



**Political Brand Identity. An examination of the complexities of Conservative brand and internal market engagement during the 2010 UK General Election campaign**

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3 This paper seeks to build an understanding of the importance of internal  
4 communications when building a strong political brand. Using the Kapferer's brand  
5 prism as a conceptual framework, the paper explores UK Conservative party members  
6 attitudes towards the development of the Conservative brand as personified by David  
7 Cameron. There are clear implications for political strategists as the findings suggest  
8 that it is crucial to engage the internal market in the co-creation of the marketing  
9 communications strategy for, as brand evangelists they interpret the brand promise at  
10 the local level.  
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## Political Brand Identity. An examination of the complexities of Conservative brand and internal market engagement during the 2010 UK General Election campaign

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### Introduction

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As the most successful UK political party in the twentieth century (Norton, 1996; Denham and O'Hara, 2007; Lloyd, 2006), the Conservative party experienced a hiatus going into the new millennium. New Labour was elected in 1997 and successfully defended their majority against a Conservative Party led by William Hague, Iain Duncan-Smith and Michael Howard respectively. Each Conservative Party leader provided a different perspective on the image, policy and presentation of the Conservative brand reflected through their own Conservative value system. In politics, the consistency of the political party product offering is crucial to electoral success (Dean and Croft, 2001), and this was exemplified in the 'New Labour' brand and its 'on message' approach to political communication in 1997 (Gould, 1998). Brands are powerful heuristic devices that encapsulate key values of the product or service and there is an emerging body of literature that examines the concept of branding in a political context (Lilleker and Negrine, 2003; Reeves *et al.*, 2006; Scammell, 2007; Smith, 2001; 2009; White and de Chernatony, 2002). Nascent research has focused on branding the party, leader, and political campaigning, whilst Smith and French (2009) examined political branding from a consumer perspective. However, there has been little discussion on the internal market and the political brand. The internal market plays a crucial role as intermediary between the party and the voters, spreading the message of the political brand (Whiteley *et al.*, 1994). Therefore this study seeks to examine how the internal market responds to the Conservative Party brand how they disseminate these messages to their local constituents.

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3 Using Kapferer's brand prism (2001) as our conceptual framework we examine the  
4 different facets of the Conservative brand from the perspective of the Conservative internal  
5 market. We provide some insight into the strengths of the communications strategy and how  
6 this has enhanced loyalty in the internal market. However, we also highlight the tension  
7 created by the hierarchical nature of what is seen as an increasingly 'corporatized' Conservative  
8 brand. The paper seeks to show how thirteen years on the opposition benches has focused the  
9 Conservative Party leadership on rebranding their party and the extent to which the internal  
10 stakeholders buy into this 'modern' Conservative brand. We conclude by suggesting that  
11 rather than tightening the political brand there should be some latitude in the communications  
12 strategy to allow some local reinterpretation which will in turn enhance internal market  
13 loyalty.

### 24 25 26 27 28 **Branding Theory**

29  
30 Although there are a number of definitions of a brand, Aaker's (1996, 7) definition  
31 focuses upon the brand as '*a distinctive name and or symbol*', and is a differentiating feature  
32 in a competitive market. However, Knox (2004) takes this further and suggests that a brand  
33 is not only distinctive through its name or logo but it provides '*added value based on factors*  
34 *over and above its functional performance*'. A brand is a communication device which  
35 represents the values, nature and personality of an organisation, product, service or political  
36 party (de Chernatony and McDonald, 2002; Jevons, 2005; Peng and Hackley, 2009).

37  
38 Brands have been described as a '*cluster of values*' (de Chernatony, 2001),  
39 multidimensional constructs (White and de Chernatony, 2002; Veloutsou, 2008), and also  
40 social objects (Muniz and O' Guinn, 2001) which are personally owned and embraced by the  
41 consumer (Neff, 2009). Hence brands imbue powerful symbolic values which create loyalty  
42 and, more importantly, an emotional attachment (Aaker, 1996; Fournier, 1998; Muniz and O'  
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3 Guinn, 2001; Cova and Cova, 2002; Tan and Ming, 2003; Atkin, 2004; Algesheimer *et al.*,  
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5 2005; Lindstrom, 2005; Lury, 2005; Lavine and Gschwend, 2006; Roper and Parker, 2006;  
6  
7 Burnett *et al.*, 2007). Paradoxically although brands are complex entities they need to be  
8  
9 distilled into a simple, value-based message (Needham, 2005), that must be consistent both  
10  
11 internally and externally and integrated in a coherent marketing strategy (White and de  
12  
13 Chernatony, 2002). Hence a strong brand has a clear identity that resonates with the  
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15 consumer, stakeholders and the internal market.  
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### 18 19 **Brand identity**

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21 The notion of brand identity has been defined as the distinctive envisaged identity desired by  
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23 the brand creator (Joachimsthaler and Aaker, 1997) which is supported by the internal  
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25 stakeholders (Nandan, 2005; de Chernatony, 2006). Brand identity encapsulates the vision  
26  
27 and aspirations of the brand which correspondingly has an effect on brand development  
28  
29 (Alsem and Kosteljik, 2008). Brand identity has been broken down into six main  
30  
31 components: vision; culture; positioning; personality; relationships; and presentation or  
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33 reflection (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; de Chernatony, 2002). These are all emotional  
34  
35 components, however, Kapferer's (2001) brand prism also includes the more functional  
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37 component of physique. Therefore, the brand prism generates a deeper understanding of a  
38  
39 brand (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003). Although brand identity prism is criticised for the  
40  
41 authors' failure to conceptualise and operationalise the distinctions between the brand image  
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43 and the brand identity concepts (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003; Dahlen *et al.*, 2010; de  
44  
45 Chernatony, 2006; Harris and de Chernatony, 2001), it provides a mechanism to evaluate  
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47 brand coherence and brand integration (de Chernatony, 2006). Indeed, '*a sense of identity*  
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49 *and core values that underpin it provide an anchor around which all activities and*  
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51 *communications can be structured*'. Therefore, the brand prism, which represents a complex  
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3 construct of brand identity (Dahlen *et al.*, 2010), may enable a deeper understanding of the  
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5 brand and in this instance the political brand.  
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8 On one hand, internal and external stakeholders are crucial when building a strong  
9  
10 brand identity (Dean and Croft, 2001). On the other, for the brand to be perceived as  
11  
12 authentic by external stakeholders, internal stakeholders have to believe in the brand's shared  
13  
14 values (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007; Kapferer, 2001).  
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16 Hence building a shared brand vision with internal stakeholders can only enhance brand  
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18 identity.  
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### 21 22 **Internal branding**

23 The competitive nature of today's business environment has rendered tangible,  
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25 functional benefits of a brand unable to sustain competitive advantage (King and Grace,  
26  
27 2010) and although a brand is a cluster of functional and emotional benefits (de Chernatony,  
28  
29 2001), the functional benefits can easily be copied. The skills and knowledge that people  
30  
31 possess have been considered as valuable to an organisation. They represent the  
32  
33 organisation's operant resources (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) that induce emotional benefits that  
34  
35 provide the element of uniqueness and differentiation that a successful brand strives for  
36  
37 (Papasolomou and Vrontis, 2006a). Indeed, because employees have direct contact with  
38  
39 customers and other external stakeholders, they are the embodiment of the brand in the  
40  
41 public's eyes (Wangenheim *et al.*, 2007). Therefore, it is necessary that organisations provide  
42  
43 their employees with an opportunity to understand their brand to enable them to deliver the  
44  
45 brand promise. It is through their demonstration of positive brand-supporting behaviours that  
46  
47 the brand can consistently transmit images to stakeholders which differentiate the  
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49 organisation in the market place. This is crucial in a political marketing context particularly  
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51 as the internal market members of a political party present the party message to the local  
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53 community. As Edelman (1964) suggests  
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3 *meanings are not in the symbols. They are in society and therefore in men.*  
4 *Political symbols bring out the concentrated from those particular meanings*  
5 *and emotions which the members of the group create and reinforce in each*  
6 *other.*  
7

8 Hence, political brand identity is co-produced by the party elite, media and also the  
9  
10 citizens but should be reinforced by the internal market when presenting this to the local  
11  
12 constituents.  
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15 Recently, marketing researchers and practitioners have focused on internal branding as  
16  
17 a means to enable an organisation to fulfil its brand promise proposed to external  
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19 constituencies (e.g. Drake *et al.*, 2005; Mitchell, 2002). A number of studies (e.g. King and  
20  
21 Grace, 2010; Miles and Mangold, 2004; Punjaisri *et al.*, 2009) have supported the notion that  
22  
23 internal branding enables employees to develop a shared understanding and necessary skills  
24  
25 that allow them to effectively 'live' the brand and become 'brand Evangelists' (Nandem,  
26  
27 2007). Such positive outcomes of effective internal brand management such as enhanced  
28  
29 employees' brand commitment (Aurand *et al.*, 2005; Burmann and Zeplin, 2005), brand  
30  
31 loyalty (Papasolomou and Vrontis, 2006b), and brand identification (Punjaisri and Wilson,  
32  
33 2007) have been empirically documented. It is through these positive attitudes that employees  
34  
35 have towards brand that subsequently engender brand-consistent behaviours (Punjaisri *et al.*,  
36  
37 2009). By securing management's understanding and commitment, employees will better  
38  
39 accept and internalise brand values, resulting in a better alignment between their attitudes and  
40  
41 behaviours, and the brand (Vallaster and de Chernatony, 2006). Consequently, they can act  
42  
43 and behave naturally when delivering the brand promise at any brand touch points (Mosley,  
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45 2007). In political campaigning, galvanising the internal market so they can convey the  
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47 political brand to voters is a crucial component of electoral strategy.  
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54 Internal branding requires support from a communication strategy that takes account of  
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56 both external and internal communication practices (Hallam, 2003). According to Bergstrom  
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3 *et al.* (2002), internal branding should focus on effectively communicating the brand to  
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5 employees and convince them of their worth and relevance to the delivery of the brand  
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7 promise. Therefore, internal communications become an integral element of internal  
8  
9 branding, reflecting the marketing input into the internal branding process. Indeed, Terry  
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11 (2003) has argued that marketers can add credibility to internal communications, this is  
12  
13 because of their knowledge about peoples' motivation, needs, desires, and weaknesses; they  
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15 are capable of not only communicating the brand but also shaping people's perceptions.  
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17 Various authors have viewed internal communications as an effective motivation mechanism  
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19 (e.g. Piercy, 1995; Rafiq and Ahmed, 1993), having the capability to reduce employee  
20  
21 resistance in times of change (Foreman, 2000). Zucker (2002) argues for internal  
22  
23 communications as being the first point of focus in internal branding to induce employee's  
24  
25 commitment and encourage behavioural changes. Indeed, Punjaisri and Wilson (2007) have  
26  
27 found that internal communications exert a relatively higher effect on employees' brand-  
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29 supporting behaviours than training programmes do, although they have contended that the  
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31 coordination between Marketing and HR is essential in internal branding.  
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38 In order to optimise the effectiveness of internal communications, authors (e.g. Henkel  
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40 *et al.*, 2007; Wood, 1999) have highlighted the balanced management of both formal and  
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42 informal communications. Furthermore, an open environment, a two-way communications  
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44 process is pivotal when building mutual understanding and trust between managers and  
45  
46 employees within and across departments (Sonnenberg, 1991; Varey, 2005). This can build  
47  
48 up to four times higher employee satisfaction and twice their commitment (Higgins, (1996).  
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50 For activists and party members who are largely voluntary, satisfaction and commitment are  
51  
52 central to their engagement (Capato, 2008; Parry *et al.*, 1992). This section discussed the  
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54 theoretical concepts of branding in particular brand identity and internal branding the next  
55  
56 section will examine these constructs from a political perspective.  
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## Political branding

Branding has been applied to destinations, countries, cities, stately homes (Adams, 2010; Bily, 2008; Morgan, *et al.*, 2002; Robinson, 2004; White and de Chernatony, 2002), as well as for religion, sports teams, rock bands, people (Einstein, 2008), universities and the metropolitan police. More recently there has been an emerging interest in applying branding concepts to politics (White and de Chernatony, 2002; Lees-Marshment, 2009; Lilleker, *et al.*, 2006; Moufahim and Lim, 2009, Phipps *et al.*, 2010; Reeves *et al.*, 2006; Smith, 2009;), but as Harrop (1990) pointed out the nature of governing is much like a service provider in that it is intangible, complex and heavily reliant on people. This services perspective of political parties was supported by Henneberg and O'Shaughnessy 2007, who argued that there are three components of the political brand, firstly policy as the service offering, secondly the politician as the tangible service offering and the party as the brand offering.

Nevertheless voters elect the party they believe to be most capable of providing those services (Butler and Stokes, 1969; 1974; Clarke *et al.*, 2004) but as Lock and Harris (1996) pointed out in their seminal paper political parties are '*complex intangible products which the voter cannot unbundle [so]...voters have to judge on the overall packaged concept or message*'. Therefore during an election campaign political parties position or reposition themselves through the development of policies that resonate with their target group (Lees-Marshment, 2009). Over time re-positioning is necessary in order for the party or candidate to adapt to environmental or market trends but this is largely constrained by the party history, ideology and their record on promise delivery (Worcester and Baines, 2006). This is where the notion of branding is helpful to political parties as it can provide a framework for presenting their values, vision and strategy for achieving that vision, in short it can be a very efficient heuristic device. However, this vision needs to be shared by all stakeholders but in

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3 politics it is more complicated as political parties are '*complex organisations with multiple*  
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5 *levels, sites of authority and goals*' (Bale, 2008). The hierarchical nature of political parties  
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7 with party members, Members of Parliament and the leadership create a dynamic tension on  
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9 the development and consistency of the political brand. Leadership is crucial and can affect  
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11 how the brand is perceived by voters. Peng and Hackley (2009, 174) claim that not only can  
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13 branding be applied to political parties it can also be applied to political candidates and  
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15 leaders which '*build[s] a sense of reassurance and foster[s] identification*', conversely, the  
16  
17 party leader can also create dissonance amongst voters (Scammell, 2007). Hence this paper  
18  
19 will attempt to unbundle the key characteristics of the Conservative brand identity and this  
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21 may go some way in explaining how the Conservative Party only partially succeeded in  
22  
23 getting into power after the UK 2010 General Election campaign.  
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### 28 **The Conservative Party**

31 The Conservative party has a strong tradition in the UK as one of the oldest political  
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33 parties, the origins can be traced back to the seventeenth century (Norton 1996; Charmley,  
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35 1996; 2008; Blake, 1989). During the last century it was the most successful party in the UK  
36  
37 (Denham and O'Hara, 2007; Lloyd, 2006) and has been seen as the natural party of  
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39 government of the United Kingdom (Willets and Forsdyke, 1999). However, this masks an  
40  
41 underlying tension that runs through the Conservative Party, which has been present since the  
42  
43 1832 Reform Act and the repeal of the Corn Laws. This tension is two dimensional; firstly  
44  
45 there are two factions within the Conservative Party who differ on one key dimension,  
46  
47 namely the authoritarian/liberal dimension. This is exemplified by traditional/protectionist  
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49 and progressive/free trade and, although the party's core value is to conserve, these two  
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51 factions differ in how conservation is conceived, managed, and how it provides the vision for  
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53 governance (Charmley, 1996). This key distinction still affects Conservative thought on  
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55 issues such as society, the tension between the rural and urban constituencies (Woods, 2002),  
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3 acceptance to change, law and order, wealth creation, and role of government, the state and  
4 institutions (Hickson, 2005; Kavanagh, 2000; Norton, 1996). This factional distinction also  
5 affects the Conservative perception of the UK and its position in the world, particularly its  
6 vexed relationship with Europe (Crowson, 2006, Lynch, 2009). Secondly, there is a tension  
7 between ‘*visceral Conservatism and political necessity*’ (Charmley, 2008, 3), the distinction  
8 between ideology and pragmatism. This affects how the Conservative Party relates to power,  
9 the mechanisms used to gain power and the rhetoric of persuasion. In summary, the picture  
10 painted of the Conservative Party is one of a complex collection of beliefs and values that  
11 have been created historically, occasionally ideologically and often pragmatically.  
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24 For some, the reason for the enduring success of the Conservative Party during the  
25 twentieth century was the notion of moderation (Blake, 1997), a post-war consensus with a  
26 centre right focus. This moderation is evident in many Conservative Governments from  
27 Churchill to Heath; however, moderation was not what the Thatcher government was noted  
28 for. After Thatcher’s demise there were a series of Conservative Party leaders, only Major  
29 succeeded in winning a General Election, the rest - Howard, Duncan-Smith, Hague all  
30 presided over a ‘sales led’ Conservative Party (Lees-Marshment 2004) on the Opposition  
31 benches whilst Blair’s new Labour were in power.  
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42 This brief historical analysis sets the scene for the situation David Cameron inherited  
43 when he became Conservative Party leader, his aim was to diminish their ‘*Nasty Party*’  
44 image famously described by Theresa May. Research conducted by Lord Ashcroft (2005)  
45 found that ‘*the Conservative party doesn’t stand for anything anymore*’ (Ashcroft 2005, 93)  
46 but crucially he believed that ‘*millions of people thought the Conservative Party wasn’t like*  
47 *them and didn’t understand them; the problem is that they were right*’. The Conservative  
48 brand had become ‘toxic’ and it was Cameron’s role to decontaminate it (Jones, 2008, 3).  
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3 Denham and O'Hara (2007) note that '*what an opposition can do: prepare for office,*  
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5 *seek to present itself as a credible alternative to the government and exploit opportunities*  
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7 *when they arise*'. Cameron's repositioning of the Conservative brand was an attempt to  
8  
9 present a credible, electable alternative and this meant that the new branding strategy had to  
10  
11 be accepted by party members, who would in turn, reinforce the brand values and create a  
12  
13 coherent brand identity. This was the message learned by new Labour who during the 1997  
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15 UK General Election campaign ensured all political activities and communications were 'on  
16  
17 message'. The Conservative brand needed to be synchronised internally, in order to present  
18  
19 consistent image to external stakeholders including the electorate, the media and other  
20  
21 interest groups such as business, (Harris de Chernatony, 2001; Van Riel and Fombrun, 2007,  
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23 Dean and Croft, 2001). This paper examines how the internal Conservative stakeholders  
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25 accepted the David Cameron's Conservative brand image through the conceptual framework  
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27 of Kapferer's brand prism.  
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### 32 **Methodology**

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35 This paper seeks to examine the Conservative Party brand from the perspective of the internal  
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37 stakeholders, thus building an understanding of Conservative brand identity. Political  
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39 branding research is at the exploratory stage (Lees-Marshment, 2009; Smith, 2009), and  
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41 Davies and Chun (2002) suggest that qualitative research is useful at the early stages of a  
42  
43 relatively under researched area. The methodology aims to take an '*inside-out*' approach to  
44  
45 the Conservative Party brand (Harris and de Chernatony, 2001; Peng and Hackley, 2009; Van  
46  
47 Riel and Fombrun, 2007). By understanding how the internal stakeholders conceive the  
48  
49 brand it is possible to identify where problems arise and where they can be ameliorated.  
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51 With this in mind this paper adopted a qualitative research approach using in-depth semi-  
52  
53 structured interviews in order to understand the UK Conservative brand from the perspective  
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55 of internal stakeholders (Gillham, 2005; Warren and Karner, 2005). In-depth interviews  
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3 often seen as '*special conversations*' (Rubin and Rubin, 1995, 6), can be seen as flexible in  
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5 terms of topic area development, spontaneous and '*potentially a Pandora's box generating*  
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7 *endlessly various and abundant data*', (McCracken, 1988, 12). A judgement sample was  
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9 adopted and this generated a sample size of 30 internal Conservative stakeholders including  
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11 Members of the European Parliament, House of Commons and House of Lords, Councillors,  
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13 activists, and Prospective Parliamentary Candidates. Interviews were conducted prior to the  
14  
15 2010 UK General Election; December 2009-April 2010. Each interview was tape recorded  
16  
17 and fully transcribed for analysis. There are a number of issues that qualitative researchers  
18  
19 face when conducting research, most notably validity, generalisability, access and consent,  
20  
21 reflexivity, voice and transparency (Butler-Kisber, 2010, 13). These issues were considered  
22  
23 throughout the research design, data collection and analysis process. The validity of this  
24  
25 paper is, thus, based on the quality of interviews and findings interpretation in relation to  
26  
27 extant literature. The thematic enquiry was adopted following the approach of Bird *et al.*  
28  
29 (2009: page number?),  
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34  
35 *the initial categories were modified from a broad and culturally appropriate*  
36 *list...following the first round of coding, categories were broken into sub-*  
37 *categories by identifying properties that described the content of each*  
38 *category*  
39

40 Drawing on authors such as Kvale (1996), Rubin and Rubin (1995) and Heath and Heath  
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42 (2008), the transcripts were examined using Kapferer's brand prism (2001) as a conceptual  
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44 framework.  
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50 Figure 1 should be placed here  
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55 Therefore, the findings are organised into the categories physique, relationship,  
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57 reflection, personality, culture and self image. Using these facets this study builds an  
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3 understanding internal market's engagement with the repositioned Conservative brand  
4 identity.  
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## 6 7 **Findings**

### 8 9 **Conservative Party Physique**

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11 Einstein (2008, 12/3) argues that in terms of successful branding '*the name or the logo*  
12 *appears on everything that is associated with that brand comes to mind*'. Within the  
13 conceptual framework of Kapferer's brand prism the physique is the functional aspect of the  
14 brand identity, for de Chernatony (2006) it refers to the tangible elements of a brand. Many  
15 respondents were ambivalent about the change in visual identity, one party member pointed  
16 out that they  
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25 *quite liked the torch but was tied to specific aspects – Mrs. T [Thatcher]...so*  
26 *time for a change*  
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28 Another councillor believed that

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31 *the torch was more strident. The torch represented the part of Margaret*  
32 *Thatcher; it was a strident, strong symbol. It represented Britain in the*  
33 *world going forward. The tree is an eco; we jumped on the eco band-wagon*  
34 *– vote blue, go green – I don't agree with it. I am not an eco person at all.*  
35

36 A further councillor argued that they '*ignore*' the new oak tree logo and

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39 *apart from it goes on the ballot papers, I have completely ignored it. Why? I*  
40 *dislike it, I don't understand it.*  
41

42 Other comments followed a similar viewpoint suggesting that they '*don't fly the Tory*  
43 *colours*' in their constituency and consider the blue and green oak tree as '*dull and boring*',  
44 (MP), instead have their own colours and established identity. If the logo was ignored so  
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48 were central policies as one MEP claimed to

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51 *campaign very much on broadly local issues and on the reputation of*  
52 *being independent minded...in politics what matters is your reputation*  
53 *and you have to establish that from day one.*  
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55 This tension between central and local party identity has affected the consistency of the  
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57  
58 'modern' Cameron Conservative brand.  
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### Conservative Party Relationship

The relationship facet of the brand prism is described as the relationship between the brand and the consumer, and the brand and the internal market (de Chernatony, 2006; Kapferer, 2001). For a political party this can be explained through a) voter attitudes, (an external perspective that beyond the scope of this paper), b) structural nature of the party, the party leadership and the internal market and c) the emotional sense of belonging to the brand.

Figure 2 should be placed about here

The structure of the Conservative Party comprises of three elements; the Parliamentary Party, Professional Party and the Voluntary Party where there is some degree of overlap. Members of Parliament belong to the Parliamentary Party; the Professional section includes local councillors, representatives and Prospective Parliamentary Candidates; whilst regional associations, volunteers, activists and sub-groups make up the Voluntary section. There was a broad consensus from the internal stakeholders that there is a distinction between the Parliamentary (Central) Conservative Party and the Regional Conservative brand in terms of the values, outlook and traditions. However it was also suggested that each region or association could have its own identity yet still hold Conservative Party brand values.

The relationship between the party leadership and the local/European Parliamentary members has raised some concerns of accelerated centralisation of the Conservative Party message. It was suggested by some that the Parliamentary Party has taken away powers from the local/European level leaving some to concur that '*the party has become too centralised*' (MEP) whilst another MEP claimed that they '*regretted the way we are obliged to centralise our organisation and campaigning*'. This is further illustrated by a local party member when

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3 he claimed that there was *'more power to grass-roots in my day...all areas had power, more*  
4 *of a community themed party'*. Another local party activist claimed that the Party had  
5 *'everything comes from CCHQ [Conservative Party Central Head Quarters]...and*  
6 *Conservative Associations are resenting this being told what to do'*.  
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12  
13 Centralisation of the Conservative branding strategy has put a strain on the internal  
14 market relationship, as one party member commented *'The central [Parliamentary] party*  
15 *needs to trust local associations and regional levels of the party more...the electorate trusts*  
16 *us but this sense of trust is missing between the central and local parts of the party'*.  
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22  
23 There was little understanding or acceptance of the need to have a consistent message,  
24 particularly in today's instant media environment. Several participants were disgruntled that  
25 the Conservative Party did not appear to echo the concerns of citizens outside Westminster.  
26 Some stated that even Conservative stakeholders are not totally *'convinced'* or comfortable  
27 with policies and approaches adopted by the Parliamentary Party, *'The further you go away*  
28 *from London and in other parts of the country; I don't think it is resonating as good'* (party  
29 member).  
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39 A number of participants of the Conservative Party regions and MEPs felt that there  
40 was a *'them and us'* mentality with many feeling *'disconnected'* from Westminster. One  
41 MEP stated that there have *'always been problems between the Parliamentary Party and the*  
42 *European Conservative Party'*. Nevertheless, they still see themselves as Conservatives but  
43 the locus of control is firmly at with the Parliamentary Party. The literature reflected a  
44 consistent coordinated message but one councillor believed that the local publicity material  
45 was more successful, he claimed that  
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55 *when centralised Conservative literature is given out during campaigning*  
56 *many people say no I don't think I am going to vote Conservative. When*  
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3 *given the locally branded literature citizens have replied oh I will definitely*  
4 *vote for you – we get loads of those through the door.*  
5

6 For some, the Conservative brand it was a modern political party, offering something  
7  
8 for everyone in terms of policy and values, in-tune with modern. This point was shared with a  
9  
10 Prospective Parliamentary Conservative Candidate who believed that the Conservatives were  
11

12  
13 *a lot more unified – all harmonised over big issues...brought new blood into*  
14 *the party from different backgrounds...good team in place...good policy.*  
15

16 It appears that there are constituency members who have promoted their own version of  
17  
18 the Conservative brand whilst sitting comfortably under the UK Conservative Party banner.  
19  
20 They are fiercely loyal Conservatives who are loyal to the fundamental core Conservative  
21  
22 values of responsibility, freedom, aspiration and individualism and used these values as a  
23  
24 structure for dealing with the issues facing their local constituents.  
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27  
28 However, during the course of the interviews it emerged that there were tensions  
29  
30 between different elements of the Conservative Party in terms of trust, personal support and  
31  
32 values. Members of the European Parliament considered that there was an indifferent  
33  
34 relationship between the Westminster Conservative Party and the European Conservative  
35  
36 Party. A number of participants of other elements of the Conservative Party including the  
37  
38 professional and voluntary strands still considered a ‘them and us’ mentality, and the feeling  
39  
40 of being ‘disconnected’ from the Westminster bubble.  
41  
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43  
44 Many were also not entirely convinced with the direction the Conservative Party was  
45  
46 going and there was a distinct lack of trust of Central Office leading to a lack of support from  
47  
48 many constituency members. One Conservative councillor, although conceding that branding  
49  
50 was an important concept, he questioned who  
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52  
53 *controls the brand...we make the brands in the provinces...we don't have to*  
54 *buy into it...Obviously the tree [logo] was chosen by Dave's henchmen in*  
55 *central office and if tomorrow they chose to have a venetian clock tower [as*  
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3 *their logo] that's what we will have, that's their choice. In that sense they*  
4 *are the centre – the corporate Conservative Party.*

5  
6 This was a recurring theme throughout the interviews with many respondents,  
7  
8 particularly those outside Westminster, resisting any attempts at controlling the message and  
9  
10 the brand. This was also reflected in the next section of culture and reflection.

### 11 12 13 **Conservative Culture and reflection**

14  
15 Culture is described by Kapferer (2001, 101) as '*the set of values feeding the brand's*  
16 *inspiration*'. For the respondents interviewed, the core Conservative values of responsibility,  
17  
18 freedom, aspiration and individualism which are interpreted and operationalized at  
19  
20 Constituency level. This view was shared by a Conservative Member of Parliament who  
21  
22 suggested that '*the party has distinct characteristics in different parts of the country...the*  
23  
24 *party reflects the character of the place*' (MP).  
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30 One MP went further stating that the Conservative Party in their part of the UK was  
31  
32 '*ten years behind the game...more traditional*' than the Conservative Party in the South of  
33  
34 England and the Parliamentary Party. There was a view that the local party needed to  
35  
36 respond to local beliefs and values for instance, one Prospective Parliamentary candidate  
37  
38 commented '*Distinction is nothing new. A provincial Northern seat...can only win by*  
39  
40 *showing clearly you have got sort of a local identity.*'  
41  
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44 This local interpretation of Conservative values was a recurring theme throughout the  
45  
46 interviews for instance, another councillor suggested that  
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49 *Each region of the Party [Conservative] has their own identity and*  
50 *promotes different forms of conservatism.... We reflect the local needs*  
51 *filtered through our party agenda but tailored from the dining a la cart of*  
52 *the menu of the best issues...whether it is urban, suburban or rural. We are*  
53 *all dining from the big book of recipes but the menu's we are choosing to*  
54 *dine off are different albeit all put together by the same master chef Dave.*  
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3 In the marketing literature it is argued that consistency is key to a strong brand this is  
4 also true for political brands according to Schneider (2004). However, local interpretation of  
5 these values is evident in the Conservative safe seats where a consistent, tailored message  
6 continues to resonate with the local electorate.  
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### 10 11 12 **Conservative Personality**

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15 Personality is described as the figurehead or spokesperson for the brand (de  
16 Chernatony, 2006; Kapferer, 2001). For the leader there was a view that David Cameron  
17 had  
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23 *great integrity, had a generosity of spirit and I liked his values and I liked*  
24 *his positive view on the world. It's not an angry philosophy basically an*  
25 *enabling philosophy.*  
26

27  
28 One curious aspect is that although there was a view that Cameron was centrist in terms  
29 of Conservative policymaking he was seen by some as being very keen to localise politics, to  
30 give decisions back to local people. He was seen as very keen to reduce the size of the state  
31 again empowering people to take charge of their own lives within their own communities  
32 (PPC). For one MP Cameron was a curious mix of traditional/liberal Conservative, *'you can*  
33 *trace him back to MacMillanite-Disraelite with a touch of Gladstone – the only thing he*  
34 *didn't have a ideological tap into was Thatcher in a funny way'* almost *'all things to all*  
35 *Tories'*. He was also seen as being a good communicator who espoused the virtues of the  
36 *'one-nation' Conservatism, he was also perceived to be 'sincere' (MP) and 'keeps his cool'*  
37 *under pressure (Member House of Lords). One respondent suggested that as he was an*  
38 *unknown quantity, he had no baggage so 'determined to succeed and repackage the Party*  
39 *plus presenting himself doing it'*. He believed he would be successful in attracting the middle  
40 classes who had defected to new Labour by *'the huskie, the goodies, the greenery, the*  
41 *socially inclusive, trendy, Notting Hill sort of approach'*. One key point raised by one  
42 respondent is that *'David Cameron has transformed the standing of the party that people are*  
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3 prepared to listen to us'. So after three election defeats the majority of participants were  
4  
5 willing to support Cameron as they could see 'he's a winner', 'electable' and they were 'sick  
6  
7 of losing' and this was the 'best chance of re-election for a generation'.  
8  
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### 10 Self Image

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12 Self image refers to the way "in which a brand enables users to make a private  
13 statement to themselves" (de Chernatony, 2006, 212). As the internal market are consumers  
14 of the Conservative brand this will be examined rather than the views of external  
15 stakeholders. There was a high level of inconsistency amongst respondents regarding the  
16 extent to which the brand had changed. Moreover, for those who believed the brand had  
17 changed there a diversity of views as to how the brand had changed and what the catalyst was  
18 for change. For many respondents, like this Conservative Future member, the facade of the  
19 Party had changed under the leadership of David Cameron but in reality the Party was still  
20 the same as it was under the leadership of Michael Howard. This was reflected in comments  
21 from party members who were sceptical about the extent to which Cameron could change the  
22 party for instance one remarked that 'The MPs haven't changed so how can the party have  
23 changed...if Cameron wins and after the honeymoon period the veneer will peel off'. Another  
24 suggested that "the values [of the Conservative Party] are still the same but the perception of  
25 leadership has changed'. Many respondents supported this view arguing that the  
26 Conservative Party was focusing on 'style' of the message rather than 'substance' of policies.  
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47 Contrasting this view, there was a significant proportion of interviewees who believed  
48 that the Conservative Party had changed under Cameron's leadership 'he has changed it, he  
49 has softened it, he's chosen quite a few what he believes to be popular elements and the  
50 whole green agenda – I think he truly believes in' but the clarity of the message was missing.  
51 It was 'too vague'; Cameron had 'changed the look [of the Party] but did not do enough with  
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3 *the message...it's not clear what they stand for'*. One MEP suggested that David Cameron  
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5 *'hasn't made enough of a change'* arguing that the Conservative Party needed more  
6  
7 *'substance'*.  
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10  
11 For many respondents substance meant that the electorate understood what the  
12  
13 Conservatives stood for compared to Labour, for instance one MP was worried that *'we*  
14  
15 *don't have a clear distinction...no differentiation...we need to get that back...I don't think we*  
16  
17 *have any clear values'*. The concern for a clear message that distinguished the Conservative  
18  
19 Party from the alternatives was also evident amongst the voluntary party members one  
20  
21 suggested, *'we haven't put across a clear alternative'*.  
22  
23

24  
25 A number of participants were unsure about the Conservative brand and *we don't really*  
26  
27 *know what the central party stands for and Dave is not clear too'*, (Councillor). *'do not know*  
28  
29 *what Dave's purpose or central idea is yet'* (MP). When asked to clarify their confusion it  
30  
31 was again claimed that the Conservative Party's message was not clear enough, which was  
32  
33 confusing not just the participant but also the electorate. A handful of participants were  
34  
35 concerned that the Party itself didn't fully understand the message it was trying to project and  
36  
37 didn't know the core values of the Conservative brand despite the General Election being  
38  
39 only months away. This was reiterated by a member of the Professional element of the  
40  
41 Conservative Party revealed that many members of the Party including CCHQ didn't  
42  
43 understand the envisaged identity and *'if CCHQ don't understand their brand what hope can*  
44  
45 *we have for the rest of the country'*.  
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49  
50 Despite this lack of clarity for the Conservative brand identity of this one MEP reacted  
51  
52 pragmatically and claimed to *'campaign very much on broadly local issues and on the*  
53  
54 *reputation of being independent minded...in politics what matters is your reputation and you*  
55  
56 *have to establish that from day one'*. Indeed, as advocates of the brand or *brand evangelists*  
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3 they need to be on message supporting the Cameron Conservative brand. However, some  
4  
5 respondents argued that it was their personal relationship with the local electorate that was  
6  
7 responsible for their success hence we have two physical manifestations of the brand, the  
8  
9 Party leader but also the local MP. This was particularly evident in the safe seat  
10  
11 constituencies and the local MP empathised with the needs of the area in terms of business,  
12  
13 economy and local people.  
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17 There was a belief that Cameron may be the best chance for electoral success for some  
18  
19 time so many kept their reservations quiet and went along with what he was doing; although  
20  
21 he was changing the perception of the Conservative brand he wasn't going to change their  
22  
23 beliefs. Cameron has merely '*quietened the dissatisfaction and united around the fact we*  
24  
25 *need to shut up and win*', (Councillor) as '*You can achieve nothing in politics if you don't win*  
26  
27 *elections*' (Councillor). Finally it appeared that being on the opposition benches for 13 years,  
28  
29 many respondents concluded '*we are all willing to shut up to get Cameron elected*', (MEP),  
30  
31 '*we can't go on like this*' (MP), and '*it's time to keep quiet and get elected*' (party member).  
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### 36 **Conclusion**

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38 In terms of communicating the values of the brand, the findings clearly indicate that the  
39  
40 Conservative Party still does not have a clear brand identity within the internal market and  
41  
42 demarcation lines follow the historical strands within the Conservative Party. Furthermore  
43  
44 there are clear distinctions between the national and local Conservative brand and how this is  
45  
46 presented to the citizen by local campaigners. This notion of central and local message  
47  
48 differentiation is quite a dilemma for Central office, there is a need to respond to local issues  
49  
50 to act local but it needs to be underpinned by a central core message. Although if more  
51  
52 control that goes to the local constituency there is a chance that the message may become  
53  
54 more diluted and this could undermine the Conservative brand. This dilemma is not new, nor  
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3 necessarily problematic. Anthony Downs (1957:135) in his seminal work argued exactly this  
4  
5 when he discussed appealing to rural and urban constituencies with different policies that  
6  
7 were not conflicting. The crucial aspect of building a political brand is that it must contain  
8  
9 core values that are consistent with the ideology, values, history and culture of the party and  
10  
11 the leader embodies this through their own interpretation of Conservative values. The  
12  
13 importance of the local constituencies are to operationalise this Conservative brand, through  
14  
15 peripheral values that resonate with the core values but are more flexible identifying specific  
16  
17 values that echo the local constituency reflecting the culture and circumstances of the local  
18  
19 constituency electorate. Vallaster *et al.* (2006) argue that internal stakeholders play a crucial  
20  
21 role in promoting a successful brand, with a strong identity that has the potential of instilling  
22  
23 and maintaining confidence with the consumer or citizen (Schneider 2004).  
24  
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28  
29 Wagenheim *et al.* (2007) suggest that the key strengths of the internal market are the  
30  
31 skills and knowledge of the local market and the enthusiasm and the motivation they have for  
32  
33 the brand demonstrate they are the '*embodiment of the brand*' (Wagenheim *et al.* (2007). In  
34  
35 terms of brand supporting behaviours and a shared understanding there is still some  
36  
37 dissonance here, internal communications need to reveal a consistency with the local party  
38  
39 values and Cameron's Conservative brand.  
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### 42 **Implications**

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45 The implications arising from this study focus upon firstly the use of Kapferer's brand  
46  
47 prism. This conceptual framework was useful for building an in-depth understanding of the  
48  
49 Conservative brand and unearthing the challenging aspects the brand is experiencing. In  
50  
51 particular, the culture and the relationship facets of the brand prism raised the most concerns.  
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53 For instance the past failures of the Conservative Party which have been due to poor strategic  
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55 decisions which were short term and sales led (Lees-Marshment 2004); disunity in a number  
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3 of guises (Norton 2009), for instance splitting the rural vote Woods (2002); Europe (Lynch  
4  
5 2009); and finally the legacy of Margaret Thatcher (Butler and Kavanagh 2002). The '*them*  
6  
7 *and us*' mentality identified in this study suggests that there is a lack of message consistency  
8  
9 across the internal stakeholders of the party. An ineffective implementation of internal  
10  
11 branding inside the party is reflected by the lack of shared vision, and resistance to change of  
12  
13 some internal audiences. Indeed, the call for a clear message of what the brand stands for  
14  
15 further highlights the significant role of internal branding to clearly communicate with the  
16  
17 internal market about its brand identity. As a result, there is evidence of resistance to change  
18  
19 from some party members. Without a shared understanding of brand identity, it is unlikely  
20  
21 that external audiences receive a coherent brand message at all brand touch points (e.g.  
22  
23 Punjaisri et al., 2009). Secondly, although this research paints an interesting picture of the  
24  
25 internal Conservative brand there are serious implications arising from the contradictions and  
26  
27 uncertainty about the Conservative brand. Whilst David Cameron is considered the  
28  
29 personality of the brand identity prism, the perceived lack of the management's  
30  
31 understanding and commitment explains the issues found in the culture and relationship  
32  
33 dimensions. This highlights that all dimensions of the brand prism are distinctive, yet  
34  
35 interdependent and internal branding cannot be effective without first securing the  
36  
37 understanding and commitment from the party leadership members. Also, this study  
38  
39 encourages management to implement open-environment, two-way communications in order  
40  
41 to build mutual understanding and trust across the political party. When trust exists across the  
42  
43 internal audiences, internal branding becomes more effective in enhancing the party  
44  
45 members' commitment and loyalty (Mohart, Herzog and Tomczak, 2009). However, our  
46  
47 research suggests that the historical hierarchical nature of the Conservative Party is partly to  
48  
49 blame. During and after the Thatcher era much of the traditional elite power structure was  
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51 replaced with more accessible institutional processes, many respondents were concerned  
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3 about the return to an elite power structure under the leadership of David Cameron. This  
4 affects how internal market engagement is not only developed but also how internal  
5 communications are managed and it is communicated. From this research it is clear that there  
6 still remains an unswerving loyalty to the Conservative Party amongst the participants of this  
7 study. The enthusiasm and loyalty that exists amongst the party activists who continue to be  
8 'Brand Evangelists' for the Conservative Party needs to be harnessed and not viewed with  
9 apprehension.  
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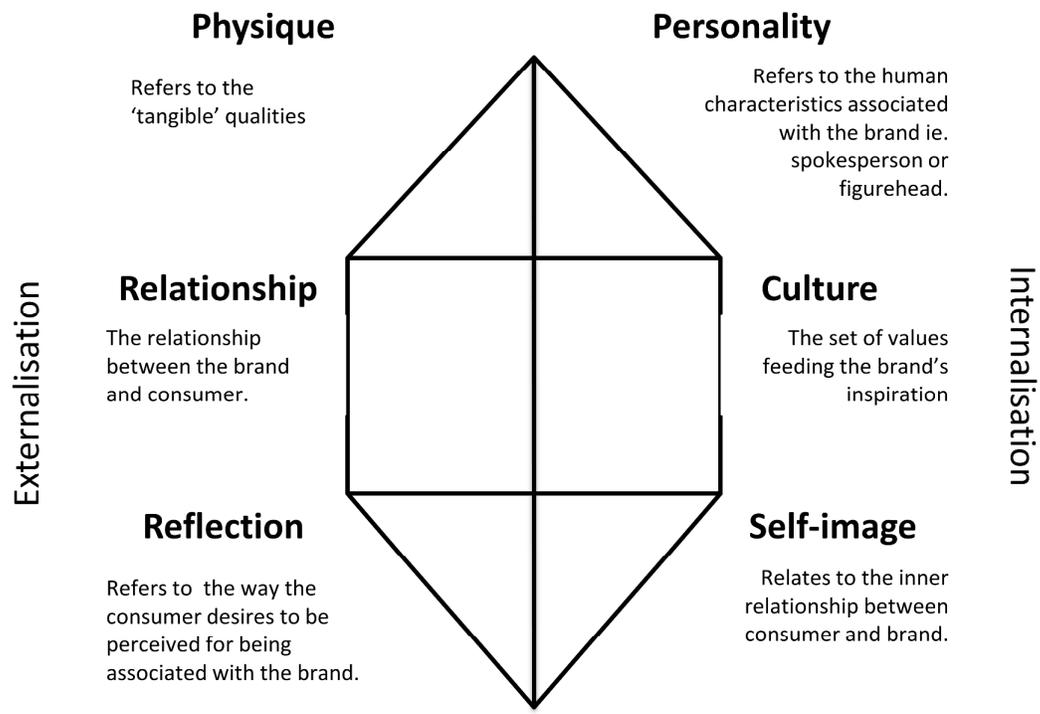
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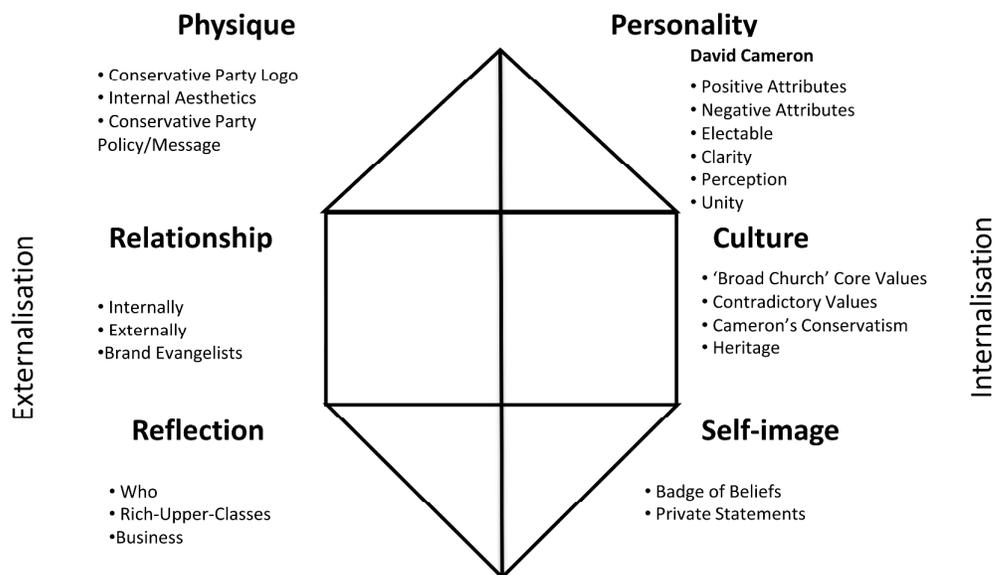
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**Figure 1: Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism**

(Adapted from de Chernatony 2006; Fill 2006:397; Kapferer 2008)

Review Only



**Figure 2: UK Conservative Party Brand and the Brand Identity Prism**

Review Only

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2  
3 Dear Sir/Madam  
4

5 I would like to thank the reviewers for their constructive and helpful comments and in  
6 this revision we have taken these into consideration. We have made modifications to  
7 the paper in three sections, the literature review on brand identity, the methodology  
8 section and finally the implications section.  
9

10  
11 In response to the comments "*although some brief discussion of the merits -*  
12 *strengths/weaknesses/limitations of the concept would provide a little more critical*  
13 *depth*", we have redrafted the brand identity section of the paper providing a deeper  
14 critical discussion of the brand identity literature also adopted a critical analysis of  
15 Kapferer's brand prism. Thirdly we have developed a stronger justification for the  
16 application of the model to analyse the UK Conservative Party.  
17

18  
19 We have responded to the comments on the methodological approach by extending  
20 the methodology section to include an explanation of the data collection method and  
21 also how the data was organised into themes and then analysed.  
22

23 The implications section has been significantly amended to take into consideration the  
24 reviewers comments on providing a discussion on the implications for the internal  
25 market and political branding. The key points we make are related to core and  
26 peripheral values; the need for greater flexibility with peripheral values at a local level  
27 and harnessing the enthusiasm of the brand evangelists. We have emphasised why  
28 this research is important and how, when branding theory is applied to political  
29 branding there are human dynamics that also need to be incorporated into the brand  
30 identity. This is related to the party leadership but also to the party members and  
31 activists.  
32

33 Finally, we have added a graphic representation of Kapferer's brand prism and the  
34 Conservative party.  
35

36 I hope these have been completed to the satisfaction of the reviewers and once again  
37 thank them for their advice.  
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