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Abstract Submitting Form

Conference	<u>7th Annual International Colloquium on Branding, 29-31 July & 1 August 2019, Athens, Greece</u>
Title of Paper	Exploring Personal Politic brand Identities of Iceland's Parliamentarians
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Title	X Dr <input type="checkbox"/> Mr <input type="checkbox"/> Ms <input type="checkbox"/> Other Specify:
First Name	Guja
Family Name	Armannsdottir
Position	Senior Lecturer in Marketing
University/ Organization	Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham
Country	United Kingdom
E-mail	<u>Guja.armannsdottir@ntu.ac.uk</u>
Title	<input type="checkbox"/> Dr X Mr <input type="checkbox"/> Ms <input type="checkbox"/> Other Specify:
First Name	Stuart
Family Name	Carnell
Position	Senior Lecturer in Marketing
University/ Organization	Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham
Country	United Kingdom
E-mail	<u>Stuart.carnell@ntu.ac.uk</u>
Title	X Dr <input type="checkbox"/> Mr <input type="checkbox"/> Ms <input type="checkbox"/> Other Specify:
First Name	Christopher
Family Name	Pich
Position	Senior Lecturer in Marketing
University/ Organization	Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham
Country	United Kingdom
E-mail	<u>Christopher.pich@ntu.ac.uk</u>

Abstract

Please try to limit your abstract to less than 500 words (about 30 lines)

Political branding research remains under-researched, particularly the internal orientation and intentional, desired positioning otherwise known as *political brand identity*. Existing studies that have tended to focus on the identity of 'party' political brands rather than that of politicians. Further, framing politicians as 'personal brands' allows us to explore the manifestations of intended identities, combined of personal characteristics such as personality traits, experiences feelings, beliefs and personal values, which up until now remained an under-developed research area. In this study, we explore the creation and management of personal political brand identity particularly from the perspective of the brand's creators. Further, this is achieved by bridging two streams of commercial branding theory such as *personal branding* and *brand identity*. More specifically, this study investigates the creation and management of personal political brand identity by building on the six-staged personal brand auditing framework (Philbrick and Cleveland 2015) to examine the personal political brand identities of politicians from an internal brand-creator perspective. Members of Parliament from the Republic of Iceland contextualises this study. The reason for this is twofold. Icelandic politics faced a succession of financial scandals, which has meant general elections have taken place in 2013, 2016 and 2017 instead of every four years. In addition, the last Icelandic general election witnessed an influx of new parliamentarians each possessing distinct identities and positions.

Therefore, up to half of the Icelandic Parliament is represented by newly elected personal political brands.

This qualitative case-study approach reveals how personal political brands create, construct and communicate their identity. This research adopted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with Members of the Icelandic Parliament. In addition, as part of the case study analysis, public websites and public social media sites were analysed to help better understand the topic. This study adopted a two-staged thematic approach to analyse the key findings identifying common themes and patterns. This study reveals that the personal brand identities of members of the Icelandic Parliament represented a clear brand mantra and created-managed via personal values and ideology and based on key issues that were personal to the individual. In addition, this study highlighted that personal brand identities were developed with offline and online touchpoints with the aim of communicating an aligned, clear and authentic political brand in the mind of Icelandic citizens. However, this study also revealed the challenges of managing an integrated, authentic personal brand identity given the problematic nature of the party-coalition political system. Our paper builds on the six-staged analytical process of personal branding and proposes the *Personal Political Brand Identity Framework* as an operational tool to introspectively evaluate personal political brand identity. This framework can be used by political actors across different settings and contexts to assess personal political brands from multiple perspectives. This in turn will address the explicit calls for further research on the internal perspective of political brands, which in turn will extend an under-developed area of political branding.

Keywords (at least three)

Personal Branding, Political Branding, Brand Identity, Iceland, Qualitative Research

Please email to: atiner@atiner.gr as an attached file or fax it to +30 210 3634209