

Exploring Role of Political Human Brand Personality, Appearance and Behavioral as Political Brand Association in Political Campaigns for Voters' Preferences

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore how political branding is defined and exhibited during the local body elections in Pakistani regions where voter turnout is high in number. This paper offers new appreciation in the study of political branding which is widely explored in the West. Data were collected through in-depth interviews among 37 campaign marketers who played an important role during elections and were participants in the World Marketing Summit 2020, Lahore, Pakistan. Political branding rotates around the personality measures through his/her intensity of charisma and charm, being smart, responsible and attentive, compassionate, trustworthy, and hardworking. While brand appearance includes visual representation. Musical entertainment in public meetings can also be a political brand-identifying agent. Political Brand Behavior covers emotional gestures, conscientiousness, and consistency. Overall, the study demonstrates how political branding helps voters differentiate candidates and facilitates recall at the ballot box, thereby potentially increasing voter turnout. Enhancing the likability of political brands through strategically crafted branding strategies may lead voters to respond more favorably to those campaigns. The research holds significance for advancing the understanding of political marketing practices in non-Western contexts. The findings provide actionable insights for campaign strategists seeking to optimize branding approaches. Moreover, the study contributes novel perspectives on how personality, appearance, and behavior collectively shape a candidate's political brand identity and popularity among constituents

Keywords: political branding, brand personality, brand appearance, brand behavior, political campaigns, Pakistan, local body elections

Introduction

Overview

The idea of political branding is about political brand identity and behavior that directly impacts voting preferences has gained popularity in marketing and political studies (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez et al., 2023; Banerjee, 2021; Ferreira and van Eyk 2023). A strong leader image creates political brand awareness among voters (Farkas & Bene, 2021). Jha (2021) stated the brand image created by a leader's competency and responsiveness substantially influences voters. An important aspect of any brand, including political brands, is being distinctive and well-recognized by the target audience. The positioning of a political brand in the market

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depends on several factors related to recognition, conceptualization, and effective communication strategies (Quach et al., 2020; Kausar et al., 2022; Dawson, 2024; Grüning & Schubert, 2022). It is important to understand brand theory and the concept of political marketing to effectively brand a political party. When branding politics, voters process information about political campaigns similarly to how they recognize consumer brands - associating campaign messages with their prior beliefs about parties and candidates (Kausar et al., 2022; Dawson, 2024).

Pakistan has over 207.8 million people, making it the world's sixth most populous country (CIA, 2020; Yousaf, 2016). Thousands of political candidates from various parties contest elections there, spending billions of rupees (Subohi, 2018). Developing countries follow technological advancements in political campaigning that were pioneered in industrialized democracies (Kausar et al., 2022). Political parties hire experts in fields like social media, sociology, politics, and public relations to develop party manifestos and launch effective campaigns. The 2018 Pakistani elections cost an estimated Rs. 440 billion, a 10% increase from 2013 (Subohi, 2018). Political advertising is becoming more market-oriented, so political brand association needs exploration (Kausar et al., 2022).

Problem Statement

Branding defines candidates' success/failure in Pakistan elections (de Leon 2021; Castellon 2016). Candidates want to appear "larger than life" to voters (Castellon 2016). Pakistan sees low local election voter turnout versus generals (Dawn, 2016; Business Recorder, 2023; Dawson, 2024). Voters lack interest in local candidates' personalities (Youth Parliament Pakistan, 2021). Studies found branding appearance, behavior, and personality affect turnout (Abdul, 2019; Michael and Adnan, 2015; (Madinga et al., 2021; Jha, 2021; Farkas & Bene, 2021). Negative branding/credibility demobilizes voters (Dawson, 2024; Ansolabehere and Iyengar 1995).

Gap Analysis

Kulachai et al. (2023) studied the relationship between political brand trust and voter preference is fragile and requires consistent work. It does not identify specific branding behaviors that build trust. Gutiérrez-Rodríguez et al. (2023) called for more robust research on voter intention and preference to identify brands. However, the study fails to cover brand personality. Diniso (2023) noted political branding remains under-researched. Cosgrove and Shrader's (2022) campaigns focused solely on political human brand personality rather than combining it with its

behavior. Grüning and Schubert (2022) viewed campaigns as an important way for parties to communicate with voters. It does not analyze specific political brand perceptions created by the personality, appearance, and behavior of political brand and their voter impact (Madinga et al., 2021; Jha, 2021; Farkas & Bene, 2021). Banerjee's (2021) idea that political branding influences behavior and voting gained popularity. It does not provide evidence combining perception by both appearance and behavior of political brand (Madinga et al., 2021; Jha, 2021; Farkas & Bene, 2021).

In the recent past Voter, the political Human Brand Equity Model was worked on by Bastian Atzger, Elisabete S. Sá, and Joaquim Silva in the year 2020, grounded on Aaker's (1991, 1996) customer-based brand equity (CBBE). This covers the sources of political human brand association: Personality, behavior, and appearance. Similarly, Ferreira and van Eyk (2023) also identified three major variables – Personality, appearance, and behavior are the sources of brand association that can influence voting preferences. Ferreira and van Eyk (2023) identified political brand meaning appearance and personality and trusted behavior as influential in voters' intent. A candidate's platform sustains interest over personality (de Asis, 2022), helping understand voter segments (Lees-Marshment, 2001; Henneberg, 2004). Foreign studies found branding influences voting and behavior (Narteh, Mensah, and Nyanzu 2017; Nwanganga, Peter, and Mirian 2017; Fauzi and Listyani 2016; Banerjee, 2021). Despite these models being considered comprehensive, their limitations must be acknowledged. The studies by Ferreira and van Eyk (2023) may have limited generalizability given they were conducted in specific countries. Ahmed et al. (2017) relied on recalled past experiences which could be inflated by memory lapses. Oscarsson and Rosema's (2019) consideration set model has been widely used where only two candidates running for president. Bastian et al., (2020) only highlight the sources but do not give any direction of voter's preferences (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez et al., 2023). Dawson, (2024) on the other hand only mentions negative branding demobilized voters, his research was limited to finding the result for the opposite situation

Research Objective and Significance

Pakistan's weak party structure undermines choices for voters (Abbas, 2021; Noshina et al., 2015; Dawn, 2022; Youth Parliament Pakistan, 2021; Asia Society). Voters focus on candidates over parties (Abbas, 2021; Noshina et al., 2015; Dawn, 2022; Youth Parliament Pakistan, 2021; Asia Society). This study finds out how sources of brand association from voters-based brand equity model by Bastian et al., (2020) help in enhancing voters' preferences during political campaigns (Gutiérrez-

Rodríguez et al., 2023). This certainly helps to understand which political branding factors during local body election campaigns help to enhance voters' interest and ultimately affect to enhance voters' turnout (Dawson, 2024).

This research offers novel insights by bridging the gap between Western theories of political branding and their application in Pakistani electoral dynamics. By understanding how branding influences voter behavior, political campaigns can strategically tailor their messaging to resonate with constituents (Banerjee, 2021). Practically, political parties and candidates can leverage these findings to craft compelling brand narratives. They should focus on building authentic and memorable brand identities that resonate with voters.

Literature Review

Political Branding and Voter's Preferences

Politician branding involves showcasing a candidate's personality through visual elements like hairstyle and clothing (Mitsikopoulou, 2008). Political branding additionally incorporates textual, visual, musical and temporal aspects (Needham and Smith, 2015) and requires authenticity and authority from leaders to maintain appeal and fulfill promises (Speed, Butler, and Collins, 2015). It is seen as part of professionalizing party campaigns and resulting from electoral consumerization (Lilleker, 2015) or developing voter awareness and guidance (Kumar and Dhamija, 2017). Several studies examined the relationship between political branding and voter preference (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez et al., 2023). Kulachai et al. (2023) found the relationship between political brand trust and voter preference to be fragile, requiring consistent work. Gutiérrez-Rodríguez et al. (2023) called for more robust research on voter intention and preference to identify branding elements influencing preferences. Diniso (2023) noted political branding remains under-researched, calling for theoretical and practical models to better understand it. Cosgrove and Shrader (2022) suggested campaigns focused solely on personal branding rather than party principles could yield mixed results. Grüning and Schubert (2022) viewed campaigns as an important way for parties to communicate with voters by providing useful information influencing preferences. The idea that political branding can influence human behavior and directly impact voting preferences has gained popularity in marketing and political studies (Banerjee, 2021). A strong leader image creates party awareness among voters (Farkas & Bene, 2021). Jha (2021) stated the brand image created by a leader's competency and responsiveness substantially influences voters. Political brand image and appearance must be carefully monitored as they could determine voters' decisions (Madinga et al., 2021).

Additionally, political brands should operate with integrity and possess vibrant personalities (Ferreira & van Eyk, 2022; Jain et al., 2018). In summary, political branding shapes perceptions and decisions using various representational techniques.

Voter Based Political Human Brand Equity Model

Bastian, Sá, and Silva adapted Aaker's CBBE model to study voter-based political brand equity (Bastian et al., 2020). A key dimension is brand associations, or the attributes linked to candidates in voters' cognitive schemas (Bastian et al., 2020). The formation of these associations is influenced by various sources over the course of a campaign (Asep et al., 2019; Bastian, 2020). Early in the process, initial exposure to candidates builds basic awareness, often through campaign events, advertising, and media coverage (Solomon, 2004; Bastian, 2020). These initial interactions allow initial associations to take shape based on communicated messages and highlighted personal qualities (Assael, 1995; Bastian, 2020; Grüning & Schubert, 2022). Strategic communications aim to link candidates to important issues and values (Asep et al., 2019; Grüning & Schubert, 2022). As the campaign progresses, repeated exposures and interactions through different channels reinforce and refine these associations (Bastian, 2020). Debate performances, interview answers, and third-party endorsements provide additional inputs that impact the evolving associations (Asep et al., 2019). Opposition research may introduce counteracting considerations (Asep et al., 2019).

Cumulatively, the varied touchpoints shape comprehensive brand schemas that interpret candidates holistically rather than in isolation (Bastian et al., 2020). Strong, consistent associations with desirable leadership traits and qualifications contribute to perceptions of quality and suitability (Asep et al., 2019). However, an overreliance on simplified messages risks missing countervailing inputs (Asep et al., 2019). Strategically addressing competing associations becomes important to managing perceptions (Bastian et al., 2020). Understanding how political brand associations form within voters allows campaigns to guide this development favorably through integrated engagement over time (Bastian et al., 2020).

Political Brand Association

Brand attitude also forms brand association that is an overall evaluation by consumers due to the strength and favorability voters receive after being associated with the political human brand (James et al., 2001; Funk, Haugtvedt, and Howard, 2000). One of its indicators is the amount of knowledge consumers possess which represents the strong attitude of

consumers towards that brand (James et. al., 2001). For a political human brand, it is the behavior of a politician, it covers how consistent a political candidate is in terms of his/her work and act according to what he /she said (Bastian et al., 2020; Banerjee, 2021)

- 1.1.1. *Personality*: ideal candidate to a person with a “good personality” and “strong character”, a “true fighter who does not try to be everybody’s darling”, a person “with integrity and a good character” (Bastian et al., 2020). Personality, on the other hand, is an individual’s particular disposition through which individual think, understands, and acts (Omoto et al., 2010). It is also the feature through which an individual is recognized (Omoto et al., 2010).
- 1.1.2. *Appearance*: pleasant look that conveys “appeal and charm”. A certain visual “appearance, style or attractiveness” and a “positive aura” contribute to such appeal. A politician should have something on him/her that attracts the eye” (Bastian et al., 2020).
- 1.1.3. *Behavioral qualities* were also considered important aspects associated with a political human brand (Banerjee, 2021). As per the research by Bastian et al., (2020) the importance of behaving with “conscientiousness” and showing “empathic and emotional gestures” was clearly recognizable. Other behavior associations were being a “hard worker” and having the spirit of “a fighter”. Another mentioned association was “consistency”. “An ideal politician is someone who says directly what he/she wants to do and then acts in that exact way”.

Political Brand Personality for Voters’ Preferences in Political Campaign

The existing literature on political branding demonstrates that it encompasses different dimensions. The most common of which is brand personality or the set of human characteristics and qualities that are associated with a particular brand (Tarver 2021; Aaker 1997). To measure brand personality, Aaker (1997) developed a framework composed of sincerity, competence, excitement, ruggedness, and sophistication. Guzman and Sierra (2009) combined both Aaker’s (1997) and Caprara et al., (1997) brand personality scales to analyze the brand image of the Mexican candidates during the 2006 elections. The resulting framework showcases five influential components which are arranged in order of magnitude namely, competence, empathy, openness, agreeableness and handsomeness. In the context of the Pakistan, local body elections are known to be candidate-centered which is the result of volatile and

incoherent political parties (Abbas, 2021; Quimpo 2007; Noshina et al., 2015; Dawn, 2022; Youth Parliament Pakistan, 2021; Asia Society). Local studies have proven that personality traits of the candidates matter a great deal in influencing the electorate (Abbas, 2021; Noshina et al., 2015; Dawn, 2022; Youth Parliament Pakistan, 2021; Asia Society). Personality was also elaborated in the elections. As stated by Wong (2022), some of the candidates' campaigns generally revolved around their persona because mass appeal became the definitive end which is an integral factor of electoral success. Hence, the question arises:

RQ1: How was the brand personality of the political candidates realized during the campaign's voters' preferences?

Political Brand Appearance for Voters' Preferences in Political Campaign

The political candidates' campaign colors, slogans, and symbols are often visible and distinguishable during local body elections in the Pakistan. Tarver (2022) operationally defines brand appearance as the visual aspect of a brand, such as color, designs and other visual elements, that helps identify and distinguish a specific brand in people's minds (Madinga et al., 2021; Jha, 2021; Farkas & Bene, 2021). Few foreign studies explored the influence of brand appearance on voting behavior (Nwanganga, Peter, and Mirian 2017; Narteh, Mensah, and Nyanzu, 2017; Banerjee, 2021). Evaluating political branding on a party level, Nwanganga, Peter, and Mirian (2017) found that party slogans have the highest influence on voter's choice in Nigeria during the 2015 elections, followed by logo then rally signs. Meanwhile, Narteh, Mensah, and Nyanzu (2017) found that party color also significantly influences voters' choices. They argued that color is an integral aspect of branding because it stimulates a certain degree of distinctiveness and identification of parties. Despite these claims, it is the political candidates who most utilize brand identifiers in the Pakistan, yet local studies on brand appearance remain insufficient (Madinga et al., 2021; Jha, 2021; Farkas & Bene, 2021). The need for further research is also warranted because Pakistani candidates are always known for their creative sloganeerings or they're visually inviting, distinct campaign colors (Dunya News 2018; Dooc 2022; Palatino 2022). Hence, the question arises:

RQ2: How was the brand appearance of the political candidates realized during the campaign for voters' preferences?

Political Brand Behavior for Voters' Preferences in Political Campaign

Brand Behavior is another dimension of political branding which is regarded as a strong predictor of voting behavior (Bastian et al., 2020; Banerjee, 2021). Narteh, Mensah, and Nyanzu (2017) found that the Behavior of political candidates greatly influenced voters. The authors argued that brand behavior is influential because political parties position their behavior in a way that they are representative of issues affecting the daily activities of voters who, in turn, assess the behavior of different political parties and its impacts on them before they make a choice. In the Pakistan, however, political brand behavior is mostly appraised in terms of candidates. Studies of Asian countries found that political brand behavior is one of the factors that guides the voting preference (Gutiérrez-Rodríguez et al., 2023; Asad et al., 2019; Dolipas 2018; Tandoc-Juan, Tan, and Atianzar 2019; Murcia and Bolo 2016; Santiago 2015; IPER 2004). As found by Santiago (2015). The study of Murcia and Bolo (2016), however, generated a different finding in which the personality of candidates is found to be a stronger predictor of voting preference. However, there is a paucity of local studies investigating how brand behavior and the motivations behind them are showcased to the public during campaigns. Hence, the question arises:

RQ3: How was the brand behavior of the political candidates realized during the campaign's voters' preferences?

Methodology

This research endeavors to explore how political branding is defined in Pakistan and how it is displayed during the local body elections. This entails looking into the mechanisms employed to present the different brand dimensions as well as their perspectives on the dimensions themselves. The current study follows the methodology of political marketing research conducted by Bastian et al., in 2020. Which is taking interviews from 37 respondents of participants in marketing-related conferences. The interview consists of 12 open-ended questions designed to capture textual answers (Bastian et al., 2020). Following the Bastian et al., (2020) regarding political branding qualitative study a purposive sampling strategy was used to target political marketers, which provides in-depth understanding (Morse et al. 2002; Patton 2015). Two groups of respondents were selected on a convenience first-come, first-served basis (Luborsky and Rubinstein 1995). The first group was directly interviewed by participants of the World Marketing Summit 2020, Lahore, Pakistan, consisting of 18 in number. The second group was interviewed online and consisted of 19 marketers who participated in World Marketing Summit 2020, Lahore, Pakistan. Additionally, using a snowball strategy (Patton 2015; Nikolopoulou (2022), snowball sampling is a non-probability

sampling method that uses the current study participants to recommend new volunteers who share a common interest to participate in the study. This procedure persisted until the researchers obtained the desired sample or reached saturation point (Nikolopoulou 2022). Cossham and Johanson (2019) established that a key informant interview is a thorough qualitative discussion with a key informant who offers knowledgeable viewpoints on a research phenomenon or a specific topic that the researchers themselves lack. Data were collected during the year 2020-2021.

Thematic analysis was utilized for qualitative data analysis. According to Caulfield (2019), thematic analysis is a method that is usually used in interviews or transcripts in order to extract common themes i.e. recurring ideas, topics, or patterns of meaning. Specifically, the data analysis was influenced by Braun and Clarke’s six phases of thematic analysis (2006), mentioned in Table: 1, who propounded that analysis entails a constant searching back and forth between one’s entire data set, the coded data, and the analysis of the data. It also follows that writing begins at the first phase by jotting down ideas and coding schemes, not something that only occurs at the end. Thus, by using a thematic approach, a thorough grasp of the campaign managers' and volunteers' in-depth familiarity with the political branding of their candidates was made possible.

Table 1:

Six Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Phase	Description
Familiarizing yourself with your data	The researchers transcribed the interview data, read through the texts, and wrote down initial ideas emerging in the transcripts.
Generating initial codes	The researchers coded interesting features of the data from their transcripts, usually in phrases or sentences, and then collated the data relevant to each code.
Searching for themes	The researchers re-read the data several times which allowed them to collate and narrow down the codes into an identifiable theme.
Reviewing themes	At this point, the researchers returned to their data set again which helped them check if the themes are representative of their coded extracts.

Table 1:
Six Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Phase	Description
Defining and naming themes	Since the researchers finalized their list of themes, they then defined and provided an understandable name for each theme.
Producing the report	Lastly, the researchers wrote down the analysis of their data. They used direct quotations from the informants that corresponded to each theme. By going back to their research questions and relating back to their literature, the researchers produced a scholarly report of their analysis.

Qualitative content analysis was used to uncover the meanings of the respondents' words within their context (Denzin and Lincoln 2018). This research method is adequate to systematically reduce and categorize textual material into a small number of meaningful categories via replicable coding rules (Stemler 2001; Weber 1990). Based on their meaning, relevant keywords with their respective context were assigned to a priori codes and categories. The coding process was kept flexible to integrate emergent codes and categories that could contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon (Stemler 2001; Thomson 2006).

A sample of transcripts was coded independently and the coding output was compared and revised; interpreted the codes and reorganized into meaningful categories (Patton 2015), integrating and revising their contributions into a final form. The analytical procedures followed mitigate the interpretive researchers' bias and contribute to reproducibility (Weber 1990). The answers of the two groups of participants with different political backgrounds were contrasted, to identify similarities and discrepancies. Their convergence into the coding scheme signaled the accuracy of the findings (Creswell and Creswell 2018). The set of 36 interviews was deemed adequate as code saturation was reached with the 28th interview. Therefore, according to the theoretical framework, the data were sufficient to account for the most significant aspects (Morse et al. 2002). To enhance the credibility of the analysis, the responses were triangulated interpretations were made (Guba and Lincoln 1994), on a reflexive analysis working back and forth in a constant iteration between the interviews and literature, supported the findings with examples from the data, and related them with the theoretical framework (Patton 2015).

Findings

An analysis of the interview transcriptions revealed three dimensions that define political branding in the Pakistan, namely personality, appearance, and behavior of candidates. The exhibition of a candidate's political branding is collaboration between national and local campaign groups who forward the positive attributes of political candidates, who use campaign materials to convey the brand appearance of the candidates, and who organize public meetings to present the programs proposals of candidates.

Political Brand Personality of the Political Candidates in Campaigns

The personal attributes of candidates is one of the most direct ways for voters to know them. (Respondent No. 7, 10, 12, 17, 21, 25-35). According to the informants, they highlight the personality of their candidates during their campaigns because it establishes how much a candidate and a voter have in common. (No. 6, 14, 18, 19, 21, 25). Voters have desired preferences when it comes to the personality of a politician (No. 2-10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 32). But Marketers are also aware that it can be difficult to identify and meet what those preferences are. (No. 1, 3, 4-14, 15, 17-22, 35). That's why, marketers see to it that they at least present personal attributes [of our candidates] that they feel are common trait of the voters (No. 2-10, 15, 21, 25, 30, 35). Respondents highlighted their political candidate's positive attributes by utilizing online discussions, "public meetings" and community-based discussions towards the sentiments of the working people. (No. 1, 3-11, 14-25, 34). Key Informants utilized the use of online discussions through Facebook posts, as well as their "public meetings" (No. 6, 19, 25, 34). They showcase political candidate's "typical" personal attributes of charisma and charm, (No. 2-10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 21, 24-27, 30, 35) and attributes of being responsible, (No. 2-10, 12-15, 17, 21, 25, 30, 35) smart, (2, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12-15, 17, 21, 25) articulate that they perceive would help her fit the position of political leader. (No. 3, 8, 24). Marketers also believed that their team clarifies underlying gender-based assumptions towards their candidate to avoid the discouragement of voters towards their brand. (25-28, 30-33). The personality politics that marketers brought to their campaign is centered with the personality politics of political candidate and his positions. (No. No. 1, 3-11, 14-25, 28, 31-34). Since what they only see is the value that political candidate put in his work and achievements (No. 1-6, 8-10, 11, 13-15, 17-26, 28, 32). Marketers can only assume candidate's personality and attributes from his achievements and motives for the campaign (2, 14, 20, 31). Respondents, on the other

hand, endorsed political candidate's personal attributes of being attentive, involved, and compassionate during the campaign. (No. 1, 5–8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 24, 27, 28, 30, 34)

Political candidate as a person of determination and will-power who intends to address the concerns of the people, forming the perception that he waves an “invisible flag of hope” (No. 4, 6–8, 10, 12, 26) for the working people who have long struggled in a system maneuvered by the elite ruling class. (No. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7–9, 18–21, 23, 25, 31, 32, 36). Political candidate's involvement in encouraging and empowering working people and his representation of the “working people's hardships” (No. 5, 8, 11–14, 20, 24, 26, 31, 33) and “sentiments” (No. 2, 4, 7–14, 15, 20, 28) signifies that the working class can lead despite the elite ruling class being the most prominent in politics. Political candidates visit localities across the regions so that the people can recognize him and his positive attributes first hand (No. 4, 7, 9, 11, 12, 17, 20).

Female political candidate banked on the additional features of “motherly positive attributes” (No. 4, 6, 8–10, 12, 14, 27, 29–32, 36) such as nurturing (No. 1, 2, 4, 6, 13, 14, 22, 24, 28). Marketers try to do is to center the female candidate's typical branding of physical appearance (No. 7, 8, 10, 12, 13, 15, 17, 20, 21, 23, 24, 26, 27, 29) with the positive attributes of character being trustworthy, (No. 1, 2, 4–6, 8, 9, 11–13, 15, 17, 27, 28, 31, 35, 36) smart, (No. 13, 16, 17, 19, 21–23, 25) hardworking (No. 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 11, 17, 18, , 31, 32, 34, 36)

Political Brand Appearance for Voters in Political in Campaigns

Brand appearance is operationalized in this study as the candidate's campaign color, slogan, and logo which form part of his or her appearance during local body elections (No. 1–4, 6–8, 17, 22, 26, 27, 29, 30, 33, 34). Because most of the informants are campaign volunteers, the bulk of their involvement is in communicating their candidate's branding to the grassroots such as in the cities and other areas (No. 4, 17, 22, 26, 30, 33, 34). They conducted public meetings because they wanted to personally converse and connect with the inhabitants about their candidates (No. 4, 6, 17, 26, 27, 29, 34). Among the things they do to magnify their candidates' brand appearance is handing out campaign materials (stickers, posters, tarpaulin, etc.) (No. 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9–11, 13–15, 32, 33). Which are also translated in the local language, in practically every public meeting they hold. Marketers have those comics which details the journey and achievements of their candidate (No. 4, 11, 15, 32, 34). They also have flyers which are locally produced and designed by ourselves. (No. 5, 8, 22, 30–32). Even with small financial resources, managed to hand out leaflets and tarpaulins to the people (No. 5, 8, 12, 30,

34) because this is a way for them to participate in the campaign (No. 3, 5, 7, 10, 14, 36). Through this they hope to secure more votes for candidate (No. 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 12, 14, 23, 26, 27, 30, 33, 34, 36).

With regards to other brand identifiers, the informants reported that although there is a national campaign group primarily responsible for the campaign color, slogan, and logo (No. 6–8, 10, 13, 15, 17, 31, 35, 36). It is a collaborative effort because they have regional representatives and local networks that helped in their formulation (No. 1–4, 6–8, 10, 13, 15, 17, 19, 24, 26, 30, 31, 35, 36). In their case, they form part of the local networks that make the campaign color, slogan, and logo visible in the localities through the campaign materials (No. 4, 8, 9, 11–13, 15–17, 19, 21, 24, 26–34). From their perspectives, they believe that uniformity of the candidates' brand appearance is important if they want to create an impression that this branding is specific to their candidate (No. 4, 9, 11–13, 15–17, 24, 26–34). According to them, they promoted the brand appearance of their candidate by ensuring that the candidate's campaign color and slogan are reflected in the materials they hand out. (No. 4, 11–13, 15–17, 19, 21, 24, 26–34). Marketers considered that their campaigns are from the ground, even though color schemes, (No. 1-9, 13, 21, 29, 30, 35), slogan, (No. 1–6, 8, 9, 15, 24, 31, 34, 36), and logo (No. 4, 5, 10, 15, 35). Through this people on the ground should also own the movement (No. 5, 8, 9, 13). Marketer do not simply focus their campaign on their candidate's color, slogan, and logo, because they see that political campaigns in the Pakistan are changing (No. 4, 5, 7, 12, 15, 17, 18). They notice that the trend is shifting towards having the most audience and providing the most entertainment (No. 5–8, 11–15, 24). They think these are aspects that increase the influence of the candidate's campaign (No. 6, 8, 9, 15, 24, 31, 34, 36) because they believe that people, even if they are undecided voters (No 27, 29, 34, 36), will join events that are larger and more entertaining (No. 4–6, 8, 9, 15, 24, 27, 34, 36). "What marketers see is that people join where there is entertainment (No. 4, 5, 7, 17, 18). That is why when having a campaign, have to consider putting up a grand campaign (No. 2–5, 7, 9, 13, 28), because people compare which candidate provides more entertainment (No. 20–22, 26, 32, 33) and attracts more attendees, (No. 4, 5, 7, 20–22, 26, 33). People now are into music, (No. 4, 8, 9, 11–13, 15–17, 19, 21, 24, 26–34), it creates domino effect" (No. 2, 15).

Political Brand Behavior for Voters in Political Campaigns

In this study, brand behavior is defined as the political candidate's attributes and action output which are measured by consistency (Respondent No. 2, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 21, 24–27, 30, 35), conscientiousness

(No. 2, 4, 6, 7, 10, 12–15, 17, 21, 25, 30, 35), and emotional gesture (No. 6, 13, 14, 27). According to the key informants, they were particular about highlighting their candidate's platforms and track records during their campaigns (No. 3, 4, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17–25, 35). They also presenting photos, statistics, and annual reports or by playing audio recordings with speakers they hand carried. (No. 1-3, 14, 25, 27). By educating the attendees of the public meetings and the inhabitants of the barangays, they believe that they are not only conveying the programs but also clarifying the biases towards their candidate. (No. 3, 5, 18, 19, 25–28). They show their emotional gesture and use the messaging material in the language that is suitable to audience (No. 2, 4, 6, 8, 10–12, 14, 23, 27–29, 31, 36). They really used local language when they discussed the programs. (No. 28, 10–12, 14, 17–19, 23, 27–29, 31, 36). After that, they go around if the people have questions or they just share what they want to achieve, what leader they want, etc. (No. 3, 5, 18, 23, 25–28) This is one benefit of a community-based campaign because they can talk with the people (No. 1, 5–8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 28, 30, 34).

When marketers went to rural, they observed that most of the people there work as farmers because they are close to the fields, so they are looking at those perspectives (No. 2, 5–7, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 24, 27, 28, 30, 34). They will also show the farmers, conscientiousness, thoroughness and carefulness. (No. 2, 4, 7, 11, 15, 28). Meanwhile, the informants reported urgency for renewable energy, especially in urban areas where electricity prices remain high and blackouts frequently happen (No. 1, 8, 11–14, 24, 26, 31, 33). According to the informants, relaying the voters' concern in the programs of their candidate is an essential part of campaigning because they think this is crucial in securing more votes (No. 4, 6, 10–12, , 25, 29–31, 33). That is how they show their reliability, dependability (No. 5, 9, 11, 12, 27, 33) and uniformity (No. 3–5, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 20, 21, 27, 29, 30, 32). Sometimes marketers can really maximize the issues (No. 5, 7, 9, 13, 16, 18, 19, 25). Candidates would know that they have an interest to protect and they can show protection of that interest by voting for the proper people (No. 2, 4, 8, 10, 11, 17, 24–27, 31, 32, 34, 35).

Discussion on Findings

Voters in Pakistan find a candidate's appearance impacts leadership style perception. People prefer those resembling themselves culturally (Paul et al., 1990; Gutiérrez-Rodríguez et al., 2023). Most leaders wear local attire. Personality relates to leadership style perception. Voters associate extroversion with boldness; and introversion with weakness (Chiara et al., 2013). Loud media personalities seem dominant.

Political culture evolves via the behavior people like. Trash talk passes as boldness (International the News November 2021; Banerjee, 2021). Behavior judges' leadership through interactions (Paul, 1995; Chaiken, 1979; Banerjee, 2021). Politicians act humble with followers but harsh against opponents, pleasing similar audiences (Lodi-Smith et al., 2016). Behavior associate's performance/situation awareness negatively unlike past studies, as politicians aid themselves, not development (Beatrice et al., 2017; Major et al. 2014; Banerjee, 2021). Personality-competency links positively but negatively in Pakistan. Agreeableness, and intelligence aid only personal gains, not citizens (Asia Society and Encyclopedia of Asian History). Competence impacts trust through crisis decision-making (Aaldering et al., 2016; Afzal et al., 2009). Citizens observe crisis decisions to create trust. In addition, a leader of a political party should be truthful, operate with integrity, and have a vibrant personality (Ferreira & van Eyk, 2022).

The existing body of literature on political branding recommended the need to conduct research on political branding beyond the Western contexts (Scammell 2015). Based on the key informants' narratives, it was revealed that the facets of their political branding covered their personal characteristics having charisma and charm, being smart, responsible and attentive, companionate, trustworthy, and hardworking. Personality is a set of frameworks of effective working behavior in leadership style (Chiara et al., 2013; Banerjee, 2021). Voters in Pakistan look at their political leader as a spectacle. They relate to the personality traits of a political candidate with his leadership style and more extroverted personality. Politicians are considered to be bolder and more famous. The personal characteristics of political candidates are inseparable from one's political branding in Pakistan. In particular, positive characteristics are emphasized during political campaigns because they can be initial assessments of the candidates' likability and whether they have the qualities fit for the position. (Aning 2022; Valmonte 2022; San Juan 2022).

In order to amplify their political branding, candidates in Pakistan also maximize brand identifiers which are: color, slogans, logo, and means of entertainment like music. The merit of erecting one's brand appearance stems from the distinctiveness it provides a political candidate (Madinga et al., 2021; Jha, 2021; Farkas & Bene, 2021). These aspects hold weight because they usually follow a textual (slogan) and visual (logo and color) arrangement. As stated by Shairani (2022), campaign colors are significant considerations when candidates establish their political branding because such colors facilitate the segregation of electoral support. They make the most direct impressions of the voters because they are usually expressed in texts and visuals. The brand appearance of candidates provides a mental

picture as to how Pakistani voters can express their support: what color they would wear, what tagline they would utter, what logos they would display, etc. It is worth emphasizing that the amount of devotion that the respective networks afford to the formulation of identity may be indicative of their perceived influence on the voters as it presupposes that the brand identity of candidates is also a source of identity for its supporters. It can be construed further that a more cohesive and all-embracing campaign might be one that succeeds and accumulates higher votes in a pluralistic society.

Lastly, policies and the past accomplishments of the candidates were revealed as the essentials of their public meetings. The findings of this study reveal that Political brand behavior in Pakistan covers emotional gestures, conscientiousness, and consistency. When informants speak of their candidates' branding, it is their programs and proposals that are definitive of it. This is because policies communicate what candidates are capable of offering to address existing problems in Pakistan

Conclusion

This study sought to examine the concept of political branding in Pakistan and identify its key dimensions. Through a review of the literature and interviews with political candidates and campaign managers, several important findings emerged. Personality, appearance, and behavior were found to be the primary factors that shape voters' perceptions of candidates and comprise their political brand identity. Strategic branding helps distinguish candidates and build crucial linkages with constituents. The research highlighted how personality traits, physical appearance, and behaviors are accentuated by candidates during campaigns to appeal to voters. Emotionally resonant gestures, consistent messaging around local issues, and visually appealing branding materials can boost a candidate's popularity by enhancing their perceived likability and traits. Strategic branding aims to nudge electoral support by influencing how voters evaluate and recall different options.

The responses of 37 Political marketers of Pakistan highlighted that in third-world Asian countries like Pakistan; political branding rotates around the personality of the political candidate which can be measured through his/her intensity of charisma and charm, being smart, responsible, and attentive, companionate, trustworthy, and hardworking. While during marketing campaigns the indicators that can be of brand identity include a textual (slogan) and visual (logo and color) representation of that brand. Musical entertainment in public meetings can also be a political brand-identifying agent that attracts local voters. As previously claimed by Tahir (2010) and Noshina et al., (2015), branding has become suffused in

Pakistani politics due to the political candidates' desire to appear more distinct, so much so that it was believed to spur the electoral success of previous political candidates. Our findings revealed that political branding is an overarching concept that encompasses a candidate's personality, behavior, and appearance in so far as the Pakistan context is concerned. Hence political branding will likely remain an inextricable measure in Pakistan's political marketing because it enhances the distinctiveness of political candidates and the recall of voters. Political brand appearance, behavior, and personality can affect voter turnout (Abdul, 2019; Michael and Adnan, 2015; Dawson, 2024; Madinga et al., 2021; Jha, 2021; Farkas & Bene, 2021).

Contributions

Here are some key contributions this research makes to the academic and managerial fields:

Academic contributions

- Provides a novel perspective on political branding in a non-Western context like Pakistan, addressing the gap identified by Needham and Smith (2015) of studying branding globally.
- Identifies personality, appearance, and behavior as the key dimensions of political branding in Pakistan, adding to conceptual frameworks of political branding.
- Draws on theories from political science and applies them to marketing concepts like branding, providing an interdisciplinary lens.

Managerial contributions

- Offers campaign managers insights into how voters in Pakistan form impressions of candidates based on personality, appearance, behavior.
- Highlights specific branding strategies like emotional gestures, consistent messaging, visual appeals that can positively influence voter perceptions.
- Suggests enhancing candidate likability through strategic branding to increase voter turnout and electoral support.
- Provides actionable recommendations to optimize political branding approaches based on local cultural and political context.
- Advises focusing branding efforts on solving local issues to improve voter perceptions of candidates and parties.
- Informs investment decisions around branding activities to boost candidate/party awareness and associations with voters.

- Guides development and maintenance of political brands to cultivate voter loyalty over repeated elections.

So, in summary, it advances both academic understanding of political branding globally and supports practical campaign management through locally-relevant branding recommendations

Limitations and Further Research

This research is subject to a number of limitations. First, the findings and conclusions are not generalizable across the population since future research may uncover new brand strategies unique to other places. This is imperative because the informants insinuated that the public meetings were their own initiative. Regardless, this research has generated preliminary insights into how political branding is defined and displayed in Pakistan.

Second, there is a lack of variety and number in terms of the samples who were interviewed. To fully capture the breadth of political branding practices in Pakistan, future researchers may include key informants from all political parties' candidates. They may also double-key informants from one political candidate to cross-check and ensure the consistency of their narratives. This consideration is especially useful when the goal is to enrich the data on an insufficiently researched subject matter such as political branding in Pakistan. However, the data yielded in this research provides baseline data on the subject even with just four key informants. Lastly, the analysis of political branding is focused on political candidates alone. It has been argued that Pakistan's electoral politics is characterized by its candidate-centeredness, thus it may imply that the political branding of other candidates in different government positions is worth exploring. They could provide important nuances on how political branding strategies differ from one position to another.

Despite these limitations, this research offers several prospects for future research within the discipline of political marketing and political science. On the one hand, the findings of this study can be used to commence a quantitative study regarding the influence of political branding on voting behavior and on the electoral success or loss of a political candidate. The emerging dimensions of political branding such as the candidate's personality, appearance, and behavior may be a locus of quantitative analysis in itself. Future research may focus on finding which of these dimensions have the most substantial influence on voters. On the other hand, future research may further the findings of this research by uncovering more political branding dimensions in Pakistan and analyzing their influence on voting behavior.

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