participants viewed commercial brands as being reliable, recognisable and consistent.
- Participants agreed that when investing in a commercial brand they knew exactly what they were going to get in return for their investment every time. The consistency and reliability of commercial brands lead to consumers gaining trust in the brand and the belief that its quality and reliability are greater than the competition.
- Participants did hold some negative associations with commercial brands which included the profit-driven and exploitative mind set of some, particularly monopolies.
- The majority of participants could not describe any positive perceptions of or associations with political brands in general.
- Participants concluded that political brands are inconsistent and are only interested in getting into power. This has ultimately led to the electorate distrusting political brands even before they have been exposed to the brand and its messaging.
- There is a feeling amongst participants that political brands are dishonest and misleading, partly due to the fact that the manifestos that political parties campaign on are not always fully implemented once the party is in government.

6.5.2 Conclusions

The aim of research question four was to determine if voters view commercial brands more positively or negatively than political brands. A primary data collection method was used in the form of focus groups which was made up of constituents from Rossendale and Darwen who were of voting age and older at the time of the 2015 General Election. Task 4, outlined in the focus group schedule (Appendix 2) was developed to allow the researcher to understand both the negative and positive associations and perceptions that participants had of commercial and political brands. This allowed the researcher to ascertain whether participants viewed political brands differently than those in the commercial market, while, at the same time, understanding the reasoning behind such perceptions. Analysis of the primary data allowed conclusions to be developed and the research question to be answered.

It is evident from the research that participants viewed commercial and political brands very differently. The research established that there were many positive perceptions of commercial brands. Participants highlighted commercial brands as easily recognisable and the product offer easily understood through well-known logos, marketing communications and previous experience of using the products and services offered. The perceptions of consistency and reliability of commercial brands, as highlighted by participants, are crucial in ensuring consumers trust the brand and believe that its quality and reliability are greater than its competitors. This ultimately means that consumers 'fall in love' with the brand, trust the brand, and believe in its superiority (Wheeler, 2013).

In contrast participants had many negative perceptions of political brands. Participants highlighted that, as political consumers, they often feel misled by political parties, resulting in a lack of trust towards political brands in general. The general perception of political parties being dishonest and misleading partly, due to the fact that the political product offering, particularly the policies that form part of the promise made to the electorate in order to persuade the electorate to vote for them, are not always implemented once the party is in government. This may be due to many different reasons and not always the fault of the governing party but, none the less, it impacts greatly on the confidence and trust of the political consumer. In contrast to commercial brands, participants noted that political brands are inconsistent. As the political landscape and societal trends change political parties adapt their policies and messages in order to persuade and engage as much of the electorate as possible. Although often necessary, this has resulted in participants having the perception that political brands are inconsistent and, therefore, not necessarily to be trusted.

Overall participants viewed commercial brands much more positively than political brands. The key positive perception being that of consistency. A consistent brand helps to promote perceptions such as reliability, trust and quality to consumers. A consumer is encouraged to be loyal to a brand and, as a result, repeat purchase if there is a guarantee that the product or service they invest in meets their wants, needs and expectations each and every time they use it. Due to the nature of the political market, political brands find it almost impossible to have a completely consistent product offering between one election and the next. Changes in societal needs and trends resulting in updated manifestos to reflect those changes; turnover of party leaders and parliamentary candidates and the external political and economic environment impact greatly upon the policies and messages that a political brand promotes. However, this inconsistency of the political product offering causes the electorate to have an overall distrustful and negative perception of political brands, an additional barrier to overcome compared to most commercial brands.

6.6 Conclusion of research question five

What are the similarities between political branding and commercial branding?

6.6.1 Key findings

- Political or commercial brand both aim to ensure that the product or service offered stands out and is easily distinguishable from that of competitors by utilizing effective marketing communication methods.
- Political and commercial consumers are central to the exchange process in both markets.
- The success of both political and commercial brands is reliant upon the creation of differentiation, which involves the creation of a brand that is perceived to be both unique and distinctive in comparison to the competition.
- Political and commercial brands both strive to develop a positioning strategy that highlights the organisation's unique way of delivering value to customers.

6.6.2 Conclusions

Research question five was developed in order to understand the similarities between commercial and political branding. Conclusions were developed through analysis of the secondary data collection which consisted of an in depth analysis of the current academic literature and previous studies that are of relevance to this research.

An in-depth review of the literature found that commercial branding strategies have been successfully implemented within the political marketplace. Both commercial and political brands have the same aim: to create a set of meaningful differences that makes the offer from one political party or commercial company distinctive from those of its competitors (Kotler and Keller, 2012). It is concluded within the literature that the success of any brand, commercial, political or otherwise, is reliant upon the creation of differentiation (Davicik and Sharma, 2015; Kotler and Keller, 2012; Porter, 1998). Both commercial and political brands use strategies that will ensure their product offering stands out and is easily distinguishable from that of competitors. Effective marketing communication strategies, using methods which are outlined in Table 2, are successfully utilised by brands in both markets, particularly leaflet, direct mail, email and social media.

A clear and concise positioning strategy aids an organisation in delivering value to customers (Keller, 2013); aids the process of securing consumers' trust (McQuiston, 2004; Roberts and Merrilees, 2007); promotes the quality of products or services offered (Bendixen, Bukasa, and Abratt, 2004; Mitchel, King, and Reast, 2001), and reduces the customer's perceived risk (Glynn, 2011; Homburg, et al, 2010). Both commercial and political consumers require a brand that meets their wants and needs but, at the same time, is an investment that is of value but with low associated risk. This is possibly the greatest similarity between the branding strategies of commercial and political brands. The ultimate aim is to create within the mind of the consumer the perception of value, trust and minimal associated risk so that they feel confident enough to invest at the time of the exchange process.

6.7 Reflections

The strengths and contribution of the research will be outlined in this section. Identified limitations and the researcher's recommendations for further research will also be discussed.

6.7.1 Research strengths and contribution

The limited research which has been undertaken regarding political brands, particularly within the UK, confirms that this research is both worthwhile and relevant in order to increase understanding of the subject area.

The overall aim of the study, 'to establish whether political parties in Rossendale and Darwen effectively managed their party brand during the 2015 General Election' has been achieved through a thorough review of the academic literature and the development of a robust methodology. The initial undertaking of a thorough literature review allowed comparing, contrasting and critiquing of definitions, theories, models and concepts of branding and political branding from the current literature. This resulted in the identification of potential gaps within the literature which informed the basis and structure of the methodology of this research. These identified gaps gave the research a specific focus, ensuring original, relevant and worthwhile conclusions were developed. The strength of this research is underlined by the robust qualitative, primary data collection in the form of interviews and focus groups which have enabled strong conclusions to be developed in order to meet the aims and objectives and answer the research questions.

Through realising the overall aim of the study, this research has built upon the previous studies that have been undertaken in this area and provides an update to the academic literature in the political marketing field. The conclusions that have been developed by this research accentuate the strength of this study, particularly the findings around the success of political branding in the 2015 General Election and, in particular, the significance of the role of the leader plays in positively influencing the overall party brand. This research has developed conclusions which boldly question the current model of the political product offer, developed by Butler and Collins (1994) and supported by many academics. This conclusion, which highlights the significant influence of the leader element of the political product offer, is an important and key contribution to political branding literature. The current literature identifies that the leader element is important but certainly does not highlight the crucial impact it potentially has on the success or failure of the overall party brand. Although further, more in depth, research will be required to fully understand the political brand and the true significance of the leader element within it, this research has identified and has begun to lay the foundations of a new understanding of this fundamental area of political branding.

6.7.2 Limitations

Although every effort was made to ensure the methodology of this research was robust, valid and reliable, some limitations have been identified.

Firstly, whilst the research utilised effective sampling techniques to ensure a reliable and valid sample of participants was sourced, the size of the sample is not big enough for the findings to be completely

conclusive. Although the location of this study is entirely justified, it would be the recommendation of this research to complete a similar study across a larger number of marginal constituencies across the United Kingdom in order to gather a larger amount of data for analysis in order to confirm the conclusions of this study.

The primary research for this study was undertaken in the summer of 2016, over 12 months after the 2015 General Election had taken place. Some focus group participants struggled to recollect past perceptions of political brands and had a tendency to talk about the perceptions they had of the political brands at the time of the research. It was important that participants only gave responses that reflected their thoughts at the time of the 2015 General Election. Some participants found this difficult, talking about their perception of the political party brands as they stood at the time of the research and now how they felt 12 months previous. This may have impacted upon the validity of some of the findings and the research recommends, therefore, that when further studies are undertaken which relate to a particular election the study should be commence as soon as possible, and no more than a few months, after conclusion of the election in order to ensure that the responses of participants are both up-to-date and valid.

The overall research aim was achieved and through a robust qualitative research approach conclusions were drawn which answered the research questions and objectives. However, this research failed to quantify the degree that the political parties effectively managed their brands during the 2015 General Election. The research focused on gathering qualitative, descriptive data to develop an understanding around what makes a political brand effective and to determine the impact of the different political offer elements on overall brand equity. Focus groups and interviews allowed the researcher to understand the deeper meanings behind participants responses, however, it did not allow the researcher to fully understand the degree in which the participant perceived, understood or was aware of the political party brand. Quantitative data collection methods, in the form of a questionnaire, using closed ended questions with scaled responses could be utilised to properly quantify participant responses and gather a more insightful understanding of the true awareness, perception, image and understanding participants had of the three party brands.

6.8 Final conclusion

This research has answered the aims, objectives and research questions outlined in Chapter 1. Primary data has been collected, analysed and conclusions have been developed that help to advance the understanding of the subject area and build the foundations for future research in this under-researched, yet important, area of political brand theory.

The aim of this research was to establish whether political parties in Rossendale and Darwen effectively managed their party brand during the 2015 General Election. This research has determined how successful the three parties studied were in this regard. The research has also attempted to increase understanding in the relationships between commercial and political brands, as well as the key elements of the political offer and their ability to influence the overall party brand.

The research, utilising a multi-method qualitative primary research methodology, has established that, in order to effectively manage the overall party brand, a political party must have a strong political product offering. To be successful, the political offer requires clearly defined and relevant policies; a well positioned and differentiated party brand that the electorate is familiar with and understands; and, finally, the party must have a strong and steadfast leader that possesses prime ministerial attributes and can effectively communicate and engage with voters. The research has concluded that of the three political offer elements, the leader is the most important and has the greatest influence on voters' perception of the overall party brand. The leader is the face of the party, and the most effective method of communicating its policies, pledges and ideology. A poor leader will be negatively perceived, their ability to lead the country questioned and is likely to be generally distrusted by the electorate. Key messages and policies will not be effectively communicated resulting in confusion and distrust of the political offer and overall party brand. The leader, therefore, is essential in ensuring that the electorate is aware of, understands and is engaged with the party's candidates, leadership, policies and ideology, particularly during an election campaign.

During the 2015 General Election, the Conservative Party was the only political party in Rossendale and Darwen that effectively managed their overall party brand. Participants were aware of, understood and positively perceived Conservative policies and the overall party brand which portrayed economic competence and steadfast leadership. The Conservative Party leader, David Cameron, was a crucial element of the party's brand and was integral to the management of the overall image and electorate's perception of the party. He was positively perceived by participants in all focus groups who highlighted his strong leadership qualities, ability to effectively communicate and possession of prime ministerial attributes.

In contrast, the Labour Party and the United Kingdom Independence Party both failed to manage the electorate's perceptions of the overall party brand, primarily due to a weak product offering. The United Kingdom Independence Party was perceived to have a very limited number of straight forward and simplistic policies. The party as a whole was negatively perceived with perceptions of being narrow minded and racist held by some participants. Nigel Farage, the party leader, although a 'Marmite' character, was positively perceived for his effective showman-like communication methods,

effective leadership and straight-talking approach. He was seen as being absolutely essential to the overall party's success by participants. However, the lack of a wide range of comprehensive policies and a poorly perceived party brand resulted in the overall product offer not being strong enough to persuade the electorate to invest in them.

The Labour Party was the party that least effectively managed its overall party brand during the election. Every element of the political offer was weak. The policies were not effectively communicated, leaving many participants confused and unaware of what the party's policies were, particularly in crucial areas such as the economy. The leader, Ed Miliband, was negatively perceived by the majority of participants. He was seen as a weak and ineffective leader who possessed very few prime ministerial attributes. The leader's poor communication skills and inability to engage with the electorate and successfully impart the party pledges and policies was a significant reason why participants were, in general, confused and distrusting of the Labour Party brand during the 2015 General Election.

It is evident from this research that out of the three political party case studies which were studied the one which had a stronger, more positively perceived leader had a much more effective and stronger brand and political product offering. This research has informed an adaptation of the Political Offer Triangle model by Butler and Collins (1994). The findings from this research suggest that, although all three elements are important and directly linked, the core, most important and influential element in ensuring positive brand equity, is the leader. It is apparent from the research that if the leader does not possess prime ministerial attributes, as perceived by the electorate, and lacks effective communication skills then the overall party brand will suffer. The leader is imperative in ensuring that the electorate is aware, understands and is engaged with the party's candidates, leadership, policies and ideology, particularly during an election campaign. The adaptation of the Political Offer Triangle is outlined in Figure 23 and shows the leader element of the political offer as the most important, the diamond within the triangle, which touches every other aspect of the political offer. This highlights that the leader directly impacts upon the party and policy elements of the political offer and has the greatest influence over the overall party brand and how it is communicated to and perceived by the electorate.

Ultimately, the leader element of the political offer is a crucial communication channel which is responsible in developing voters' party knowledge which is based upon party awareness, association and image constructs outlined in the Conceptual Model of Brand Equity developed by Ahmed, et al (2015). The knowledge stage within the brand equity model allows the political party to develop their positioning and differentiation strategy to best align themselves with the wants and needs of the electorate (Marsh and McConnell, 2010). If successful, the party will achieve positive brand equity leading to investment in the form of votes on election day by political consumers.

7. CHAPTER 7 - REFERENCES

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8. CHAPTER 8 - APPENDICES

8.1 Appendix 1: Interview design schedule

Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce the researcher and thank the interviewee for their participation. • Introduce and outline the research aim and objectives and explain the purpose of undertaking this interview. • Highlight the ethical considerations of taking part in this research and ask the interviewee to sign the consent form. • Ask the interviewee if they have any questions or concerns before the interview commences. 	
Question 1: How did the party position and differentiate itself from other parties in the 2015 General Election?	Question 1 leads into question 2. The aim of this question is to understand how the party positioned and differentiated itself from its competition during the election.
Question 2: Was the national strategy different to the local strategy?	Ensure the interviewee elaborates on their answer so that the researcher has a detailed understanding.
Question 3: What marketing and communication methods did the party use in Rossendale and Darwen during the 2015 General Election?	If a list is given ask interviewee to provide reasoning behind the methods chosen.
Question 4: Through the branding, marketing and communication methods used, how did you want the electorate to perceive the party and what image did you want them to have of the party as a whole?	Explain to the interviewee that questions 4 to 8 follow a similar format. Describing words, colours, image, perceptions, feelings, etc can be used to answer this question.
Question 5: Through the branding, marketing and communication methods used, how did you want the electorate to perceive and what image did you want them to have of the party's policies?	Describing words, colours, image, perceptions, feelings, etc can be used to answer this question. The response of this question will be used to compare with the responses from the focus groups.
Question 6:	Describing words, colours, image, perceptions, feelings, etc can be used to answer this question.

Through the branding, marketing and communication methods used, how did you want the electorate to perceive and what image did you want them to have of the party's leader?	The response of this question will be used to compare with the responses from the focus groups.
Question 7: Through the branding, marketing and communication methods used, how did you want the electorate to perceive and what image did you want them to have of the party's parliamentary candidate?	Describing words, colours, image, perceptions, feelings, etc can be used to answer this question. The response of this question will be used to compare with the responses from the focus groups.
Question 8: Taking the party, the policies, the leader and the local candidate into consideration how would you briefly describe and outline who your party was and what they stood for at the last General Election to somebody who had never heard of the party before?	A succinct, sentence should be provided from the interviewee. The response of this question will be used to compare with the responses from the focus groups.
Question 9: Out of the party, policies, leader and parliamentary candidate, which was the biggest asset to the party in the 2015 General Election in Rossendale and Darwen?	Question 9 leads into question 10. Ask the interviewee to elaborate on their answer to ensure the researcher has a full understanding of which, if any was the biggest asset and why.
Question 10: Did the party promote any of the above more than others? If so, why?	Ask the interviewee to elaborate on their answer to ensure the researcher has a full understanding of which, if any was the promoted above the others.
Question 11: At the last General Election, if the party was a car, what car would they have been and why?	Interviewee should provide a car brand and an explanation as minimum.
Conclusion:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bring the session to an end by thanking the interviewee for taking part. • Remind the interviewee that if they have any concerns or queries about the research they can contact the researcher or the researcher's supervisor. 	

8.2 Appendix 2 - Focus group design schedule

Introduction

- Welcome and introductions.
- Brief background on study and the purpose of this research.
- Overview of session (length, format, schedule)
- Outline and highlight key ethical considerations. Participants to complete and sign consent form.
- Reinforce that this research is solely looking at the 2015 General Election. Participants should think about feelings, opinions, and perceptions etc they had about the political parties at that time only.
- Before the focus group commences ask all participants if they have any questions or concerns.

Task 1 - (Task developed to answer Research Question One)

Question 1: Which parties stood in the 2015 general election in Rossendale and Darwen?

- What were the candidates' names?
- Who was the party's national leader?
- What was their slogan?
- What does their logo look like?
- Do you associate any colours with a particular party?

Question 2: Rank the parties in order of who received the most votes in Rossendale and Darwen (Most votes to least votes).

Methodology: Ask the participants to individually think of answers to the questions. Participants will be given 5 minutes to individually think about the questions before a group discussion will take place.

Aim: Can participants remember the key components of the political brand and its product offer in Rossendale and Darwen from the 2015 General Election. The questions help to remind participants of the political parties that stood in the election before a more depth discussion about the parties takes place in Task 2.

Task 2 - (Task developed to answer research question one, two and three)

Question 1: The Labour Party

a.) What comes to mind?

- The Labour Party
- Labour Party Policies
- Ed Miliband
- Will Straw

b.) How would you describe the Labour Party to somebody who has no idea who they are or what they stand for?

Question 2: The Conservative Party

a.) What comes to mind?

- The Conservative Party
- Conservative Party Policies
- David Cameron
- Jake Berry

b.) How would you describe the Conservative Party to somebody who has no idea who they are or what they stand for?

Question 3: The United Kingdom Independence Party

a.) What comes to mind?

- The United Kingdom Independence Party
- UKIP Party Policies
- Nigel Farage
- Clive Balchin

b.) How would you describe the United Kingdom Independence Party to somebody who has no idea who they are or what they stand for?

Methodology: Participants to spend a few minutes making notes on handouts provided. Moderator will go through each question one by one and invite participants to shout out their thoughts. Moderator will allow the group to enter into discussion about particular points if they wish to do so. Assistant moderator to compile list of responses on flipchart.

Aim: To understand the participant's perceptions, views and opinions of each of the elements of the political product. This will allow the researcher to draw conclusions and comparisons of differing or similar perceptions between age groups. Comparisons will also be able to be made between how voters perceived the party, leader, policies and candidate and how the political parties wanted them to be perceived during the 2015 General Election.

Task 3 - (Task developed to answer research question one and two)

Question 1: If each of the three parties were a car brand, what car brand would they be and why?

Methodology: Moderator to ask each participant individually what car they think best represents each political party. Assistant moderator will generate a list of the responses on the flipchart. Participants will be allowed to engage in a discussion about the car brands raised should they wish to do so.

Aim: To further understand the perception and image the participants have of the political parties by likening them to well-known car brands.

Task 4 - (Task developed to answer research question four)

Question 1: Commercial brands.

a.) What positive ideas, perceptions, opinions, etc, if any, come to mind when you think of commercial brands.

b.) What negative ideas, perceptions, opinions, etc, if any, come to mind when you think of commercial brands.

Question 2: Political brands.

a.) What positive ideas, perceptions, opinions, etc, if any, come to mind when you think of political brands.

b.) What negative ideas, perceptions, opinions, etc, if any, come to mind when you think of political brands.

Methodology: Participants will be given 5 minutes to consider answers to the questions. The moderator will then ask the group to shout out answers and discuss their thoughts. Assistant moderator will compile a list of answers on the flipchart.

Aim: To understand the overall attitude and perception the participants have of commercial and political brands. To determine whether participants view commercial and political brands differently.

Conclusion

- Bring the session to an end by thanking participants for taking part.
- Remind participants that if they have any concerns or queries about the research they can contact the researcher or the researcher's supervisor.

8.3 Appendix 3: Letter of invitation to take part in the research



Are political brands effective in Rossendale and Darwen?

You are invited to take part in a focus group (a small discussion group). The research is focused upon political brands and marketing strategies. The study is specifically looking at the views of voters in the constituency of Rossendale and Darwen and their perceptions of the political parties during the 2015 General Election.

You do not need to have any prior knowledge of marketing, branding or politics. The focus group will consist of a several brief discussions and a couple of activities. There are no right or wrong answers, your honest opinions are what the researcher is looking for.

The study is being undertaken by Daniel Chadwick who is a Masters by Research student at the University of Huddersfield. Your views and identity will be kept completely confidential. Only the researcher and supervisory academics at the University of Huddersfield will have access to the data.

Focus groups will be held on:

Saturday 4th June at Acre Mill Baptist Church, Stacksteads.

Focus groups are being held at different times for different age categories, these are as follows:

Time	Age Group
9:30am	18-30
11am	31-40
12:30pm	41-50
2pm	51-60
3:30pm	61+


You do not need to bring anything with you on the day, everything you will need including refreshments will be provided. If you are willing to take part please contact Daniel by phone, text or email.

Mobile number: 0773 441 0981

Email: danieljchadwick@icloud.com

Should you have any questions or require further information please do not hesitate to get in touch.

8.4 Appendix 4 - Informed consent form

 Informed Consent Form
Research study: Did political parties in Rossendale and Darwen effectively manage their party brand during the 2015 General Election?
Researcher: Daniel Chadwick (Daniel.Chadwick@hud.ac.uk)
Research Supervisor: David Harvey (d.j.harvey@hud.ac.uk)
Description of study: You are being invited to take part in a study for a postgraduate research project designed to determine the effectiveness of political brands in Rossendale and Darwen during the 2015 General Election. Political branding is described within the literature as a comparatively new area of research and within the last 20 years has become of great interest to political parties. The ever increasing research and interest around political brands, highlights the relevance and importance of the subject and the need to understand political branding in much greater detail. Marketing and branding is now rooted in every election campaign in the UK, from small parish council elections to general elections, political parties are using marketing and branding techniques to influence the electorate now more than ever before. Due to the ever growing interest in political marketing and branding, there is a need for original, quality research to be undertaken in order to understand the discipline further.
Please read the following statements: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• I have read and understood the description of the study.• I willingly consent to participate in the study.• I understand that I am able to withdraw from this research at any point without question.• I understand that I will remain anonymous throughout this research.• I agree to have the focus group recorded (video or dictaphone), so it can be transcribed after the focus group is held.• I am fully aware that data collected will be stored securely, safely and in accordance with Data Collection Act (1998).

Please confirm your willingness to participate in this study:

I AGREE [] I DISAGREE []

Participants printed name: _____ Date: _____

Participants signature: _____

Researchers signature: _____ Date: _____

What if I have concerns about this research?

If you are worried about this research, or if you are concerned about how it is being conducted, you can contact David Harvey, Research Supervisor (d.j.harvey@hud.ac.uk). Alternatively you can contact Dr Eleanor Davies, Chair of the Huddersfield University Business School Ethics Committee (e.davies@hud.ac.uk).

8.5 Appendix 5: Open codes, axial codes, selective codes and themes

The Labour Party		
The Party		
Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code & Theme
Working people	A party for working people and families	Traditionally a party for the working class
Working families		
Working man - albeit less so now	A party traditionally for the working class although to a lesser extent now	
Working class - albeit to a lesser extent		
Originally the working man's party		
Originally a working class party		
Too similar to the Conservative Party	Similar to the Conservative Party	Confusion of what the Labour Party now stands for
Policies similar to the Conservative Party		
Confused	Moved to the centre ground away from their traditional policies	
Lost their way		
Moved to the centre		
Middle of the road		
North of Birmingham	A party that has strong representation in the North of England	Popular in the North of England
North of England		
The NHS	Introduced the NHS	Passionate about the NHS
Introduced the NHS		
Trying to save the NHS		
Ed Miliband	Ed Miliband should not have been elected leader	Wrong leader
Undemocratic - wrong leader elected		
Wrong leader		
The colour red	The party colours	N/A
Red		
Media lovers	Spin doctors	
Lead by Spinners and Spads		
Previous time in office - debt	N/A	
Left wing		
Equality		
Unions		

The Labour Party		
Policies		
Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code & Theme
Saving the NHS	Supportive of the NHS	Policies are supportive of the NHS
Keep the NHS		
Support the NHS		
The economy	Good for the economy	Confusion over economic policy
Going to sort the economy out		
Anti-austerity	Anti-austerity	
Spend money to make jobs as oppose to cutting	Austerity over a longer period	
Slower austerity		
Austerity - slower than the Conservative proposal		
Eventually going to reduce the deficit		
Confused	Confusion over policies	Confusion and lack of differentiation of general policies
How can they reduce the deficit without cutting		
Similar to Conservatives policies	Policies similar to the Conservative Party's policies	
Immigration 'light'	Pro-immigration	Party favourable with immigrants
Pro immigration		
Reliant upon the immigrant vote	Party's policy designed to attract immigrant vote	
Participants struggled to remember any	Policies not memorable	Policies not memorable or convincing
Not memorable		
Policies designed just to win	Policies were not convincing	
Not convincing		
Policies overshadowed by poor leader	Leader's performance overshadowed policies	N/A
Going to sort out the schools	Education policies	
Anti-academy		

The Labour Party

Ed Miliband		
Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code & Theme
Poor leader	Poor leadership	Not prime ministerial
Not a strong leader		
No confidence in his leadership	No confidence in leadership	
Weak		
Wrong leader	Wrong leader chosen. David Miliband would have made a better leader	
Union stooge - Brother should have been leader		
Brother should have been leader		
Brother would have made a better leader		
Backstabber		
Lack of charisma	Lack of charisma	
No charisma		
Not polished		
No presence		
Gawky	Negative personality traits	
Wet		
Spineless		
Flaky		
Bland		
Dishonest - 2 kitchen interview		
Devious - 2 kitchen interview		
Less confident than Cameron		Cameron seemed more confident
Seemed too young		Would not run make a good Prime Minister
Not prime ministerial		
Would not make a good Prime Minister		
Couldn't see him running the country		
Relatable	Positive personality traits	Likeable
Too nice for politics		
Pleasant		
Genuine		
Nothing positive to say	Negative narrative	Poorly communicated policies
Negative campaigning		
Childish campaigning		

Party leader - Ed Miliband (continued)		
Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code & Theme
Empty promises	Policies unclear	
Overshadowed the policies		
Confusion over cutting and spending		
Career politician	Always worked within politics	Political establishment
Always been in the political bubble		

The Labour Party

Parliamentary candidate - Will Straw		
Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code & Theme
Didn't know who he was until researched	Unknown	Not visible enough
Can't remember his name	Couldn't remember candidates name	
Can't remember who he was		
Not overly visible	Not visible in the constituency	
Not as visible as Jake Berry		
Only visible towards end of election race		
No connection to Rossendale and Darwen		
His Dad	Former Home Secretary and MP Jack Straw	Potentially overshadowed by his Father's career and bad publicity
Jack Straw		
Speaking for money claims	Negative publicity Jack Straw received around the election time	
His Dad went against him		
Jack Straw speaker circuit fiasco		
Really nice	A nice person	A good candidate
Pleasant		
A nice person		
Decent		
Intelligent		
Hard working	Came across well to voters	
Could talk well to ordinary people		
Young		
Youth went against him	Young, not always a positive	Youthful
Young man		
Career politician	Career in politics ahead of him	Part of the political establishment
A good future ahead of him		
Drugs at university	Historical drug use at University	N/A
Wacky backy		

The Conservative Party

The Party		
Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code & Theme
Austerity measures	Austerity measures	Austerity
Austerity		
Privatise the NHS	Cost saving policies	
Rich richer, poor poorer	Look after the rich	Out of touch with the ordinary working person
Protectionism		
Greed		
Corporations		
Out of touch		
Middle-Upper class		
Private education		
Eton		
Traditionally elite		
Elitist		
South of Birmingham	A party that has strong representation in the South of England	Party popular in the South of England
Southerners		
More united than the Labour Party	United	Safest option in this election
Competent	Safe and competent	
The safe option		
Safe hands		
Strength		
Radical in a controlled way		
No viable alternative in this election	No viable option in this election	
Historic	Historic	Traditional
Old fashioned		
Conservative	Conservative policies	
Right wing		
David Cameron important face of the party	Leader of the party	David Cameron important to overall party success
David Cameron		
Jake Berry	Local parliamentary candidate	N/A
Blue	Party colour	N/A
Expenses fraud	Historical expenses fraud	N/A

The Conservative Party

The Conservative Party		
Policies		
Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code & Theme
Claw back the debt	Debt reduction policies	Austerity focused economic policies
Reducing the deficit		
Belts and braces type policies		
Cuts	Austerity measures	
Clamp down on benefits		
Cutting benefits		
Major spending cuts		
'Easy' cuts		
Guarded about where the cuts will be		
Ruining the NHS	Continuation of austerity measures	
'Halfway there, let's finish the job'		
Basically economic	Economic focused	
Business friendly	Business friendly	Business focused policies
Big on business		
Business like		
All about making money		
Focus on apprenticeships		
Immigration	Immigration policies	EU Referendum
Europe	Referendum offered on EU membership	
Referendum		
An overall negative perception of policies	Negative perception of policies	Negative perception towards policies
False promises	Distrust due to false promises	

The Conservative Party

Party leader - David Cameron

Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code & Theme
Seemed to know what he was talking about	Good understanding of subject matters	Prime ministerial
You believed him		
Good subject knowledge		
Could get his point across	Effective communicator	
Articulate		
Good speaker		
Could talk the talk		
Came across well	Natural leader	
Felt like he could lead the country		
Statesman like		
More of a presence than Ed Miliband	Seen to be more favourable than the opposition leader	
Trust more than Ed Miliband		
Stronger leader than Ed Miliband		
Had an easy time against Ed Miliband		
Charismatic	Positive personality and physical traits	
Good looking		
Polished		
Slick		
Confident		
A family man	A father - relatable characteristic	
Lost child before coming Prime Minister		
Family holidays in Britain		
Two faced	Mistrust and suspicion	Lack of trust
Slimey		
Good at avoiding the question		
A fraud		
Pigs head	Dubious past behaviour	

The Conservative Party

Parliamentary candidate - Jake Berry

Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code & Theme	
Been around for ages	Visible in the community	A good Member of Parliament	
Visible			
More out there			
In the Free Press a lot			
In the Rossendale Free Press			
Local			
Knew who he was - didn't know who was			
Always appeared to be out and about			
Seen out and about			
Community spirited			
Seen walking his dog			
Done well for the constituency			
Done a good job			Good at his job
A good MP			
Competent			
Pleasant			
He would listen	Approachable		
A people person			
Approachable			
Invasion of privacy using emails to send marketing			
No conviction	Lack of respect for privacy	Negative perceptions	
Hypocrite - Voting for cuts but supporting anti-cut movements	No conviction		
A typical MP			
Puffed up	Arrogant		
Being younger a positive			
Apprenticeships push			

The United Kingdom Independence Party		
The Party		
Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code & Theme
Extreme right wing	Right wing	Very right wing
Born from the BNP and National Front	Likened to the BNP and National Front	
The acceptable face of the BNP		
Thinly veiled racism	Racist	
Racist		
Racism		
Single policy	Single minded	Europe focused. Leaving will solve all problems
Single platform		
Single minded		
Single focused		
Single policy focused		
Out of Europe		
Immigration focused		
Immigration		
Nigel Farage	Nigel Farage	Nigel Farage is UKIP
Nigel Farage is UKIP		
Dominated by a single personality		
The pound sign	Party logo	Britain focused
Keep Britain British	British patriotism	
Proud to be British		
Proud of the British flag		
They say what people think	Not bothered who they upset	Unprofessional
No 'grey' areas		
Clumsy	Haphazard	
Disorganised		
A new party but old fashioned	Old fashioned / traditional values	
Tries to appeal to the working man		

The United Kingdom Independence Party

Policies		
Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code & Theme
Leaving the EU	Anti-European Union	Leave the European Union
The EU		
Anti-EU		
Out of Europe		
Campaigned for referendum		
Immigration	Reduce immigration	
'Send them back'		
Dover billboard		
Close the doors		
Close the borders		
A handle on immigration	Britain for Britain's	
Jobs for Britains		
Britain for Britains		
British jobs for British people		
Patriotic		
Give the country back to the British people	Bring back manufacturing to the UK	
Manufacturing policies		
All eggs in one basket		Very few, very straight forward policies
Very few policies		
Very limited		
Never specific		
Lacking in detail		
Straightforward		
The party of fear		

The United Kingdom Independence Party			
Party leader - Nigel Farage			
Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code & Theme	
Just himself	He doesn't pretend to be anything he is not	Straight talking politician	
True to himself			
Genuine			
He knows what he wants	Strong personal opinions and desires		
Very strong opinions			
Passionate			
Determined			
He doesn't care what people think	Doesn't care what people think		
He doesn't care			
Says it how it is	Straight talking		
Says what people want to hear			
A 'black and white' politician			
Racist	Racist		Negatively perceived
Blinkered			
One track mind - immigration			
The acceptable face of the BNP			
Not a nice man	Manipulative		
Manipulative			
Plays upon people's fears			
Mad as a hatter	Unprofessional		
A joke			
Annoying			
Doesn't keep his party together			
Good at what he does - being a leader	A good leader	Nigel is UKIP	
A very strong personality	Strong personality		
He seems to know what he is talking about	A good communicator		
Good at dealing the media			
A wonderful showman			
A good promoter			
A good speaker			
A good marketer for UKIP			
One person party - Nigel is UKIP			Nigel dominates the party

Party leader - Nigel Farage (continued)		
Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code & Theme
A bit of a lad	Perception of being an everyday man	
A bloke in the pub		
A pint and a fag		
Clever		
Traditional values		
Has limited answers i.e. Europe, immigration		

The United Kingdom Independence Party		
Parliamentary candidate - Clive Balchin		
Open Code	Axial Code	Selective Code & Theme
No idea who he is	No idea who he is	Widely unknown
Don't know who he is		
Not well known	Limited knowledge	
Widely unknown		
Limited knowledge of him		
Used to be a Conservative	Previously involved with the local Conservative Party	Local ex councillor
Used to be a local councillor		
A turncoat		
Local man	Local	
Local business man		
Stirrer		
Trouble maker		
Seemed to talk sense		