

**Towards a taxonomy of place brand attributes. A  
content analysis of Greater Manchester's place brand  
architecture**

**Thesis by**

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# **Towards a taxonomy of place brand attributes. A content analysis of Greater Manchester's place brand architecture**

## **Abstract**

Recent years have given rise to the proliferation of place branding practice and research; however there remains little consensus when it comes to deciphering what place branding *is*. Furthermore, whilst much research has approached the subject from a theoretical or conceptual perspective; there has been very little empirical research dedicated to the subject matter, particularly in relation to how place brands are being created in practice, and more specifically there has been a lack of comparative empirical research. This explorative study proposes an empirical methodology for the deconstruction of place brands in order to assess how they are being formed, and subsequently the creation of an initial taxonomy for classifying place brands based on their constitution.

In order to build towards the initial taxonomy of place brands, a thorough analysis of extant literature is carried out (*chapter 1*), moving through the following stages:

- Firstly, the research looks at how place branding has proliferated over recent years, moving into how the majority of current place branding practice is governed by methodologies associated with product or corporate branding, an activity which is referred to for these purposes as 'traditional'.
- After seeking to clarify some of the common terms employed, often interchangeably, the key distinction between place brand and place image is made.
- The research then looks at problems which occur as a result of the application of 'traditional' branding practices to places, and asks the question whether the creation of a truly representative place brand is even possible.
- The incorporation of a sense of place is then introduced as a means of engendering requisite authenticity into any branding attempt.
- From this, the theory of looking at places in terms of their attributes is brought into the discussion.

- These attributes are then looked at in terms of their level of manageability, using town centre management theory as a basis, whilst the notion of places as thick and thin is employed to round off the discussion.

An important outcome of the literature review, and a key step towards forming the empirical methodology employed, is the clarification of some of the terms pertinent to place branding theory. A particularly important aspect of this clarification is the separation and distinction between place brand – as a created, controllable construct – and place image – as pertaining to perception of place in reality, shaped and affected by myriad contributing factors.

By offering this as a valid theoretical basis for progression of knowledge in the field; place brands can be analysed and deconstructed as created, controllable constructs, unencumbered by the vast array of associations and pieces of information, often subject to contestation, which are more adequately associated with place image. As such, whereas much place branding literature has included contributing theoretical strands emanating from areas as diverse as economics theory, sociology, planning, psychoanalysis, anthropology, and social and political philosophy (Bridge and Watson, 2010. P.1); this study is able to address these, where necessary, purely as pertaining to facets of the brands themselves - as opposed to treating them as disciplines contributing sources of theory and knowledge to branding as a practice.

In order to deconstruct the brands, and using knowledge derived from the review of extant literature; a meronymy is formed (*chapter 2*) which sets out potential meronyms (constituent parts) which can contribute to the formation of a place brand, and the perceived level of manageability of these meronyms. The meronymy is employed as the framework for analysis (*chapter 3*) to content analyse brands representing the ten boroughs of the Greater Manchester metropolitan area, in order to deconstruct them into their constituent parts. The research moves through five levels of analysis (*chapter 4*):

**Level 1** – The first level of analysis comprises the basic deconstruction of the brand of each borough using the meronymy as the framework. Words and images are both

incorporated into the units of analysis. Results are analysed by meronym to ascertain which attributes are being utilised by each borough under analysis.

**Level 2** – Once an initial overview of the attributes employed is complete, the next step is to begin to group the places. In order to do so, the data is run through the SPSS statistics package, with correspondence analysis utilised to present the brands in a two dimensional space which facilitates the initial stage of their grouping.

**Level 3** – The third level incorporates the manageability of the meronyms utilised, in order to ascertain the places which focus their brand on created content (more manageable aspects), as opposed to those who utilise content inherent or natural to the place (less manageable aspects).

**Level 4** – The penultimate level incorporates the notion of thick and thin places (Casey, 2001), in order to provide a method of triangulation with the data derived from level 3. By cross-referencing the manageability of the meronyms employed with the range of meronyms employed by each borough's brands, the brands can be positioned on a scatter plot diagram with a quartile divider based on the average for each axis; this forms the basis for the initial taxonomy which is utilised to classify the brands into four groups.

**Level 5** – Based on the findings of this analysis, an initial taxonomy is created in order to provide a means of classifying place brands based on their constitution.

## Key Findings

A key outcome of the research is that the separation of place brand from place image is an important pre-cursor to any attempt to analyse place brands in a manner that can yield useful results. After establishing this theory, it was possible to view place brands as controllable, physical constructs that can be deconstructed to facilitate research into their constitution, and subsequently to enable their classification.

Results indicate that place brands can be broken down into their constituent parts, and in turn the constitution can be employed as a means of classifying the brands. As a result, four key classifications of brand are identified:

**A1** – Thick places with emphasis on more created, manageable meronyms

**A2** – Thick places with emphasis on natural, less manageable meronyms

**B1** – Thin places with emphasis on more created, manageable meronyms

**B2** – Thin places with emphasis on natural, less manageable meronyms

The research suggests (*chapter 5*) that the goal of place branding should be to either maintain or improve the image of a place by creating a brand rooted in the place itself, thus infusing an authenticity which research suggests is a vital requirement. The suggestion being that the place, vis-a-vis the image, comes first, the brand follows as a means of reinforcing this image. By taking an empirical and comparative approach, this research offers an interesting new way of perceiving place brands, which will have significance for place branding academics and practitioners alike.

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# **Towards a taxonomy of place brand attributes. A content analysis of Greater Manchester's place brand architecture**

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

The terms brand and branding are now commonly used in everyday vocabulary; yet, they are also terms that are often misinterpreted (Davis, 2009). Blackett, in Clifton and Simmons (2003:13), suggests that the term brand has evolved over the last century to take on a primarily commercial application. Blackett (ibid) states, however, that the word brand, "has always meant, in its passive form, the object by which an impression is formed, and in its active form the process of forming this impression." Kotler (2010:5) states that "(the brand) stands for the performance of a business and its products in customers' minds... By implementing strong brand management, businesses are prepared to adapt to ever-changing competitive conditions..." Randall (2000) adds that branding is a fundamental strategic process that involves all parts of the firm in its delivery, suggesting it is about, but not confined to, marketing practice. Wheeler (2009:2) states that, "as competition creates infinite choices, companies look for ways to connect emotionally with customers, become irreplaceable, and create lifelong relationships. A strong brand stands out in a densely crowded marketplace." Indeed, the value of branding in corporate business cannot be disputed. For example, Clifton and Simmons (2003:3) suggest that "the intangible element of the combined market capitalisation of the FTSE 100 companies has increased to around 70% compared with 40% 20 years ago." This fact is a fairly concrete illustration of the power and value of the brand to organisations. Furthermore, In the last 10 years since this was written, it is likely this exponential increase has continued, or even accelerated due to the increasing importance of intangible brand assets coupled with a decrease in tangible distinctions between organisations. Clifton and Simmons (2003:3) add that globally, "brands are estimated to account for approximately one-third of all wealth, and this is just looking at the commercial definition." It is therefore not surprising that what have long been understood as corporate or product branding principles, which can be referred to for the purposes of this study as 'traditional', are now being applied to many aspects of

life, as we seek to extract maximum value from whatever attributes we can. One such area which has seen an increase in investment and action over recent years is that of the attachment of brand to places.

Indeed, branding of places has grown as a practice over the last two decades to become an industry which attracts significant investment, as well as becoming a popular subject for academic research. However, there is still little consensus as to what place branding really is. This is largely a direct result of the friction which stems from the application of 'traditional' branding to an entity, and indeed a concept, as complex and multi-layered as place.

This thesis seeks to separate the practical from the theoretical, to disentangle the terms which permeate throughout place branding literature in order to offer a view of place branding which has a practical significance, yet can also have an impact theoretically.

## **1.0 Research aims and objectives**

**Aim** – To produce a framework that facilitates, through a comparative empirical research approach, the deconstruction and classification of place brands.

**Objective 1** – Synthesise extant literature in order to produce a theoretical framework on which to build an empirical methodology

**Objective 2** – Develop, based on the extant literature, a meronomy that facilitates the deconstruction of place brands based on the constitution of attributes employed

**Objective 3** – Expand the meronomy to include the level of manageability of each group of attributes featured

**Objective 4** – Conduct a content analysis of ten place brands, using the meronomy as the framework for analysis, in order to ascertain their constitution

**Objective 5** – Analyse each brand based on the constitution of attributes employed. This will include analysis of the manageability of said attributes as well as the range utilised

**Objective 6** – To establish, based on completion of objectives 1-5; an initial taxonomy for the classification of place brands

**Objective 7** – Synthesise the extant literature and the primary empirical research (based on completion of objectives 1-6) to draw conclusions

This study aims to contribute a new methodology for classifying place brands. The research seeks to examine the application of ‘traditional’ branding activity to places from a theoretical perspective, with an overview of the difficulties and contestations that occur as a result. The over-arching aim of the work will be to identify how places brand themselves in practice, specifically in terms of the aspects or attributes of place that feed into the brand which is created. The ultimate questions being; how are place brands created in practice? And, if we can begin to understand how place brands are formed, can we begin to deconstruct and classify them based on their constituent parts? To this end, place branding activity undertaken by the ten metropolitan boroughs of Greater Manchester – Greater Manchester’s place brand architecture – will form the basis of the research. The results of the study will have an effect on how place brands are perceived, as well as on how they are structured initially. The research will provide a means for further research to build on and take forward, whilst the resultant frameworks will also have a potential practical influence as a means of informing future place branding strategies.

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of the literature

**Objective 1** – Synthesise extant literature in order to produce a theoretical framework on which to build an empirical methodology

**Objective 2** – Develop, based on the extant literature, a meronomy that facilitates the deconstruction of place brands based on the constitution of attributes/ingredients employed.

**Objective 3** – Expand the meronomy to include the level of manageability of each group of attributes/ingredients featured

**Objective 4** – Conduct a content analysis of ten place brands, using the meronomy as the framework for analysis, in order to ascertain their constitution

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## 2.0 Branding of places

Over the last twenty or so years, place branding has been steadily growing into an industry, attracting significant amounts of investment along the way. Young and Lever (1996), in a study dating back to 1995-96, stated that 93% of UK local authorities spent an average of £279,600 on place branding activity during this period. Lucarelli and Berg (2011), referencing Seisdedos (2006), cite the Eurocities Questionnaire, which in 2005 revealed that the average per capita city marketing budget allocated for city branding in these cities was €400,000/city, ranging from €130,000 to €10 million per year (this data was captured in 12 different countries). There is little doubt that the branding of places has gained popularity among city officials and academics in recent years, as illustrated by popular city brand rankings such as the Anholt-GMI City Brands Index (Anholt, 2006), or the first meta-analyses of the academic field by Gertner (2011, In Braun et al, 2013). Chunying's (2013) research into place marketing activity in China revealed that between 2007-2010, a total of over 320,000 advertisements promoting places appeared on China Central Television's 13 channels. Brown (2011) consolidates this popularity by suggesting that place branding is currently "very in-mode." In addition to the proliferation of place branding practice, the increased activity in this area is also reflected in related research output. Lucarelli and Berg's (2011) work into place branding research conducted between 1988 and 2009 shows an exponential year on year increase in the number of articles dealing with place branding in the period 1988-2009. They also cite the creation of topical journals such as *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* (2004) and the *Journal of Place Management and Development* (2008) as testament to the increasing interest in, and proliferation of, practice and research in the field.

### 2.1 Place branding in practice

Despite this exponential rise in popularity, there is still little consensus as to what place branding is, or perhaps more importantly what it isn't; a conundrum affected to a large degree by the omnipotence/omnipresence of 'traditional' product/corporate branding theory and practice reference which permeates throughout place branding discourse. Blain et al (2005) describe place branding as the marketing activities that (1) support the creation of a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that

both identifies and differentiates a destination; (2) that convey the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; and (3) that serve to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience, all with the intent purpose of creating an image that influences consumers' decisions to visit the destination in question, as opposed to an alternative one (Blain et al, 2005: 331-2). Brown (2011) describes place branding as, "an evolving multi-dimensional service system." Bridge and Watson (2010:1) suggest that place branding encompasses disciplines including economics, sociology, geography, planning and architecture, as well as cultural studies, literature, history, psychoanalysis and anthropology, and social and political philosophy.

Omholt (2013) suggests that place branding is about developing a collective capacity for action and stakeholder engagement. Govers (2012) believes that place branding aims to increase awareness, create a distinctive, credible, meaningful, attractive and memorable image which enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty. Whilst Dinnie (2008:15) – and here we must acknowledge that although theorists make reference to different types of place to outline their opinions, the root of their discussion can be considered pertinent to place in general, suggests that the place brand is defined as, "the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences."

Mommaas (2002:34) states that "the city's brand serves largely to increase its status or prestige as a tourist destination or as a residential or business location." Anholt (2005:51) agrees; "brand is a good word to use when talking about countries because it's the only one that truly conveys the idea of a deliberate capture and accumulation of reputational value." Anholt (ibid) adds, with reference to 'traditional' product branding theory, that the "brand name acts as our short cut to an informed buying decision." Van Gelder (2003:1) supports this, suggesting that "brands are created, stimulated and applied by people working in organisations seeking to create worthwhile experiences for their customers that will induce behaviour beneficial to the organisation." Whilst De Jong (2011) simplifies the concept further by opining of branding; "customers come first, they deliver the profits, follow them." Anholt (2005:10) shares De Jong's simplified view, suggesting that most people use the term branding quite loosely, reflecting the relative transience in terms, however he consolidates the meaning of place branding by suggesting that "these places, people

and organisations have found that their reputation is important to them. They suffer when it's negative and they profit when it's positive, and so they make some attempt to control it. And that loose definition of a brand is pretty accurate: at heart, a brand is nothing more and nothing less than the good name of something that's on offer to the public." Thus, the concept of place branding is in effect boiled down to a custom generating mechanism, which on the face of it seems a relatively adequate description of place brands. Again, what is immediately apparent here is that reference to different levels of place permeates the literature – 'countries' and 'cities', for example – this adds to the complexity as these places are very different. However, regardless of the type of place being 'branded', the motivations and intentions for carrying out the branding activity remain broadly consistent.

## **2.2 Clarification of terms**

The task of comprehending, let alone describing, place branding, is clouded further once you begin to consider some associated or closely related terms as "little consensus has been achieved as yet on the exact nature of place branding (Kalandides, 2009:5)." Indeed, "place branding research has developed in a most fragmented manner (Papadopoulos, 2004, in Lucarelli and Berg, 2011:9). Furthermore, "there seems to be little interchange of ideas between the different parts of the research field (ibid:10)," and "between conceptual frameworks (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011)." Riezebos (1994:264) compares a number of constructs – such as perceived brand quality, brand attitude, brand image, brand loyalty, and brand equity. Leeflang and Van Raaij (1995) refer to the term brand as being closely related to aspects of identity, image, quality and visitor satisfaction. Furthermore, "there is at present a lack of knowledge as to where the boundaries of the strategic creation of brands, identities and spatial images lie (Mahnken, 2011:68)." Mommaas (2002:16) suggests that branding is an investment in advertising related products and strategic interventions which can have a considerable influence on the image with relatively few resources, "by manipulating the perceptions, developments can be set in motion which will automatically bring about the desired image. By building a seductive image, a mental framework is created within which the city can blossom."

Kotler et al (1993:141) also talk about place image, referring to it as the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have of a place. He surmises that place

image represents a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with the place – it (image) is, “a product of the mind trying to process and 'essentialise' huge amounts of data about a place.”

As Selby and Morgan (1996:288) suggest, “at each stage the... individual... may hold different images of a destination, images which are constructed by the amount, source and objectivity of the available information.” Selby and Morgan continue, opining that place image can be described as “a hierarchy of place images, ranging from initial perceptions based on organic sources, to a modified or re-evaluated image upon visiting the destination. This modification results in a much more 'realistic, objective, differentiated, and complex image (ibid, 1996:289).” Young and Lever suggest that the “construction of new images of place is seen as vital to overcome people’s negative perceptions of cities and their connotations with decaying industrial landscapes and social problems (1996:332).”

Baloglu and McCleary, 1999, in Kokosalakis et al, 2006:390) opine that the received image is “formed by ‘stimulus factors’, in other words the place itself and any external factors associated with it, but also by ‘personal factors’, which can be understood as the socio-cultural and psychological characteristics of the perceiver.” As such, the idea that the image people hold of a given place is, at least partially, dependent on the individual themselves is introduced. McCarthy (2006:245) takes this forward, suggesting that “‘image’ relates to the summation of the impressions that people have of a city.” McCarthy continues, outlining the difference between identity and image; “‘identity’ relates to a city’s history and circumstances, which imbue it with a degree of distinctiveness. In other words, the creation of a new or different city image may be sought. Thus image creation may underpin identity formation.”

Continuing with the idea that there exists a certain degree of overlap in how these concepts can be perceived; Papadopoulos (in Pike, 2011:26) recognises a cross-over between image and brand, and states that they, “can be considered as two sides of the same coin since place image deals primarily with the demand side of the place image equation, that is, with the effects of place images on buyers, and place branding deals with the supply side of the same equation, that is, with the management of these images. Both are interested in how place images affect buyers

and how they can be used constructively in marketing places...” De Jong (2011) emphasises the difference between place marketing and branding by suggesting that “place marketing is more important than place branding,” his rationale being that marketing contributes to outcomes such as future prosperity, and importantly, bridges the gap between supply and demand. Boisen (2011) elaborates on the difference between the two by suggesting that branding is mostly concerned with perception (the mind, image), whilst marketing is about choice, reality, action. Gibson and Davidson (2004:389) elaborate that marketing “seeks to redirect public policy away from services, towards various corporate activities, such as redevelopment schemes intended to ‘clean up’ deteriorated inner-city and industrial spaces, and place branding exercises aimed at attracting... investment capital and tourists.” Whilst Madsen (1992:633), adds of place marketing; “the place has a certain amount of resources (infrastructure, houses, castle, parks, people, museums, etc). It is only through an interpretation of these resources that a place-product... is arrived at.” Madsen (ibid) continues, “in this way a place marketing strategy consists of two elements. 1. Product development, i.e. improving the physical resources of the place; and 2. Promotion i.e. improving the place image. Thus the promotion of a place image becomes a matter of commodifying it through a rigorous selection from its many characteristics.” (Madsen, 1992:634).

Anholt (2009:49) offers a simplification of terms when he outlines the difference between promotion and branding. Promotion, he suggests, “is about selling the country.” However, he continues that unless this is underpinned by a brand strategy, there is little chance that the country as a whole will acquire what marketing professor Aaker (1996:102) called ‘brand equity.’” Anholt (2009) complicates the issue still further by bringing in the notion of public diplomacy - the idea that governments need to represent their countries to the foreign publics and not only to other governments. He elaborates that, “public diplomacy is now recognised as a vital component of nation branding. In fact the two terms are often used interchangeably, partly because the state department is in charge of marketing the nation (ibid, 2009:51).” However, referring back to Kotler’s (1993) description of place image, it would seem reasonable to suggest that public diplomacy can be considered part of the “large number of associations and pieces of information connected with a place.”

Korpela (1989:241), elaborates further on the concept of place identity, describing it as “a product of active environmental self-regulation influenced by the functional principles of self.” Whilst Proshansky et al describe place-identity as “a pot-pourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas and related feelings about specific physical settings as well as types of settings (1983, in Dixon and Durrheim, 2000:32).” Again, the notion of self and the individual is raised here. Hernandez et al (2007:310) add to this theme, noting that “place identity... has been defined as a component of personal identity, a process by which, through interaction with places, people describe themselves in terms of belonging to a specific place.” Whilst Cuba and Hummon (1993, in Pretty et al, 2003:276) sum up the concept neatly in terms of the relationship between self and place when they suggest that the sense of self “answers the ‘who am I?’ question by answering the ‘where am I?’ question.”

Moving forward, Julier (2005:885) suggests that the development of a place identity is “a process of appropriation and re-appropriation rather than invention.” Indicating that it can and does change over time. Govers and Go (2009:3) suggest that, in theory, place identity is perhaps more preferable to place branding; “instead of employing a one way push process of supply driven mass communication, borrowed from manufacturing, place identity affords interactive dynamics and shifts in power to networks of consumers, citizens and corporations – both large and small – whose role, presence in markets, but particularly their perspective on applying place branding methods and designs, can make a difference in order to deal with the complex potential conflict between continuity and change; a familiar problem that most countries and corporations are facing.” Lucarelli (2011) suggests that there is a profound difference between brand and brand-ing; arguing that place branding only takes place in the presence of a planned and official image/reputation management structure. Whereas the place brand is a spontaneous, natural entity that exists in the mind. The modus operandi of practitioners in the field, of course, being to construct the former to achieve a positive latter.

In addition to the issue of separating out and developing a clear understanding of the differences and cross-overs in terminology, theorists are now adding to the discussion with wider, more philosophical questions concerning the topic of place branding. Boisen (2011) asks ‘who are places competing with?’ Arguing that it is important to understand place branding outside the context of competition.

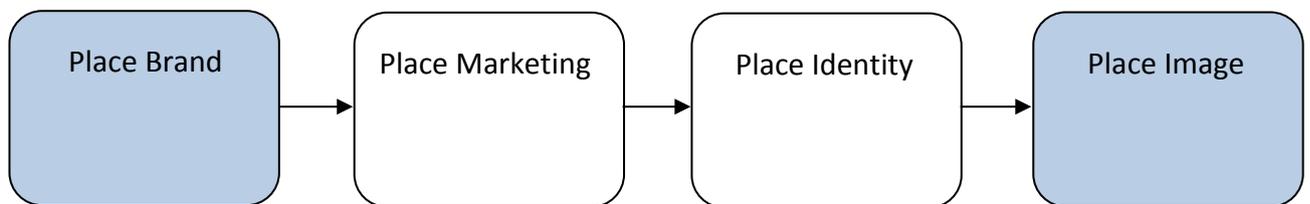
Kalandides (2012: online), raises the question of what we understand by the term place itself. Are we dealing with the real place or with perceptions of place? And could we call the former place identity and the latter place image? In order to clarify understanding, or rather a comprehension, of these terms for the purpose of this research; Table 1 presents a brief summary of key descriptions of place brand, place marketing, place identity, and place image.

**Table 1 – Clarifying terms**

<b>Place brand</b>	<b>Place marketing</b>	<b>Place identity</b>	<b>Place image</b>
“deals with supply side of the same equation” (Papadopoulos, in Pike, 2011:26)	“contributes to future prosperity and bridges the gap between supply and demand”( De Jong 2011)	“affords interactive dynamics and shifts in power to networks of consumers, citizens and corporations” (Govers and Go 2009:3)	“the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have of a place” (Kotler 1993:141)
“Mostly concerned with perception” (Boisen 2011)	“about choice, reality, action” (Boisen 2011)	“a product of active environmental self-regulation influenced by the functional principles of self “ (Korpela, 1989:241).	“deals primarily with the demand side” (Papadopoulos, in Pike, 2011:26)
“about developing a collective capacity for action and stakeholder engagement “ (Omholt (2013)	“about selling the country” (Anholt 2009:49)	“a `pot-pourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas and related feelings about specific physical settings as well as types of settings” (Proshansky et al, 1983, in Dixon and Durrheim 2000:32)	“relates to the summation of the impressions that people have of a city” (McCarthy, 2006:245).
“an evolving multi-dimensional service system.” (Brown 2011)	“seeks to redirect public policy away from services, towards various corporate activities, such as redevelopment schemes” (Gibson and Davidson (2004:389)	“a component of personal identity, a process by which, through interaction with places, people describe themselves in terms of belonging to a specific place” (Hernandez et al, 2007:310)	“constructed by the amount, source and objectivity of the available information” (Selby and Morgan, 1996:288)
“increase awareness, create a distinctive, credible, meaningful, attractive and memorable image which enhances customer satisfaction and loyalty” (Govers 2012)	in place marketing, the place has a certain amount of resources (infrastructure, houses, castle, parks, people, museums, etc). It is only through an interpretation of these resources that a place-product... is arrived at.” (Madsen, 1992:633).	“Answers the ‘who am I?’ question by answering the ‘where am I?’ question” (Cuba and Hummon, 1993, in Pretty et al, 2003:276).	“seen as vital to overcome people’s negative perceptions of cities” (Young and Lever, 1996:332).
“the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences.” (Dinnie 2008:15)		“a process of appropriation and re-appropriation rather than invention” (Julier, 2005: 885)	
“deliberate capture and accumulation of reputational value”(Anholt, 2005:51)			

From this, it is necessary to attempt to clarify these varying opinions and suggestions in order that an axiom for progression of the research can be adopted. As such, we can perceive the interaction of these activities/processes in a structured order, moving from the brand creation, what Papadopoulos (in Pike, 2011) termed the supply side of the equation, through to marketing of said brand, then passing through the influences of stakeholders and external factors including the concept of self, before ultimately the net result of the place image is formed; what Papadopoulos (ibid) refers to as the demand side of the equation. Figure 1 depicts this process:

**Figure 1 – Relationship between terms**



As such, we are perceiving the brand as a separate entity to the image. Whereas theorists such as Brown (2011) and Bridge and Watson (2010) view the brand as an inherently complex entity, the majority of theorists covered above seem to share a broad agreement, even if it is latent as opposed to manifest, that the brand is a relatively simple construct. As such we can surmise that the ‘huge amounts of data’ that must be ‘essentialised’, which serve to complicate the discussion (Kotler, 1993), are less concerned with the construct of brand, and rather are more concerned with the notion of identity formation, ultimately feeding into the image of place that people possess. This is a key observation in permitting the research to treat brands as constructs, as opposed to phenomena which cannot be easily analysed; characteristics of this nature we attribute to image. The axiom adopted dictates that place image as a concept is not knowable or describable in the same terms that brands can, and should, be. Much theory to date has made the apparent mistake of amalgamating the two as part of a single phenomenological concept; it is the suggestion of this research that this has led to the contestation and pervading lack of

clarity which characterises extant discourse. Therefore the separation of image and brand is a key step towards advancing our understanding of place branding.

### **2.3 Problems associated with the application of traditional branding practice to places**

Aside from issues relating to the ambiguity/inter-changeability of terms, increasingly there are question marks being raised over whether the use of traditional corporate/product branding techniques - when dealing with places - are adequate or worthwhile at all. Anholt (2004:125) suggests that, as people frequently and quite rightly point out, "a country is not a product and while there is a huge potential in the enlightened imaginative and responsible application of product marketing techniques to places it is certainly not the case that places may be dealt with as if they were soap powder." As Moilanen and Rainisto (2009:3) state, "these procedures are not directly applicable when you are branding complex and multidimensional entities such as countries, cities or tourists regions."

Indeed, Papadopoulos and Heslop (2002) question whether mass public citizenry rather than elite 'ownership' of place renders product/service branding principles inappropriate. Morgan et al (2002:4) suggest that places are too complex to include in branding discussions since they have too many stakeholders and too little management control, they have underdeveloped identities and, interestingly, are not perceived as brands by the general public. There is even a view as to whether, regardless of the methodology employed, a place brand is even possible to create. Lynch (1960:1) states, "the city is a construction in space, but one of vast scale, a thing perceived only in the course of long spans of time." It would therefore seem appropriate to suggest that promoting a place through the creation of a brand is a fool's errand. Lynch continues, "most often, our perception of the city is not sustained, but rather partial, fragmentary, mixed with other concerns. Nearly every sense is in operation, and the image is the composite of them all (ibid:2)." Indeed, something which feeds into this assumption quite neatly is the notion of place as anthropomorphic. Although theorists such as Kalandides (2012: online) have contested this line of thought, it is reasonable to suggest that a place and the thoughts that occur when we each think of a given place, comprises of so many aspects, assets, nuances, and opinions, both good and bad, that it can never be

encompassed into a single artificially created brand, much like a person. What is to one person may not be to another and, owing to this multifaceted make-up, it is quite possible that no two people share the exact same opinion on a single place, and therefore a place's brand is very much open to interpretation. Kearney and Bradley (2009, cited in Pike, 2011: 25) echo this concept by suggesting that "place cannot be separated from people." Govers and Go (2009:14) suggest that places "have personalities already moulded and constrained by history and preconceptions. They consist of a broad heterogeneous range of personalities that will cause confusion and are likely to resist being shoehorned into a homogenous mould."

As Lynch (1960) opines; places can also be described as polymorphous, and therefore to root a place in time through the creation of a brand would be an error, as even if, for arguments sake, the brand and associated paraphernalia did capture the place and all within it perfectly, the ever-changing nature of place would dictate that in time this brand would very soon be, in effect, defunct. And so would begin the creation of the next – temporary – brand, by its very nature rendering the artificial brand creation process a waste of time. This concept of temporality is taken forward by Anholt (2009) who argues that places are deeply rooted cultural phenomena that move in response to events and changes in the places themselves. The important message Anholt conveys is that communications are no substitute for policies, and that altering the image of a country or city requires something a little more substantial than simple promotional activity and nice logos, for example. Again, the inference here is that the place (nay the image) dictates the brand, and not vice-versa.

Indeed, these difficulties further support the proposal to look at place brands as separate to place image. The above discussion refers to place brands as if they are the places themselves – an inevitable by-product of the appliance of 'traditional' branding theory to place. This research suggests that this is not the case, and rather the place image is a product of the place itself, whereas the brand is in fact a constructed representation of this image. As if to legitimise this view to a greater extent; there are wider associated issues with place branding around contestation of ownership and target markets – perhaps issues which one could describe as being social or ethical (Brown, 2011). Mommaas (2002) suggests that place branding is often about creating an added value symbolic of economic exploitation and cultural

manipulation. Anholt (2004:13) suggests that place branding practitioners are "often accused of rewriting history, social engineering, cultural pollution, exploitation, condescension, neo-imperialism." However he tempers this by counter-arguing that "countries have of course been branding themselves systematically and deliberately for many centuries (ibid)." Dinnie (2011) adds to the mix an even wider set of opposing factors, such as, "political challenges – political turf wars, hostile media reaction, public suspicion and cynicism, stakeholder participation, short-termism, and lack of impact measurement." Kotler et al (1993, cited in Zenker and Beckmann, 2013) divide place branding target groups into three target market segments: 1. Visitors, 2. Residents and workers, and 3. Business and industry. They argue that marketers often focus on establishing the city as a singular, reductive brand, disregarding that perception and knowledge of a city differs dramatically between stakeholders/potential consumers of said brand. They continue that "place branding should emphasize much more the perceptions of the different target groups and develop strategies for advanced place brand management (ibid: 6)." Therkelsen and Hacker (in Pike 2011) note that both scholarly and more applied consultancy research has approached the field of place branding from a marketing angle, and limited attention has been given to internal stakeholder relations and the processes behind place branding initiatives. Braun et al (2013) also suggest that residents are largely neglected by place branding practice and their priorities are often misunderstood, even though they are not passive beneficiaries but are active partners and co-producers of public goods, services and policies. Anholt (2005:160) echoes this sentiment when he suggests that the vision and the strategy need to be broadly shared by the place at large, "if the strategy is properly and fully shared it can be a source of renewed purpose and even of common identity for the whole country [nay place.] Otherwise, it's virtually impossible that any change will occur." Weglarska (2011), serves to validate this theory when she states that her locality employs "branding which is not representative of our region, chosen by marketers." Dinnie (2008:15) anchors this theory quite nicely when he suggests that "nations do not belong to brand managers or corporations; indeed, if they belong to anyone, it is to the nations entire citizenry."

In Dinnie's (ibid) opinion, "just as the state belongs to the people, not the government, the brand belongs to the consumers, not the company." As such,

conflict arises when places are promoted in such a way as to create discontent amongst those who consider themselves to be stakeholders of said place. As Young and Lever (1996:334) suggest, “what is significant is that they (the public) have opinions on how the city should be promoted and that they consume these expensively produced images in a way which demonstrates considerable diversity and which therefore questions the efficacy of the promoted image.” Indeed, by way of a warning, Anholt (2004:12) suggests that “marketing teaches that people can't be deceived for long. They reject your offering when they are disappointed; and you can't make people buy a bad product more than once.” Therefore it would seem that the ‘product’ must match up to the ‘promise’ and that any deviation from this will be found out. Adding further to the difficulty of branding a place, place branding has even been described as a “consumer oriented concept” (Padgett and Allen, 1997:50). The suggestion being that it is consumed and created simultaneously, and therefore it is very difficult, nay impossible, to create a false brand. Govers (2012) also raises questions about the decision-making processes at the local level, as it needs to be determined where and how place identity should be positioned, and who should be responsible for its creation. Anholt (2005:164) outlines the necessity to ‘live the brand’, arguing that “the general population as well as the private and public sectors need to agree with, subscribe to and enact the country's vision of what it is, what it stands for and where it's going. At least, they need to do this as far as it's possible in a vigorous democracy.” It is therefore clear that brands which are deemed unrepresentative cause contestation and lead to alienation and dissatisfaction amongst key stakeholder groups. Whilst pleasing everyone is always unlikely, the outcome that seems far more likely is that place brands which do not represent places in an authentic manner please no-one – other than their creators, of course. As such, again using the suggestion that brand and image must be considered as separate entities, there is a requirement to match closely the brand (construct) with the image (reality).

What is sure is that place branding as a concept, in terms of how it has been widely perceived and how it has been executed, is becoming increasingly vulnerable when subjected to scrutiny. Yet as already mentioned, despite the withdrawals highlighted, the practice of ‘artificial’ place brand creation is booming, with place marketers acting in the belief that their place brand is a controllable and fully manageable

communication tool (Zenker, 2011:40), “creating place brands through over-simplification (i.e. reduction of one trait), stereotyping (amplification of one or more traits) and labelling, (where a place is deemed to be of a certain nature), Shields (1991:84).” However, it is clear that many commentators acknowledge that place branding, in some form or permutation, is a valid pursuit - exemplified in no small part by the proliferation of activity in the area. Yet, in short, given the brief discussion above; regardless of the ubiquitous nature of place branding, the practices currently being employed appear to be flawed, yet continue to be universally popular.

Randall (2000:10), returning to ‘traditional’ branding practice momentarily; suggests that “brands are so fundamentally important to the survival and success of many firms that we need to understand them in all their subtleties and complexities so that we can manage them correctly... Unless we can tease out the true meaning of a brand, we cannot hope to identify and meet these challenges.” The proposed distinction between brand and image, the former as a construct, the latter which we can refer to (loosely) as reality; aids clarity of understanding to a great extent. If we accept that the image is the product of the physical place combined with all of the contributing factors Kotler (1993) references, then we effectively simplify the brand to be nothing more than the constructed representation of this image. The question, therefore, is that if we understand the place brand as the representation of place image, how can the place image be legitimately and consistently perceived by those charged with creating place brands, in a manner that permits it, or at least certain elements of it, to be represented by the place brand in an authentic and representative manner? As such avoiding the shortfalls which Zenker (2011) and Shields (1991) warn against. In order to begin to comprehend this scenario, and in turn begin to develop an original comparative empirical methodology for understanding place branding; attention will now turn to delving deeper into the complexities of place brands, and how these brands are created.

#### **2.4 Can a truly representative place brand really be achieved?**

According to Govers and Go (2009), a country branding programme will typically begin with the responsible (legitimacy issues aside) government or agents producing lists of their place’s achievements and natural advantages: the most distinguished sons and daughters, the role the place has played in local/national or

even World events, any major historical significance, architecture and natural beauty, regional cuisine, language and folklore. Indeed, Kotler (2000:4) lists the various levels of meaning a brand could possess: "Attributes, Benefits, Values, Culture, Personality; and the user (consumer)." The idea is that these elements are distilled into a brand, and thus the place is subsequently marketed to a waiting world. Brown (2011) disputes that this methodology can be a success, warning "not to compress the brand, it doesn't work." However, we must accept that branding by its very nature involves the compression of attributes into a consolidated/easily memorable format. So, what is 'good practice' when it comes to place branding? Does it exist? Stakeholder engagement is often touted as a key contributor to any credible branding effort. Zenker (2011) suggests that citizens wish for more participation and want their rights to be respected. He further hypothesises that the greater the depth of participation, the higher the level of satisfaction, commitment and trust people will have with their place. This opinion is shared by Hernandez-Garcia (2013) who introduces the concept of 'social urbanism' as a means of increasing the representational authenticity of places through the inclusion in branding material of place aspects which are not always 'desirable' and do not fit in with the sparkling narrative that is more often than not the norm – yet can add favourably to such narrative by providing an authenticity. Indeed, Pajaanen and Andersson (2011) suggest that any top-down approach to place branding should be informed by bottom-up information flows, whilst Bainchini and Ghilardi (2007) believe that places that stay true to their original identity are more successful. As Hajer (2003:61) opines, "as many now articulate, the challenge is to develop relations between the spheres of civil society, the economy and the state which are less hierarchical and less paternalist, which are sensitive to the needs and aspirations of diverse groups (and especially those who tend to get marginalised) and which have a capacity to learn from diverse knowledge resources." Thus further enforcing the idea that 'authentic' brands which form almost organically, rooted in the place itself, ensuring an upward flow of information, bottom-up if you will; would appear to be preferable to brands formed as a result of any enforced top-down methodology.

What seems to be clear, is that if place branding is to have the desired effect, there must be a common cause and consensus among stakeholders and this, ultimately, is best derived by ensuring that the brands reflect the given place in an authentic

fashion, representing the place as it exists in reality – this research suggests that this can be achieved as a result of utilising attributes which the given place possesses. Indeed, this would seem to satisfy to a degree the requirement to ensure that the brand is being constructed from the bottom-up, and is as such as authentic as possible. As a result, the long process of consulting, co-opting, and involving stakeholders, followed by distilling from their input the essence of a place's personality which, according to Polunin (2002:3) is probably the toughest part of the place branding exercise as it stands, is avoided. Yet, the authenticity that would appear to be required is still achieved.

Indeed, this idea of authenticity gleaned from the place itself appears to be a pervading factor when it comes to 'successful' place brands. Gummesson (2008:319) cites Shah et al (2006) who bring in the concept of customer centricity in organisations, a concept which could be likened to stakeholder engagement in that any success is dependent on the interests of multiple parties being secured. This leads to what Shah et al describe as balanced centricity—all stakeholders have the right to satisfaction of needs and wants. As Anholt (2004) puts it, in today's global marketplace, where brands and products can come from literally anywhere, their 'rootedness' will surely become more and more important to consumers in their constant search for brands with trustworthiness, character and distinctiveness. This research suggests that it would appear the incorporation of place attributes is a means of achieving this. However, in the interest of balance, it is also worth noting that whilst it may appear that there are better and worse methodologies for branding places, there may not necessarily be a single correct way. Indeed, Kavartzis (2012) takes an interesting stance by voicing a concern that there seems to be a search for a *single* methodology – a holy grail for place brands, if you will. This is echoed by Dinnie (2008) who argues that although some things are uncertain, and that the perception vs reality conundrum in all likelihood cannot be solved, this is no excuse to not keep on trying. Anholt (2004:117), suggests "it takes enormous patience and wisdom to broadcast a few simple perceptions about a place, and help them to take hold on public consciousness." In addition, "at times, each individual 'branding' action, and its effect on the whole world's perceptions of the country, may seem heartbreakingly tiny, hardly even worth doing, a mere drop in the ocean (ibid, p.119)." However, despite the valid points Kavartzis and Anholt make, it should not

diminish efforts to seek a better way for places to create brands for themselves. Overall, it seems that although the process of branding is difficult, and a single 'best practice' methodology may not exist; this should not deter places from trying to develop 'good practice'. This research suggests that the separation of brand and image, and the construction of the former employing attributes which ensure requisite authenticity, is a means of taking a step towards this 'good practice.'

## **2.5 Where is the sense of place? Incorporating attributes of place into place branding**

So, if a place brand is to be successful, we have seen throughout the discourse that identity, sense of place, and local distinctiveness all contribute to what we have suggested can be considered the image of a place; which the brand should seek to match as closely as possible. As Castells (1996:476) argues, "in the network society image making is power making, because the question that many in this increasingly virtual and globalised world are asking is, where is the sense of place?" Indeed, as Anholt suggests (2004:125), perhaps the first rule of branding a country is to be acutely conscious of the limits of what one can and should achieve by it, "It is safest to treat brand as nothing more than a metaphor for a country: many of the tricks and techniques of product marketing, as we have seen, provide useful parallels for how governments can get their messages across." However, he suggests that "once you start believing that your country (or your political party, for that matter) really is nothing more than a product which needs to be targeted at a demographic, you are heading for trouble." As exemplified by Anholt, the appliance of authenticity at every juncture is a key aspect of any attempt to brand a place. By creating an attachment between the people and their country; the most sincere, energetic and effective ambassadors that any government could wish for can be created; "You don't have to pay them; they do it for love (2005:170)." Murray (2001:10) supports the idea that authenticity is key by acknowledging that whilst "the personality of a place is complex, hard to pin down and, by its very nature constantly shifting and evolving. This does not mean that we can... try to create a fictitious one."

As a means of achieving the requisite 'authenticity' in the brand, Murray (2001) believes that a key factor in any place branding success is the promotion of a place's positive aspects/vitality – the attributes the place has which can be utilised to

improve its image. Despite this, Murray (2001:7) suggests that a worrying trend in place branding activity is to represent places as “culturally homogenous (10.2% of references covered), and not to acknowledge and recognise diversity (only 3.2% of references covered), which in turn, as we have seen, can alienate local audiences, potentially destroying any concept of brand equity.” According to Murray (2001:7), “the very approach that is making our towns, cities and regions successful – the application of creativity, the development of cultural vitality, the celebration of difference – is severely lacking in the practice and literature being used to promote places.” Murray (ibid) believes that the adoption of a planning approach to how places are branded and promoted is the route to favourable results – something which this research is building towards.

## **2.6 Defining attributes in the context of place**

It would seem appropriate at this point to discuss what we mean by attributes in the context of place. We can define the attributes of a place as “the panoply of resources that show that a place is unique and distinctive (Landry, 2000:7).” Bianchini and Ghilardi (2007) suggest that place branding and marketing should be more ‘cultured’, knowledgeable and critically aware of traditions of expression by being rooted in research on the history, on the socio-economic realities, on the internal and external image, and on the life and representations of a particular locality. Indeed, discussion of place attributes can be a reference to as diverse a range of subject matter as arts, architecture, design, history (Kunzmann, 2004), through to heritage (Anholt, 2006), relative events, and cultural facilities. Likewise, also included is entertainment facilities/provision (Kunzmann, 2004). Meanwhile, Scaramanga (2012) includes cultural goods, products of cultural industries, and heritage as contributing to place. Essentially – referring back to the assertion that brand and image should be perceived separately - when we are discussing attributes, we are discussing everything connected to place, an abbreviation for anything that contributes to what that place is, and as such everything that contributes to the formation of the image of a place that people form.

Bianchini and Ghilardi (2007) introduce a listing of what the resources of a place, nay the attributes, encompass: arts and media activities and institutions; the cultures of youth, ethnic minorities and other communities of interest, including local festivals

and other celebratory events; the tangible and intangible heritage, including archaeology, gastronomy, local history, dialects and rituals; the local “image bank”; the natural and built environment, including public and open spaces; the diversity and quality of places where people socialise, including street markets, bars, clubs, cafes and restaurants; and local milieu and institutions for intellectual and scientific innovation, including universities and private sector research centres; and the repertoire of local products and skills in the crafts, manufacturing and services. Zenker and Beckmann (2013), have contributed work in a similar vein, conducting research into perceptions of the city of Hamburg, Germany, amongst different groups of residents, namely the ‘creative class’ and ‘students’, in order to identify the differences in their associations with their city. The distinction between the two groups, for the purposes of this study, is secondary to the overall collection of results themselves, which serve to highlight what we can reasonably interpret to be attributes of the city (both tangible and intangible). Amongst the findings were: the harbour, the waterfront, reserved people, multi-culturalism, red light district, party district, the river, nature, diverse, open and tolerant, bars and restaurants, the University, likeable and helpful people, theatre, the castle, freedom, music events, and bad weather. All aspects that we can assume combine to create/contribute to the desired image of Hamburg, and therefore all attributes that could be appropriated in the creation of a Hamburg brand.

Taking forward the idea of breaking places down into their constituent parts; further commentators have committed similar work into encapsulating the themes of place branding material into categories. Murray (2002) developed the following list of place attributes: Local geography/natural environment; Local people/friendly; Local people/other references; Local culture/diversity; Local culture/homogeneity; Local occupations/economy; The present; The past/heritage; Leisure; Uniqueness/non-specific; Uniqueness/specific. Jacobsen (2012) suggests that Quality, Promotion; Impression; Awareness; Confidence; Heritage; Image; Personality; Reputation – are all valid aspects of place which can legitimately feed into place branding efforts. Jacobsen perceives these attributes as yielding benefits including function; distinction; prestige; and identity.

Returning briefly to corporate/product branding theory, Kotler (2010:1) breaks down the idea of brand into branding ‘ingredients’, suggesting that “the advantages of a

strong and attractive brand may long be taken for granted in consumer goods, but a recent phenomenon has emerged; that of branding the ingredients contained in the end product... After all, what makes up the end product but the sum of its ingredients?" Kotler continues and poses the question, "Why not advertise and use to advantage the very things that contribute to the desirable end result?" Kotler (2010:4) discusses further benefits, amongst them reasoning relating to differentiation and sustainable value for the consumer, "the central importance of the ingredient to the final product (i.e. it would not be the same without it)." He states that "the downstream company (which we can appropriate to refer to the place brand), supports the activity of the ingredient/component manufacturer (i.e. the place's attribute or 'ingredient') as they feed the ultimate brand... the level of ingredient influence on the ultimate brand can be tailored to meet shifting demands and tastes." When this theory is applied to places and place brands, we can immediately see that there is a fit there in terms of goals – both in terms of the initial brand creation and the flexibility to adapt it at a later stage. Therefore, when all of the above is taken into consideration, it would seem that a reasonable approach to 'good practice' place branding would be to treat a place's attributes as a collection of potential brand 'ingredients,' it is from this set of ingredients that the place brand can be constructed.

What analysis of the research literature thus far has displayed, is that place branding literature is conceptually heavy and driven to a large extent by theory. Whilst some research has attempted to view place brands from a practical viewpoint, this has largely taken the case study approach, and as such the scope of said studies is by its very nature limited. As Lucarelli and Berg (2011:14) have suggested, "it could either be argued that the empirical foundation of the domain is largely based on anecdotic (sic) evidence with few comparative studies and even fewer studies attempting to measure the impact of city branding efforts." As such there appears to be a clear gap for research which takes an empirical approach to analysis of place branding in practice, an approach which necessitates the cross-referencing of different brands in order to draw measurable results and inferences concerning how said brands are being created, and based on this, whether the brands can be classified accordingly.

## 2.7 Manageability of place attributes

We have seen that incorporation of a place's attributes into any branding attempt can be reasonably viewed as good practice. An interesting distinction that can also be drawn is between attributes that are more manageable, as opposed to those that are less manageable. We can look at the practice of town centre management as a means of underpinning this theory. Town centre management can be defined as, "a co-ordinated response – of public and private sectors – through which the town centre 'product' can be managed and developed" (Paddison, 2003:618). Warnaby et al (1998:18) describe town centre management as, "the search for competitive advantage through the maintenance/strategic development of both public and private areas and interests within town centres." As Pal and Sanders (1997:71) suggest, town centre management has grown in influence and remit to the extent that, "TCM is now seen by government as a central plank in maintaining the vitality and viability of town centres." Business improvement districts (BIDs) or business improvement areas (BIAs), have proliferated to a great extent over recent decades and can be viewed as a natural progression from TCM. BIDs/BIAs can be broadly defined as, "companies permitted to levy a tax on businesses and property owners within a specific urban boundary in order that the services in that area may be improved" (Hogg et al, 2003:467). Hernandez and Jones (2005:795), define the mandate of BIDs/BIAs as, "...twofold: to improve, beautify and maintain public lands and buildings... beyond that which is provided by the municipality at large; and... to promote the area as a business and shopping area." Harris et al (2013:105) adds that BIDs/BIAs are, "multidimensional constructs embodied in an eclectic range of methods, tools and techniques." Hernandez and Jones (ibid:795) continue to list the five key activities of BIDs/BIAs; marketing, business recruitment, streetscape improvement, seasonal decorations, and special events. As such, we can see that these aspects of place are, by nature, manageable to a greater or lesser degree. The development through TCM and into BIDs/BIAs could reasonably be attributed to a need for a greater level of buy-in in terms of both stakeholder engagement and funding. Indeed, Jones et al (2003) have opined that the development of BIDs/BIAs, specifically within the UK, is partly in response to TCM's inability to attract investment from private sector stakeholders, such as retailers for example. As such, BID legislation remedies this deficiency by imposing mandatory levies on all

stakeholders who stand to benefit from its implementation and activity, thus creating a “framework both for stronger partnerships as well as a formal structure for more widespread financial contributions from the private sector” (Jones et al, 2003:50).

Whilst town centre management as a term refers to a specific type of place, namely towns, and similarly BIDs/BIAs connote urban areas which we can reasonably assume to be largely town/city based; we have seen the proliferation of ‘traditional’ TCM/BID/BIA activity evolve and grow over time to include many types of place. Indeed, as Parker (2008:5) suggests, this management of place now incorporates, “town and city centre management and marketing, the management of business improvement districts and trade improvement zones, those involved in regeneration, community development and planning, neighbourhood renewal, urban revitalization and even national park management.”

Indeed, such is the span of activity and range of places covered that the term ‘place management’ has been coined as an overarching term (Parker, 2008:6). However, regardless of the label attached to it, this management of place is limited to an extent by the aspects of place that can be effectively managed. Whereas town centre management began as a means of fulfilling simple functions such as “providing hanging flower baskets, clearing graffiti, formulating promotional campaigns.” What we now see, as exemplified by the development of BIDs/BIAs, is a more strategic approach to management of place in the wider context. “Gathering and sharing market information, enabling stakeholders to work together in the strategic planning process, setting up formal and informal communication and social networks between partners, training the town’s stakeholder employees to implement the regeneration strategy and maintain a marketing orientation, and evaluating success, in order to both motivate all involved and to assess progress” (Whyatt, 2004:352). So, all of the aspects that can be controlled or affected through management, must by their very definition be manageable – at least to an extent.

## 2.8 Thick and Thin Places

Whilst the review of the literature thus far has provided a solid theoretical underpinning for the primary research; an additional consideration that can and should be considered is the notion of places as being either thick or thin. The research to this point has outlined a requirement for the place brand to be created, and as such viewed, as comprising of attributes of the given place which it is representing – attributes that differ in level of manageability - it would seem a reasonable suggestion that as well as the nature of the attributes employed, the range and breadth of said attributes should also be taken into consideration.

Duff (2010:881) describes thick places as being “contrived in the imbrications of affect, habit, and practice, presenting opportunities for personal enrichment and a deepening of affective experience.” Duff elaborates, “thick places enhance one's sense of meaning and belonging, forging a series of affective and experiential connections in place.” In contrast, “thin places... lack the `rigor and substance of thickly lived places’. They offer nothing to hold the self in place, and no memorable or resonant command of placial experience.” The theory of thick and thin places was derived by Edward Casey (2001:684) who states that “the relationship between self and place is not just one of reciprocal influence (that much any ecologically sensitive account would maintain) but also, more radically, of constitutive co-ingredience: each is essential to the being of the other.” In essence, and referencing the review of place attributes above, a thick place can be considered to be in possession of a greater range of attributes than a thin place. Whilst Casey’s concept is primarily concerned with the theoretical relationship between the self and place, and how they interact with one another to a fulfilling or limiting extent; Casey “fails to provide a clear sense of how thick (and thin) places might be identified (Duff, 2010:881).” Therefore it seems reasonable that the loose concept of thick and thin places can be appropriated for the purposes of this research when considering place attributes, and is as such a useful addition to theory regarding these place attributes, and subsequently how place brands are constructed. If we take Casey’s concept of thick places as providing a more enriching experience, whilst thin places do not – we can opine that places with a greater range of attributes could be considered, or at least termed, ‘thick’, whilst those with a less diverse range of attributes can be considered ‘thin’. Despite this, one must be conscious that one person’s thick place may be

another's thin place, and vice versa, as such we must be conscious of the limitations of the applicability of such theory.

So, based on analysis of the extant research, it would seem reasonable to suggest that place brands can be broken down into the constituent attributes used to create said brand. It would also seem reasonable to suggest that based on this constitution, place brands could be classified into distinct groups. In order to facilitate this deconstruction and classification of place brands, attention will now turn to the theoretical framework which can be used to achieve this.

## CHAPTER 3

### Formation of the framework for analysis

**Objective 1** – Synthesise extant literature in order to produce a theoretical framework on which to build an empirical methodology

**Objective 2** – Develop, based on the extant literature, a meronomy that facilitates the deconstruction of place brands based on the constitution of attributes/ingredients employed.

**Objective 3** – Expand the meronomy to include the level of manageability of each group of attributes/ingredients featured

**Objective 4** – Conduct a content analysis of ten place brands, using the meronomy as the framework for analysis, in order to ascertain their constitution

**Objective 5** – Analyse each brand based on the constitution of attributes/ingredients employed. This will include analysis of the manageability of said attributes/ingredients as well as the range utilised.

**Objective 6** – To establish, based on completion of objectives 1-5; an initial taxonomy for the classification of place brands

**Objective 7** - Synthesise the extant literature and the primary empirical research (based on completion of objectives 1-6) to draw conclusions

### **3.0 Development of the framework for analysis**

The literature review has provided a solid theoretical base for the development of a framework for the analysis of place brands. The extant research and theory will now be employed to inform the creation of a theoretical framework which will facilitate the deconstruction and classification of place brands in a robust, systematic manner. This framework will take the form of a meronymy, which will incorporate place attributes, as well as the perceived level of manageability of these attributes, in order to draw valid inferences.

#### **3.1 Classifying place brands: Taxonomies and meronomies**

Bailey (1994:1) describes classification as “the ordering of entities in groups or classes on the basis of their similarity. Statistically speaking we seek to minimise within-group variance, while maximising between group-variance.” As such we are seeking to organise the entities into groups, with each group being as different as possible from the other groups, while the content of each individual group is as similar as possible. As Bailey (ibid) elaborates, “without classification, there could be no advanced conceptualisation, reasoning, language, data analysis or, that matter, social science research.” Previous research has been committed to classifying places, such as Davies and Bennison’s (1978) study which offered a method for the classification of shopping streets based on defined characteristics. Therefore, it stands to reason that classification of place can be reasonably extended to take in place brands, this research takes forward this suggestion, and will seek to create a classification tool setting out different types of brand.

In order to classify entities, in our case ‘brands’ correctly, there are two main tools that can be utilised; the typology and the taxonomy. The key differences between the two are set out in Table 2, which has been adapted from work by Martin-Pena and Diaz-Garrido, (2008:202), which we can reasonably appropriate for application to place brands.

**Table 2 – Key characteristics of typologies and taxonomies**

	<b>Typologies</b>	<b>Taxonomies</b>
<b>Definition</b>	Ideal types.	Classifications of real brands in representative and mutually exclusive groups.
<b>Objective</b>	To match one of the ideal types theoretically proposed to obtain better results.	To obtain stable groups by using several techniques and data samples.
<b>Key features</b>	Provide generic theories for all types and theories for each type. Specify factors that make up theoretical basis.	Right choice of classification variables. Not influenced by techniques or data samples. Capacity to generate knowledge.
<b>Result of procedure</b>	Types formed before allocating brands to each class. Brands are classified according to previous theory rather than on basis of empirical study.	Taxonomies emerge from empirical procedures used to describe groups of brands on basis of degree of similarity between variables or characteristics.

Source: Adapted from Bozarth and McDermott, in Martin-Pena & Diaz-Garrido, (2008)

Based on these descriptions, the taxonomy is the chosen classification tool which will be utilised to classify the place brands. Where typologies may deal with ‘ideal’ classifications, for the purpose of the primary research we will be viewing place brands as ‘real’ in that we will examine the brands as created, controllable entities. The brands’ content will be analysed empirically in order to facilitate classification based on the degree of similarity/difference in their constitution, and therefore a typology – where types are formed based on existing theory as opposed to empirical study, is not an appropriate instrument.

Whereas taxonomies are a means of classifying, another means of grouping entities is through the use of a meronymy. Research utilising this method of studying part-whole relationships is limited to the point that a simple search of Emerald Group Publishing’s database yields no results across any format of publication. In contrast to a taxonomy, a meronymy does not classify entities, rather it facilitates, as described by Dictionary.Senagent (online: no date), “a partial ordering of concept types by the part-whole relation.” The constituent parts of the meronymy are termed meronyms, therefore for the purpose of creating the meronymy, the attributes identified through the research can effectively make up the meronyms. It is the relative distribution of these attributes that will facilitate the identification of the

constitution of the brands, and in turn the classification of the brands in the initial taxonomy.

### 3.2 Towards a taxonomy of place brands – a meronymy of place attributes

In order to produce the initial taxonomy, the range of attributes which have been offered by theorists must be taken into account. We can legitimately distil these into ten key attributes: The arts, architecture, economy, local governance, leisure, geography, heritage, weather, history, and people. Table 3 below provides a list of these place attributes, together with associated references, which we can reasonably describe collectively as comprising the complete theoretical image of a given place;

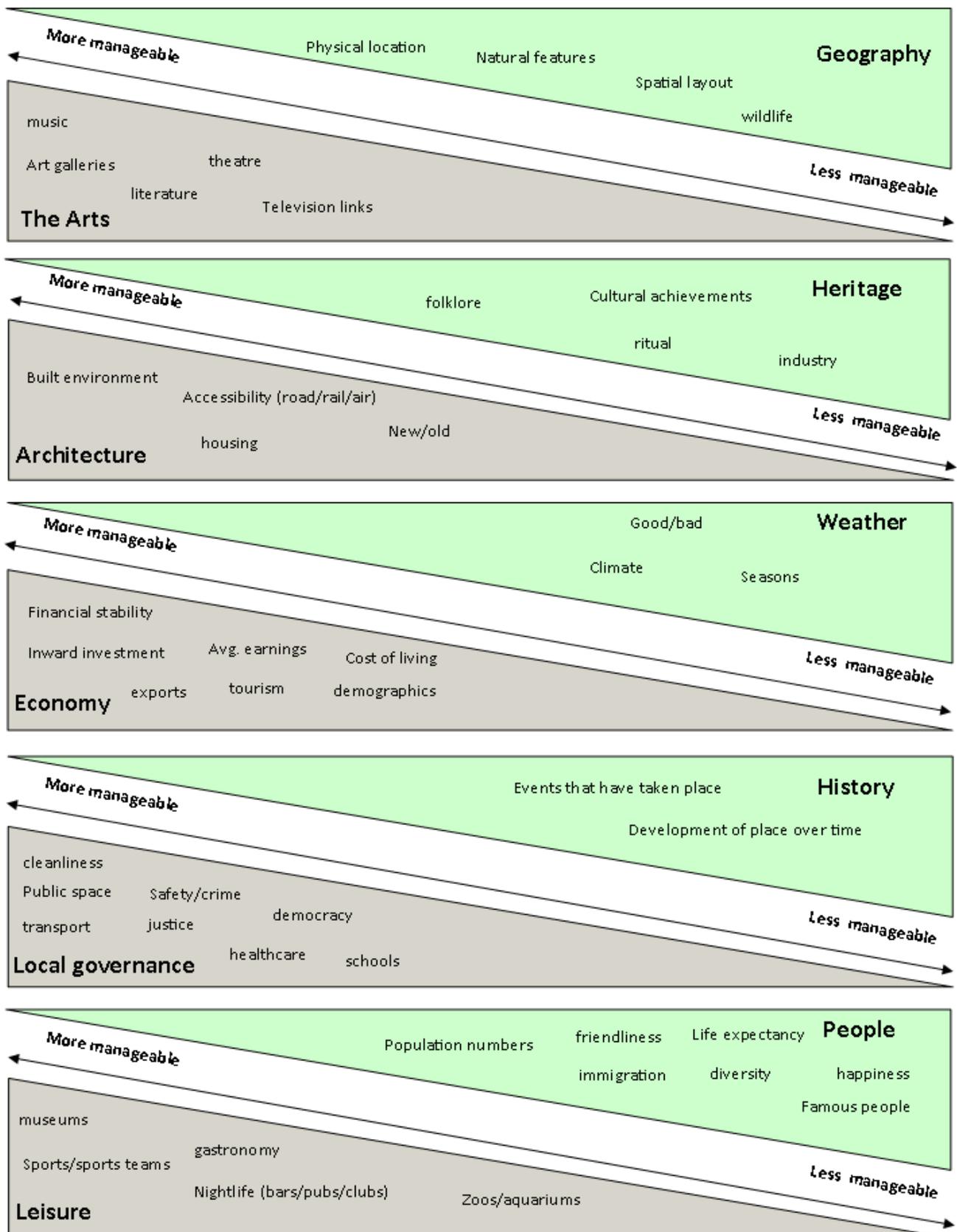
**Table 3 – identified place attributes and associated references**

	Attribute	Reference
More manageable attributes	The Arts	Kunzmann (2004), Bianchini (2004)
	Architecture	Zenker and Beckmann (2013)
	Economy	Zenker and Beckmann (2013), Murray (2002)
	Local governance	Bianchini (2004)
	Leisure	Kunzmann (2004), Bianchini (2004), Zenker and Beckmann (2013), Murray (2002)
Less manageable attributes	Geography	Bianchini (2004), Zenker and Beckmann (2013), Murray (2002)
	Heritage	Anholt (2007), Scaramanga (2012), Jabobsen (2012)
	Weather	Zenker and Beckmann (2013)
	History	Kunzmann (2004)
	People	Zenker and Beckmann (2013)

This set of attributes can be incorporated into a meronymy which sets out the attributes as meronyms, whilst also illustrating their perceived level of manageability. Figure 2 represents the meronymy. For clarity, and in order to facilitate the content analysis; within each of the ten key meronyms, additional sub-meronyms have been identified and included. This will assist with the accuracy and reliability of the allocation of attribute to meronym group.

Figure 2 – Meronomy of place attributes

## Attributes of Place—a Meronomy



This meronymy incorporates all of the attributes of place which have been drawn from the review of the literature. Again, collectively, we can surmise that these attributes comprise the image of the place. Whilst the meronymy doesn't take into account issues such as contestation of ownership, what it does is form the basis, or blueprint, for a place brand which is authentic in nature, thereby bypassing in part some of the issues which spawn from the creation of brands which do not resonate with certain stakeholder groups. A key feature of the taxonomy is the split between natural, inherent 'less manageable' attributes, and created, man-made 'more manageable' attributes – which in theory any place can recreate. It is important to observe that for the avoidance of contention, each attribute has been positioned in a continuum format so as to advocate that the manageability may be open to interpretation, however one could reasonably assume that certain attributes, such as weather, would fall under the less manageable category, whereas attributes such as leisure activity would be more manageable. The meronyms are positioned accordingly in the meronymy. This separation of more manageable and less manageable attributes will assist in the research.

### **3.3 Summary of the literature review (*encompassing chapters 2 and 3*)**

An important outcome of the literature review, and a key step towards forming the empirical methodology employed, is the clarification of some of the terms pertinent to place branding theory. A particularly important aspect of this clarification is the separation and distinction between place brand – as a created, controllable construct – and place image – as pertaining to perception of place in reality, shaped and affected by myriad contributing factors. By offering this as a valid theoretical basis for progression of the research; it would seem a legitimate hypothesis that place brands can be analysed and deconstructed as created, controllable constructs, unencumbered by the vast array of associations and pieces of information, often subject to contestation, which are more adequately associated with place image. In order to facilitate deconstruction of the place brands, and using knowledge derived from the review of extant literature; the meronymy has been formed which sets out potential meronyms (constituent parts) which can contribute to the formation of a place brand, and the perceived level of manageability of these meronyms.

In order to test this meronymy in practice; this study will seek to analyse the content of Greater Manchester's 'place brand architecture' by categorising the attributes gleaned from the websites used to promote the ten metropolitan boroughs in the metropolitan county. The theoretical meronymy above will be used as the basis for this research. The results will then be compared across the boroughs covered, in order to produce a quantitative evidence base on which to draw conclusions and create an initial taxonomy for classification of the brands. These websites are aimed at generating visitor numbers and portraying the respective places in a positive light, something which we can reasonably assume as being representative of their desired place brand. In essence, the research will seek to critique the promotional or communications aspects of product/services branding, in the context of place, with the overarching aim being to display, albeit on a relatively small scale, how place brands are being created, and to what extent they can be classified based on their constitution.

As the review of extant literature attests; whilst much research has approached the subject of place branding from a theoretical or conceptual perspective; there have been very few comparative empirical studies dedicated to the subject matter, particularly in relation to how place brands are being created in practice and how said brands can be classified on this basis. This thesis seeks to assist in filling the gap in knowledge, and to this end, the empirical methodology for the deconstruction of place brands which has been devised based on extant research, will now be tested.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

**Objective 1** – Synthesise extant literature in order to produce a theoretical framework on which to build an empirical methodology

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**Objective 7** - Synthesise the extant literature and the primary empirical research (based on completion of objectives 1-6) to draw conclusions

## **4.0 Developing the methodology**

The literature review has looked at what place branding is, how it has grown to become almost omnipresent for places of all sizes, and has attempted to address the myriad issues that arise when applying traditional branding techniques to places. By reviewing extant literature and building a legitimate argument for what can be considered good practice, we have created a meronymy which provides a basis for assessing how place brands are built, in terms of the place attributes (nay meronyms) that it draws from. This meronymy will now form the basis of the primary research, which will attempt to create a taxonomy of place brands, based on the attributes employed. In essence, whilst the place brand and its relation to the actual place – which we have necessarily termed the image - has been discussed, the primary research will take a firm focus on the former of these two aspects. We have seen that it is not uncommon for a place's brand to bear little relevance to the place it purports to be representing, and we have endeavoured, through analysis of the literature, to examine how this shortcoming can be mitigated through employment of attributes derived from the place itself. Whilst the primary research will look at the distribution of said attributes within the brand, we will not be commenting on whether these are truly representative portrayals of the place in question. Instead we will be examining the constitution of the brand, rather than the place. Therefore, the authenticity of the brands under analysis is not a consideration for the research, the sole interest of the research will lie in the way these brands are being built, and whether this dictates that they can be classified based on their constitution, or whether the brands are too similar to be legitimately classified.

### **4.1 Research perspective - epistemology**

Although the research paradigm to be used in the primary research will be essentially positivist in nature – with the intention of providing 'law-like generalisations working with an observable social reality' (Remenyi et al, 1998); the subject matter dictates that there will be deviations from this principle. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) suggest that it is more appropriate for the researcher in any study to think of the philosophy adopted as a continuum rather than opposite positions, and this will be appropriate in this study; a linear single philosophy approach is not appropriate. Whilst the underlying epistemological stance of the research is very

much of a subjectivist ontology – the premise being that a place image is produced through myriad means, including the physical and mental interaction between places and people, and it is therefore continually altering as a result (Saunders et al. 2009:110-111); for the purpose of the primary research, it is more appropriate to adopt an objectivist point of view. This is because the research is being conducted from the position that places' brands are something that it 'has', as opposed to the reality that the brand, or in terms more in line with the review of extant literature, the image, is something that places 'are.'

Indeed, viewing places' brands as something it 'has' is in line with the distinction that we have drawn based on the review of extant practice and literature between brand and image, the created brand being something that can be manipulated or changed in order to reflect whatever is desired by its creators. The subjectivist viewpoint would be to reject this as too simplistic and argue that any research into place branding should include analysis of the image as something that is created and re-created through a complex array of phenomena including social interactions and physical factors, to which individuals attach certain meanings, rituals and myths. Because of the continual creation and adaptation of this place image it is therefore extremely difficult to be isolated, understood and then manipulated. So, in somewhat of a contrast to the paradigm and ontology to be employed; there is a contradiction in the epistemology of the study as a direct result of the primary research sources – the brands themselves. This study will not delve into the social sciences elements that, as alluded to above, are intrinsic to places' image. Instead the researcher will adopt the position of a 'resources' researcher in order to analyse statistically the constituent elements of Greater Manchester's place brand architecture through analysis of material which can be reasonably considered to be representative of the created brand the boroughs are seeking to convey. Whilst the 'feelings' researcher would generate findings which would be relevant to place branding research in general, the social sciences and psychological elements are out of the reach of this study. Objectivity will be key in the research, and therefore statistical analysis of created brand material, utilising the meronomy derived from the extant literature, will form the basis of the methodology employed. In essence, the three dimensional reality of place (the image) is not being considered, we are taking the brands as being derived from the place itself, yet they are effectively being considered as

distinct from said place. We are focusing on the created, controllable brand as, for the purpose of this research, a flat construct.

## **4.2 Methodology outlined**

The review of extant literature has provided the basis for the development of the meronomy, which in turn will act as the research framework and will assist in the creation of the initial taxonomy. The primary research will employ a highly structured quantitative methodology – however complete freedom from the inclusion of a value proposition is unavoidable. Whilst place image research would lend itself to a critical realist approach; that of a multi-level study looking at the individual, societal groups and the place itself and how they are all inter-linked in the creation of the image; the direct realism approach is applicable in this case as the content being studied is static, engineered and, whilst it is being perceived individually, unchanging in its content at the time the research is being conducted, again, it is a created, controllable construct. The most fitting research approach is deductive; the theory and framework having been developed; data will be collected as a result of the research strategy employed. A theoretical sample has been selected as each brand must be considered in the same manner to as great an extent as possible across all places covered. Theoretical sampling has been described as a method for, “building interpretative theories from the emerging data and selecting a sample to examine and elaborate on this theory (Marshall, 1996:523).” In order to ensure that the meronomy can be applied in an all-encompassing fashion to each borough’s brand respectively; an initial content analysis was employed to test the meronomy framework using a combination of *a priori* and emergent coding. The theoretical sample employed will be verified prior to the research being undertaken in order to ensure it is both valid and ‘authentic’ in that it is an official promotional resource of the borough authority and that the legitimacy of the creators is not in doubt.

## **4.3 Content analysis**

Content analysis has been defined as a ‘systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding,’ (Stemler 2001:1), and, “any technique for making inferences by objectively and systematically identifying specified characteristics of messages”

(Flolsti, 1969:14). Therefore it is appropriate for this study. Content analysis permits us to interpret text and images as representative of human activity. This is particularly useful when looking at place brands, as it allows us to deconstruct the brand to uncover the constituent attributes which the creators of said brand have decided to utilise to represent their place. By creating the meronymy inductively through analysis of extant theory, we have constructed a robust framework for conducting the content analysis, one which will permit a deductive, systematic and objective – to an acceptable degree – level of research (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). By focusing on the manifest elements of place brands, as opposed to perceived or latent aspects perhaps more closely associated with our understanding of place image, we are minimising the potential for subjectivism, and ensuring reliability. There are limitations to content analysis which should also be mentioned; aside from being limited to assessment of material that is potentially outdated (the brands under consideration are constantly evolving due to website changes), it also fails to take into account causal relationships between variables (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Therefore, whilst it is useful for the purpose of this research as a means of establishing frequency of attribute or meronym use, it does not account for the motivations behind their inclusion/omission. However, as we are analysing brand constitution with a view to classifying the brands based on this, we are not concerned with the motivations behind their creation at this stage, this is a potential avenue for further research.

#### **4.4 The Sample**

In order to assess place brands in relation to one another, a tightly defined sample was necessary. The Greater Manchester metropolitan area was chosen as the focus of the study. Greater Manchester has a population of 2,682,528 people (2011 Census data), and comprises ten metropolitan boroughs; Oldham, Rochdale, Bury, Bolton, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan, and the cities of Manchester and Salford. We can reasonably define these boroughs as representative of the Greater Manchester metropolitan area's brand architecture, in that the brands of each contribute to and can be considered part of the overall created brand for said area – even if each has been created in isolation. As has been discussed in the review of the literature, it is often difficult to ascertain exactly what constitutes a place brand, and as such there are many creations in many mediums that could legitimately

qualify as being representative of the brand of the given place. Therefore, in order to maintain a consistent and fair sample, and ensure that the brands could be cross-referenced and analysed in a manner which ensured a reliable comparison, the official tourism websites of each of the ten boroughs were selected as being representative of their respective brand. In order to ensure further that the websites were being analysed consistently, and to minimise any potential prejudice emanating from budgetary constraint or other factors which could have a bearing on the breadth of content, only the home page of each site was employed for analysis. The use of the home page ensured that each site was operating on a level playing field to the greatest degree possible. Whilst additional pages of the website would offer valid additions to the brand in terms of how the content is formed, it was deemed that the home page of the site would offer a consistent basis for analysis and comparison, and in creating the home page, those responsible would likely include aspects of the place (attributes) that could be deemed to be of highest importance to that place. Therefore it offered the clearest and most reliable portrayal of the created brand for that place.

#### **4.5 Units of analysis**

The literature review has contributed towards the creation of the meronymy, which lends itself favourably to providing a framework for the units of analysis to be employed. In order to ensure that the meronymy was covering all relevant units of analysis, an *a priori* coding approach was taken with two of the websites to ensure that all relevant content was being taken into account. The meronymy needed no adaptation, with all relevant material lending itself to the meronyms set out. In order to ensure that the brands were considered in a comprehensive manner, both words and images were considered key units of analysis, and as such both were analysed using the meronymy as the framework.

#### **4.6 Validity/reliability**

Instances of ambiguity were a particular concern; Stemler (2001) warns about assuming that the words mentioned most often are the ones reflecting greatest concerns because synonyms may be used and words could have multiple meanings. However, testing of the meronymy indicated that any ambiguity was minimal, with meronyms – or associated values - falling into their defined categories

quite comfortably. Whilst the sample size was relatively small, in an exploratory study of this nature, it was deemed that a sample of ten brands would be sufficient to draw valid inferences which, significantly, would inform the basis for future, wider encompassing studies. All of the websites employed were official authority produced material, with the exception of Wigan, which did not possess an authority managed promotional website. Rather than exclude Wigan from the study, an alternative website produced and managed by the Wigan Leisure and Community Trust (WLCT) was deemed to be sufficiently representative of the brand Wigan is wishing to portray. As WLCT is a registered charity that works on behalf of Wigan Council, the legitimacy of its creators was deemed to be in line with the other nine websites under analysis. As such, each website was considered to be a genuine and authentic representation of the brand each borough intends to offer.

Finally, in order to ensure that the coding approach taken was viable and reliable, the bias of the sole investigator was mitigated through testing usually associated with inter-coder reliability measures, where a number of coders are employed to analyse large samples. Lombard et al (2004:2) describe intercoder reliability as “the widely used term for the extent to which independent coders evaluate a characteristic of a message or artifact (sic) and reach the same conclusion.” In order to establish reliability, the percent agreement method was employed (Freelon, 2009). By using the borough of Trafford’s brand as a test case, a sub-sample of the content under analysis was blind-coded by an independent test-coder (in addition to the primary researcher), using the meronymy as the framework. A reliability percentage of 82% was recorded (calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the total units of analysis). The blind-coding aspect was particularly important in order to rule out the ‘demand characteristic’, which dictates that coders can base their responses on what they perceive to be the desired outcomes, it has been defined as “the sum total of cues that convey an experimental hypothesis to subjects and influence their behaviour (Lakshman, 2011:489).” Results indicated that the content was being deconstructed in a consistent way, with high agreement displayed. As such the meronymy avoided any idiosyncrasies which could have come into play were the framework for analysis not so rigid and all-encompassing.

In order to ensure that the websites being analysed were done so in a consistent manner, screen shots of the home pages were taken. Web pages which failed to fit

onto a single screen were deconstructed and pieced together using Microsoft Publisher on an A3 sheet template. These sheets were then printed onto A3 paper in order for the content to be accurately analysed. To ensure the highest possible level of comparability, all the pages for analysis were prepared on the same day, ensuring that were the material to be informed by any public holidays (such as Easter, Christmas, bank holidays), each website would have equal opportunity to be affected by this. At the time the research was conducted (June 2013), there was no specific influence from calendar dates. Once the materials were in place, the content analysis was conducted, with each set of results recorded by hand and reproduced in spreadsheet form. Copies of the analysed websites are included in the appendices.

As well as analysis of the words employed by the brands, the images on each website were also incorporated into the units of analysis using the following methodology:

- Each image was allocated a single meronym, best fitting the intention of the image
- The image was measured in square cm
- Each square cm counted as the equivalent of one word, contributing one point towards the count for a particular meronym.

This ensured that all content of the given brand was taken into account, as such increasing the validity of the research findings.

## 4.7 Levels of analysis

In order to inform the creation of the creation of an initial taxonomy of place brands, the analysis took a five level approach:

**Level 1** – The first level of analysis comprises the basic deconstruction of the brand of each borough using the meronymy as the framework. Words and images are both incorporated into the units of analysis. Results are analysed by meronym to ascertain which attributes are being utilised by each borough under analysis.

**Level 2** – Once an initial overview of the attributes employed is complete, the next step is to begin to group the places. In order to do so, the data is run through the SPSS statistics package, with correspondence analysis utilised to present the brands in a two dimensional space which facilitates the initial stage of their grouping.

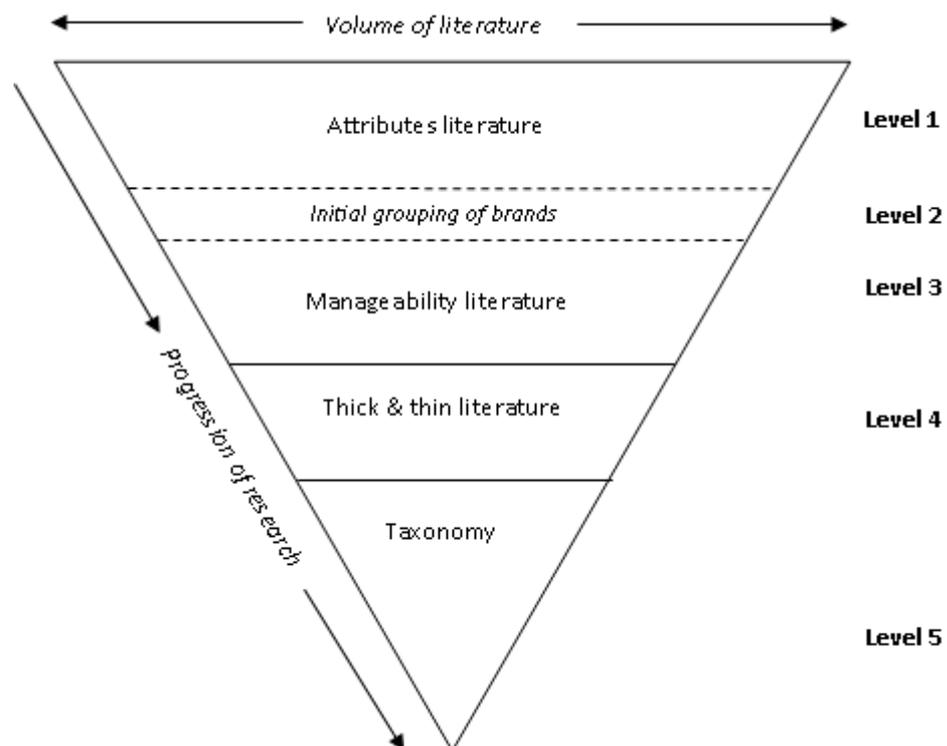
**Level 3** – The third level incorporates the manageability of the meronyms utilised, in order to ascertain the places which focus their brand on created content (more manageable aspects), as opposed to those who utilise content inherent or natural to the place (less manageable aspects).

**Level 4** – The penultimate level incorporates the notion of thick and thin places (Casey, 2001), in order to provide a method of triangulation with the data derived from level 3. By cross-referencing the manageability of the meronyms employed with the range of meronyms employed by each borough's brands, the brands can be positioned on a scatter plot diagram with a quartile divider based on the average for each axis; this forms the basis for the initial taxonomy which is utilised to classify the brands into four groups.

**Level 5** – Based on the findings of this analysis, an initial taxonomy is created in order to provide a means of classifying place brands based on their constitution.

This progression is dictated by the volume of literature underpinning each level of analysis, as depicted in Figure 3. Note that level 2 is a necessary link step, and is therefore not underpinned by the literature review.

**Figure 3 Influence of literature on levels of research**



## CHAPTER 5

### Findings

**Objective 1** – Synthesise extant literature in order to produce a theoretical framework on which to build an empirical methodology

**Objective 2** – Develop, based on the extant literature, a meronomy that facilitates the deconstruction of place brands based on the constitution of attributes/ingredients employed.

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**Objective 7** - Synthesise the extant literature and the primary empirical research (based on completion of objectives 1-6) to draw conclusions

## 5.0 Level 1 – Deconstructing the brands

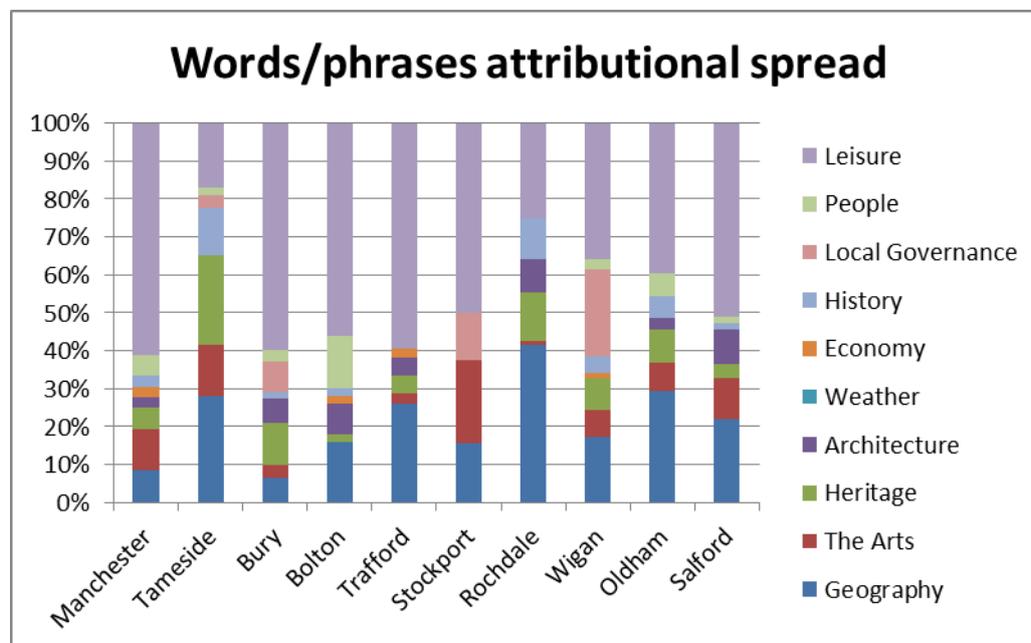
### 5.0.1 Analysis of word content

Analysis of the website content was completed via a two stage process. Firstly, words were analysed to place them into their respective meronym category. Table 4 indicates a relatively consistent distribution of meronyms across each borough, with leisure the most abundant meronym for all but two of the boroughs (Tameside and Rochdale). Geography, the arts, heritage and history also figured relatively highly, whilst weather and economy provided little content.

**Table 4 – Word content frequencies**

WORDS												
Meronym/attribute	Manchester	Tameside	Bury	Bolton	Trafford	Stockport	Rochdale	Wigan	Oldham	Salford	TOTALS	
Geography	3	25	4	8	11	5	68	12	20	12	168	
The Arts	4	12	2	0	1	7	2	5	5	6	44	
Heritage	2	21	7	1	2	0	21	6	6	2	68	
Architecture	1	0	4	4	2	0	14	0	2	5	32	
Weather	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Economy	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	4	
History	1	11	1	1	0	0	18	3	4	1	40	
Local Governance	0	3	5	0	0	4	0	16	0	0	28	
People	2	2	2	7	0	0	0	2	4	1	20	
Leisure	22	15	37	28	25	16	41	25	27	28	264	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>668</b>	

**Figure 4 – Attributes spread by borough – words**

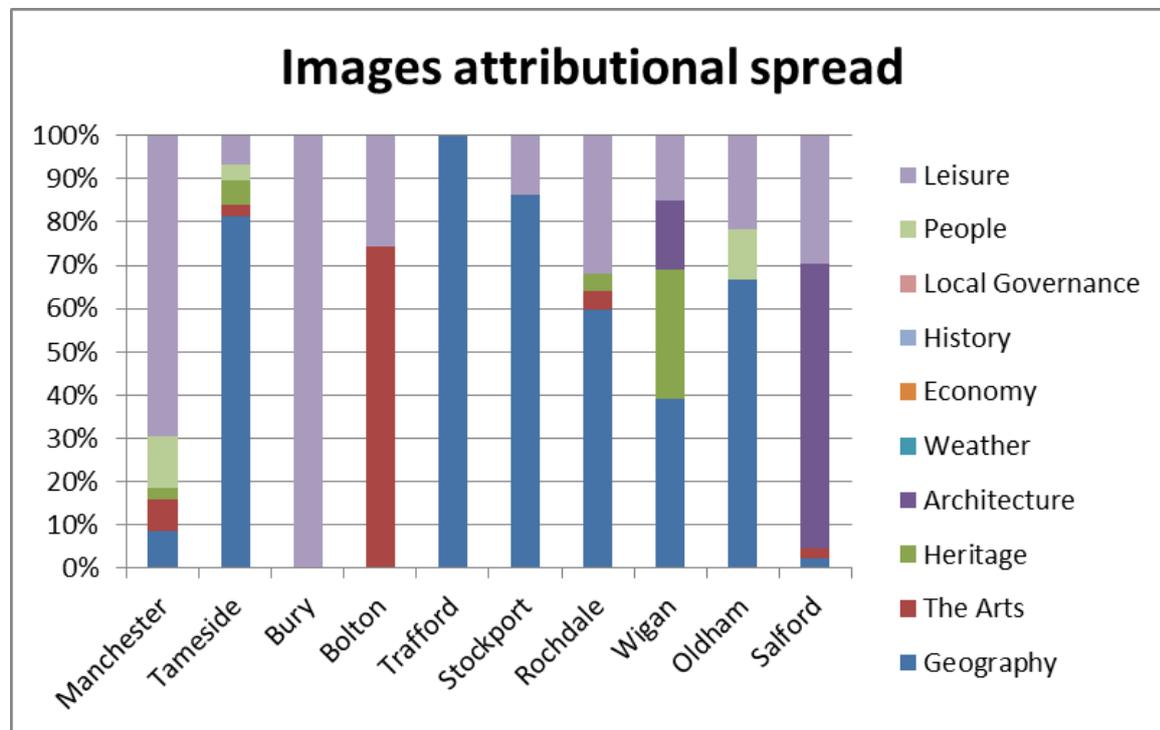


## 5.0.2 Analysis of image content

**Table 5 – Image content frequencies**

IMAGES	Manchester	Tameside	Bury	Bolton	Trafford	Stockport	Rochdale	Wigan	Oldham	Salford	TOTALS
Geography	15	86	0	0	11	19	73	71	123	3	401
The Arts	13	3	0	29	0	0	5	0	0	3	53
Heritage	5	6	0	0	0	0	5	54	0	0	70
Architecture	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	29	0	87	116
Weather	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Economy	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
History	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Local Governance	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
People	21	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	21	0	46
Leisure	124	7	50	10	0	3	39	27	40	39	339
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>1025</b>

**Figure 5 – Attributes spread by borough – images**



It is interesting to view the results of the image analysis on their own merit, before incorporation with the words. Again, leisure featured very highly, with 33% of the images representing a contribution towards this meronym. The greatest contribution came from geographical themed images, particularly rural themed images, with 39% of the images contributing to this meronym. Salford provided another interesting point of reference, with 66% of the images on their website comprising of architectural content, an interesting observation and perhaps not surprising given that the epicentre of Salford as a tourist destination, the Quays, is largely urban and

man-made. Bolton was perhaps one of the more surprising findings in relation to the images employed, with the arts comprising 29sq.cm of the 39sq.cm of imagery employed, the arts not necessarily being something that one would associate with Bolton's image.

### 5.0.3 Analysis of word and image content combined

By combining the counts for words and images, we can begin to build a true picture of how the respective brands are constructed.

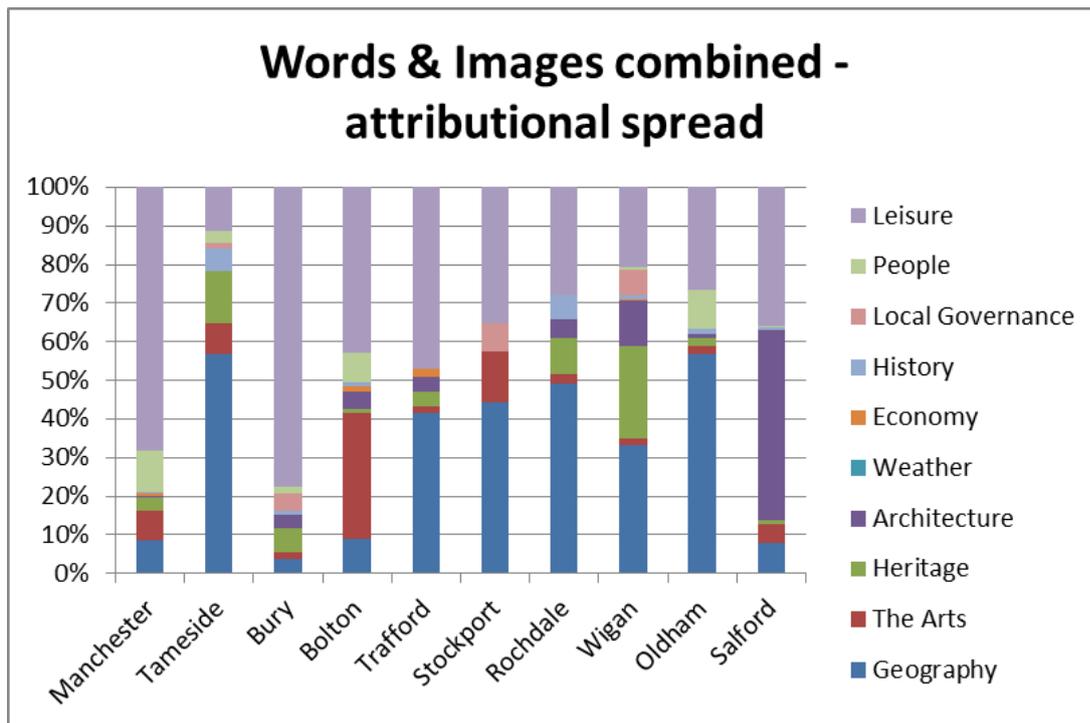
**Table 6 – Word/image combined content frequencies**

WORDS/IMAGES COMBINED FREQUENCIES												
Meronym/attribute	Manchester	Tameside	Bury	Bolton	Trafford	Stockport	Rochdale	Wigan	Oldham	Salford	TOTALS	AVERAGE
Geography	18	111	4	8	22	24	141	83	143	15	569	34%
The Arts	17	15	2	29	1	7	7	5	5	9	97	6%
Heritage	7	27	7	1	2	0	26	60	6	2	138	8%
Architecture	1	0	4	4	2	0	14	29	2	92	148	9%
Weather	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
Economy	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	4	0%
History	1	11	1	1	0	0	18	3	4	1	40	2%
Local Governance	0	3	5	0	0	4	0	16	0	0	28	2%
People	23	6	2	7	0	0	0	2	25	1	66	4%
Leisure	146	22	87	38	25	19	80	52	67	67	603	36%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>1693</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 7 – Word/image combined content – percentage breakdown**

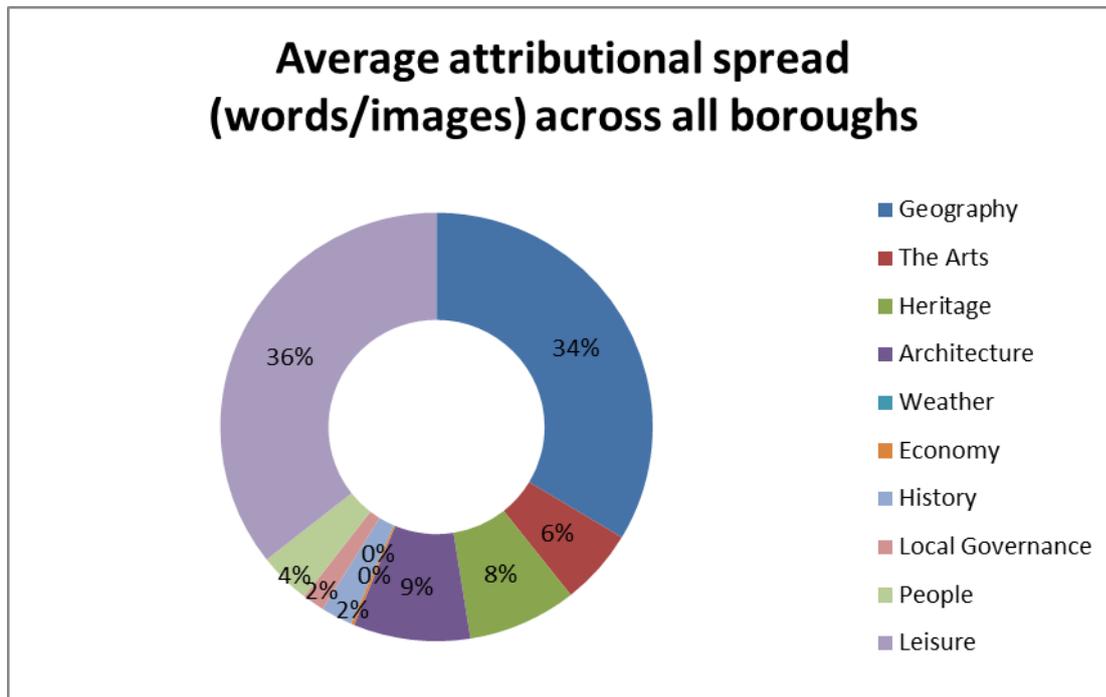
WORDS/IMAGES COMBINED PERCENTAGES												
Meronym/attribute	Manchester	Tameside	Bury	Bolton	Trafford	Stockport	Rochdale	Wigan	Oldham	Salford	TOTALS	AVERAGE
Geography	8%	57%	4%	9%	42%	44%	49%	33%	57%	8%		
The Arts	8%	8%	2%	33%	2%	13%	2%	2%	2%	5%		
Heritage	3%	14%	6%	1%	4%	0%	9%	24%	2%	1%		
Architecture	0%	0%	4%	4%	4%	0%	5%	12%	1%	49%		
Weather	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%		
Economy	0%	0%	0%	1%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%		
History	0%	6%	1%	1%	0%	0%	6%	1%	2%	1%		
Local Governance	0%	2%	4%	0%	0%	7%	0%	6%	0%	0%		
People	11%	3%	2%	8%	0%	0%	0%	1%	10%	1%		
Leisure	68%	11%	78%	43%	47%	35%	28%	21%	27%	36%		
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>100%</b>											

**Figure 6 – Attributes spread by borough – words/images combined**



We can see that the Manchester brand, the major hub of the Metropolitan area, is heavily weighted towards leisure, which comprises 68% of the content employed. People, the arts and geography feature to a lesser extent. Bury’s brand is comparable to Manchester’s in that the leisure meronym is dominant, comprising 78% of content. Local governance (4%), architecture (4%), geography (4%), and architecture (6%) form the bulk of the other meronyms employed by the Bury brand. It would appear that leisure and geographical content far outweighs that derived from other meronyms, perhaps indicative of a tendency to make use of the activity and geographical aspects of a place in the first instance, with other meronyms providing a largely supporting feature in most cases. In terms of outlying results, Bolton’s brand contains 33% of content focused on the arts, whilst Salford’s brand, as discussed above, is heavily swayed towards architectural content (49%).

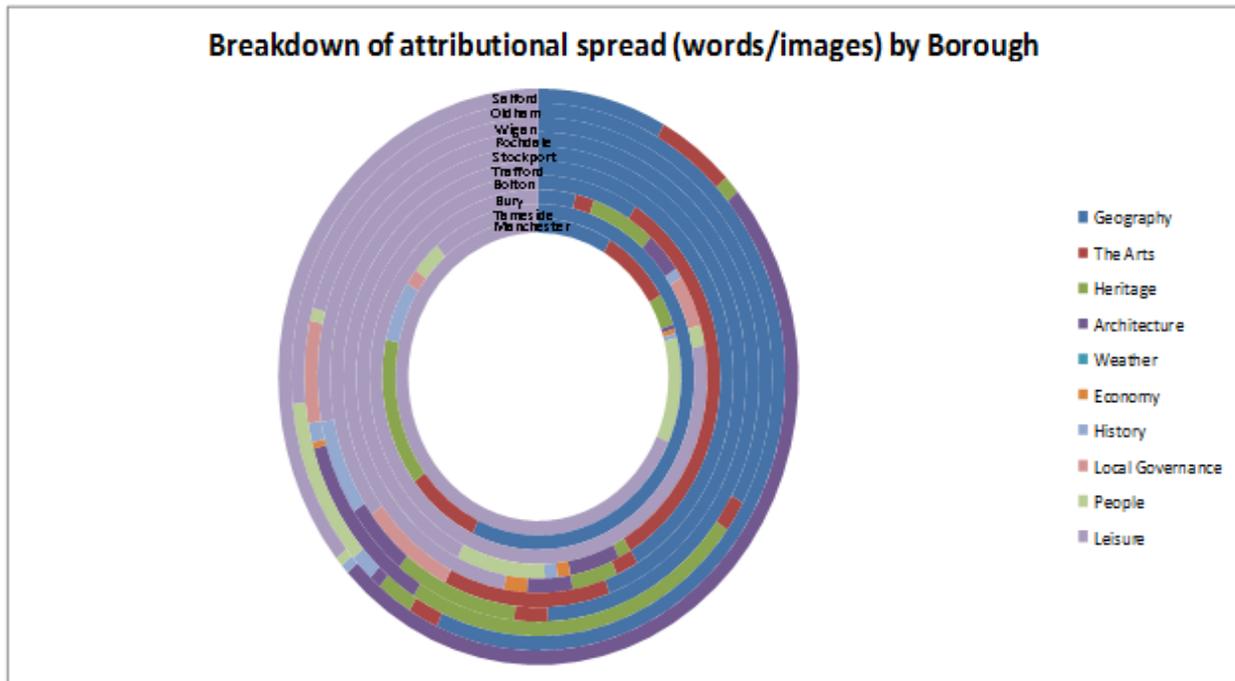
**Figure 7 – Average attributes spread (words/images combined) across all boroughs**



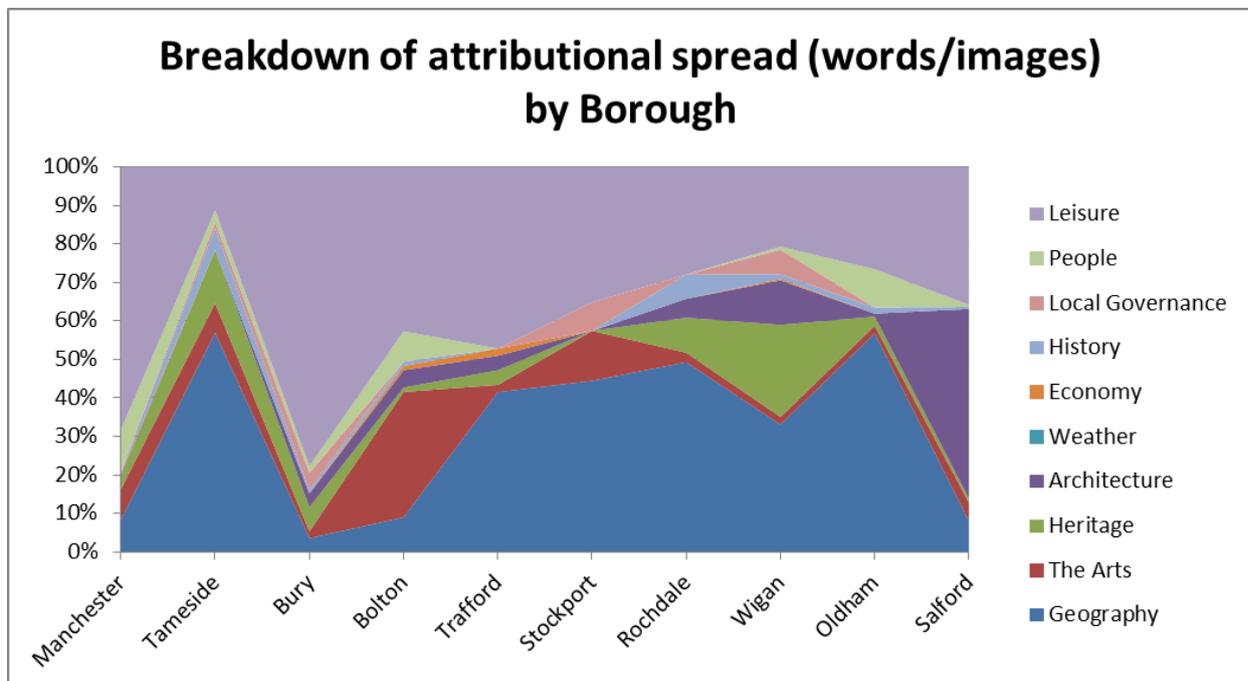
If we look at the spread of content across the Metropolitan area as a whole, we can indeed see that leisure (36%) and geography (34%) constitute the majority of content employed by the brands. The arts (6%), heritage (8%), and architecture (9%) comprise the majority of the remaining meronyms, leaving a collective contribution of the weather (0%), economy (0%), history (2%), local governance (2%), and people (4%) to make up the remainder. The absence of weather from any of the brand content is perhaps unsurprising given Manchester’s reputation for rain, however the lack of economy content is more unexpected, though this could be explained as the brand in this case is largely geared towards generating tourism and not necessarily intended to promote inward investment and economic development. The 0% figure for economy is however slightly misleading to an extent as it did achieve a frequency of 4, whilst weather did not appear at all.

The following two graphs give an impression of the heavily swayed distribution of content across all boroughs and meronyms.

**Figure 8 – Donut chart illustration of average attributes spread (words/images combined) across all boroughs**



**Figure 9 – 2D area illustration of average attributes spread (words/images combined) across all boroughs**



The first level of analysis has identified which attributes of place have been utilised to construct the respective place brands. This has provided a robust base on which to build further analytical layers which will inform the creation of the initial taxonomy.

### **5.1 Level 2 – Initial grouping of the brands**

Whilst the initial overview of meronym distribution amongst the brand content has allowed us to identify which attributes of place are the most heavily utilised in the branding attempts under analysis, it was necessary to develop the analysis further to facilitate grouping of the brands based on this constitution. To this end, correspondence analysis was employed. Correspondence analysis is a perceptual mapping tool which allows us to illustrate visual relationships and differences in data. Like many perceptual mapping techniques, correspondence analysis is an exploratory tool that focuses on exploring and representing data, as opposed to formal hypothesis testing (Ivy, 2001). Yavas and Shemwell (1996, in Ivy, 2001:277) suggest that the primary objective of correspondence analysis is to portray data geometrically as a set of row and column points in a low (i.e. two) dimensional space. As Wels-Lips et al (1998:294) describe, “correspondence analysis produces a configuration of the categories of nominal variables in a n-dimensional space. Categories of variables that co-occur frequently will appear close to each other, and categories of variables that co-occur infrequently will be distant from each other in the n-dimensional space.” It is important to note here that the correspondence analysis is performed with meronym counts, as opposed to means. Therefore the chi-square test of independence of variables is applicable in this case, rather than the Euclidean distance which would apply in an equivalent analysis of mean scores (Ivy, 2001).

**Table 8 – Correspondence analysis summary of dimensionality calculation**

<b>Summary</b>						
Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Chi Square	Sig.	Proportion of Inertia	
					Accounted for	Cumulative
1	.557	.311			.408	.408
2	.472	.223			.293	.701
3	.311	.097			.127	.828
4	.275	.075			.099	.927
5	.171	.029			.038	.966
6	.136	.019			.024	.990
7	.086	.007			.010	1.000
8	.003	.000			.000	1.000
Total		.761	1288.343	.000 <sup>a</sup>	1.000	1.000

<b>Summary</b>		
Dimension	Confidence Singular Value	
	Standard Deviation	Correlation
1	.023	.305
2	.020	
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
Total		

a. 81 degrees of freedom

Table 8 provides a summary of the dimensions which provide potential modes of analysis. The maximum number of dimensions in a correspondence analysis equals the smaller of the number of the rows minus one or the number of columns minus one (Yavas and Shemwell, 1996, in Ivy, 2001). Since the number of rows and columns is ten (ten meronyms, ten boroughs), the omission of weather on account of

it not being employed in any of the brands brings the former down to nine, therefore the maximum number of dimensions applicable in this study is eight. The proportion of inertia columns are significant in allowing us to make a judgement on the number of dimensions to be employed. Indicating how much of the row variance (representing the meronyms) is accounted for by each dimension; dimension one contributes 41% towards the variance, whilst the addition of dimension two brings this up to 70%. The addition of a third dimension adds just 12%, therefore a two dimensional approach is adequate for the purposes of this study. An additional consideration here is that a lower dimensional solution aids the display and interpretability of the results. A final point to note is that the correspondence analysis operates with 81 degrees of freedom, indicating the number of parameters of the system that may vary independently (Wels-Lips et al, 1998).

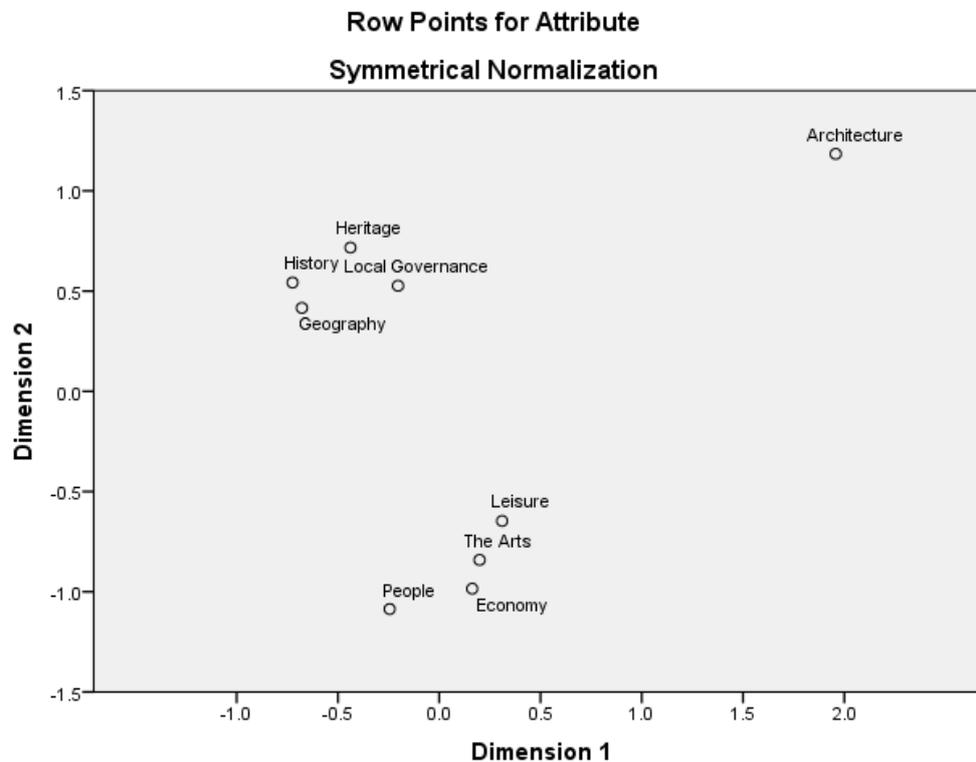
Table 9 below is useful for placing the formation of the illustrative diagram into context, the contribution of the meronyms to the point of inertia in the first and second dimensions is displayed in the right hand columns. As expected, geography (28% first dimension, 12% second dimension) and leisure (6% first dimension, 31% second dimension) produce the greatest contribution towards the location of points in the diagram, with the other seven meronyms (again, weather has been excluded as it does not contribute at all to the equation) contributing to a far lesser extent.

**Table 9 – Correspondence analysis – overview of row points**

Attribute	Mass	Score in Dimension		Inertia	Contribution	
		1	2		Of Point to Inertia of Dimension	
					1	2
Geography	.336	-.678	.416	.129	.277	.123
The Arts	.057	.199	-.841	.084	.004	.086
Heritage	.082	-.438	.717	.073	.028	.089
Architecture	.087	1.958	1.184	.249	.601	.260
Weather	.000	.	.	.	.	.
Economy	.002	.163	-.985	.007	.000	.005
History	.024	-.724	.543	.023	.022	.015
Local	.017	-.203	.527	.040	.001	.010
Governance						
People	.039	-.245	-1.086	.048	.004	.097
Leisure	.356	.311	-.647	.107	.062	.316
Active Total	1.000			.761	1.000	1.000

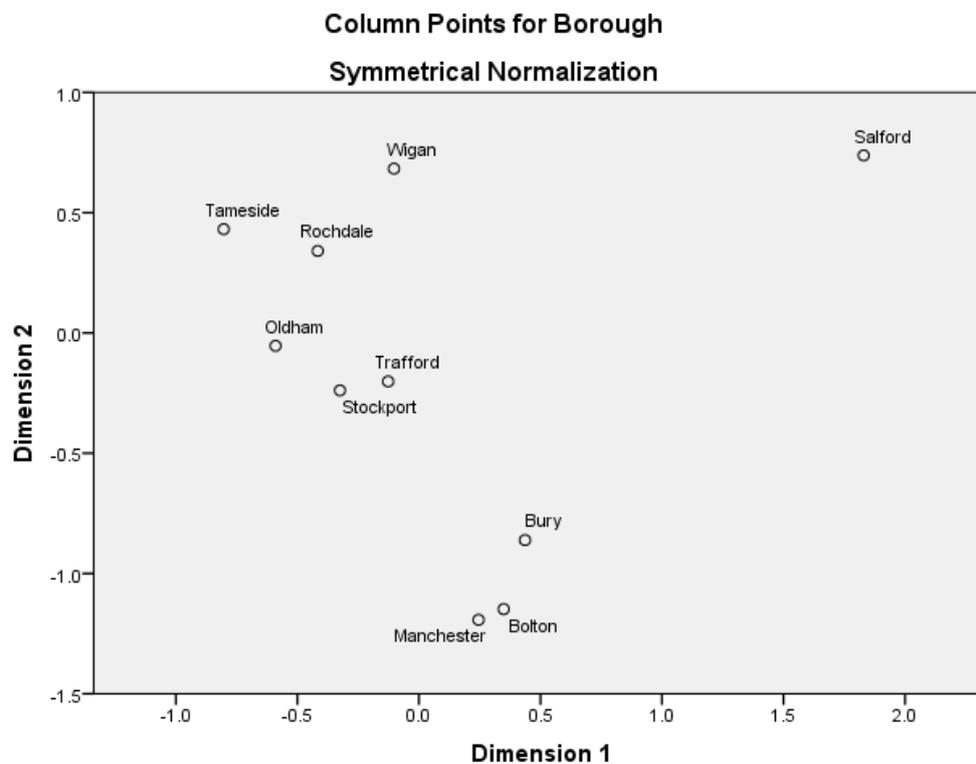
Figure 10 illustrates the initial graphical output of the distribution of row points (meronyms) generated. This representation illustrates the relative positioning of the meronyms that form the brands of the Greater Manchester metropolitan area. Straight away, we can see that two distinct groups of meronyms are visible. Leisure, the arts, people, and economy in one group; heritage, history, local governance and geography in the other. Architecture is the outlier here.

**Figure 10 – Two dimensional chart illustrating row points**



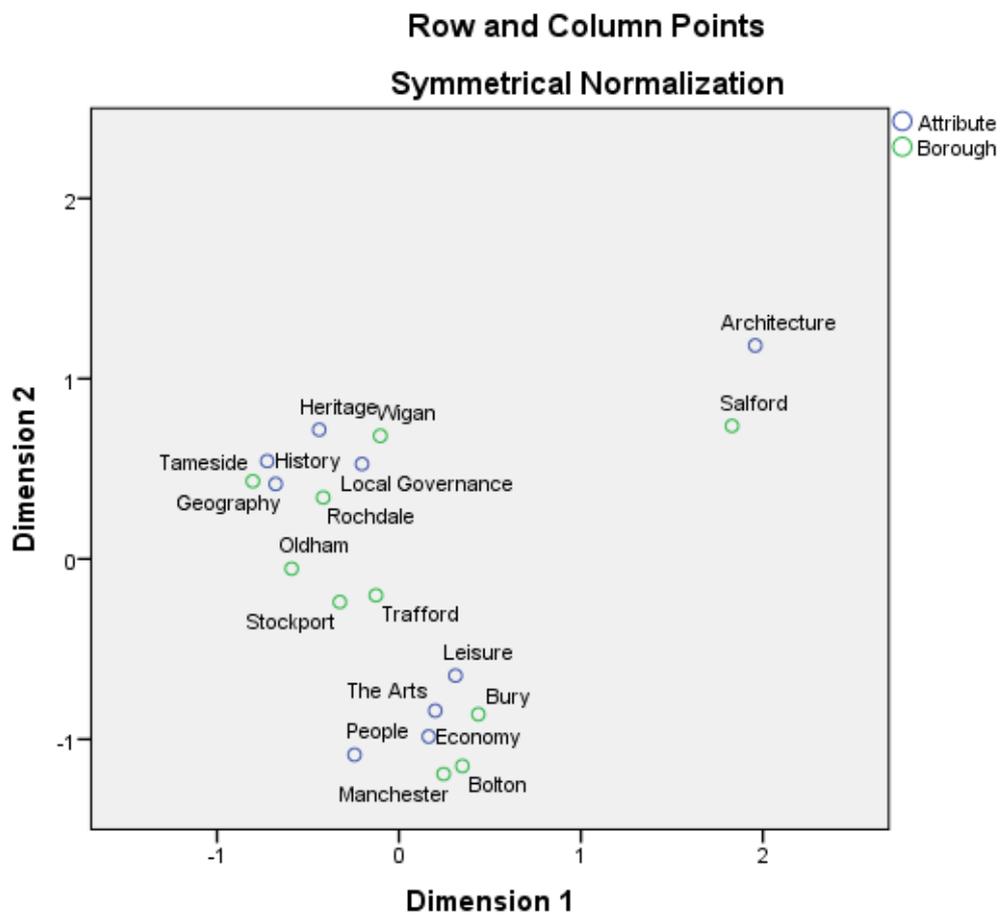
The graphical illustration of the distribution of the column points (boroughs), shown in Figure 11, again points to groupings of boroughs in terms of the constitution of their brands. We can see that Manchester, Bolton and Bury are situated very closely together, whilst there is a slightly less closely situated group in the upper left area of the diagram, with Tameside, Wigan, Rochdale, Oldham, Stockport and Trafford sharing a similar brand constitution. In accordance with the positioning of architecture on the diagram, Salford is the outlier of the group, explained by the heavy and unparalleled weighting of brand constitution towards the architecture meronym. The disparity between brands is also evident, with Manchester and Salford the most extreme example.

**Figure 11 – Two dimensional chart illustrating column points**



If we take the row and column points and view them together in the diagram, we can see which boroughs' brands are most closely associated with particular meronyms (Figure 12). As we have seen, Salford's brand is highly influenced by architecture, this is the clear outlier in the group and has been heavily influenced by the prevalence of architectural imagery within the brand content. We can see that the Manchester, Bolton and Bury brands share a similar association with people, the economy, the arts and leisure. The Wigan, Tameside, Rochdale and Oldham brands are more influenced by geography, history, heritage and local governance. The Stockport and Trafford brands fall somewhere between these two groups.

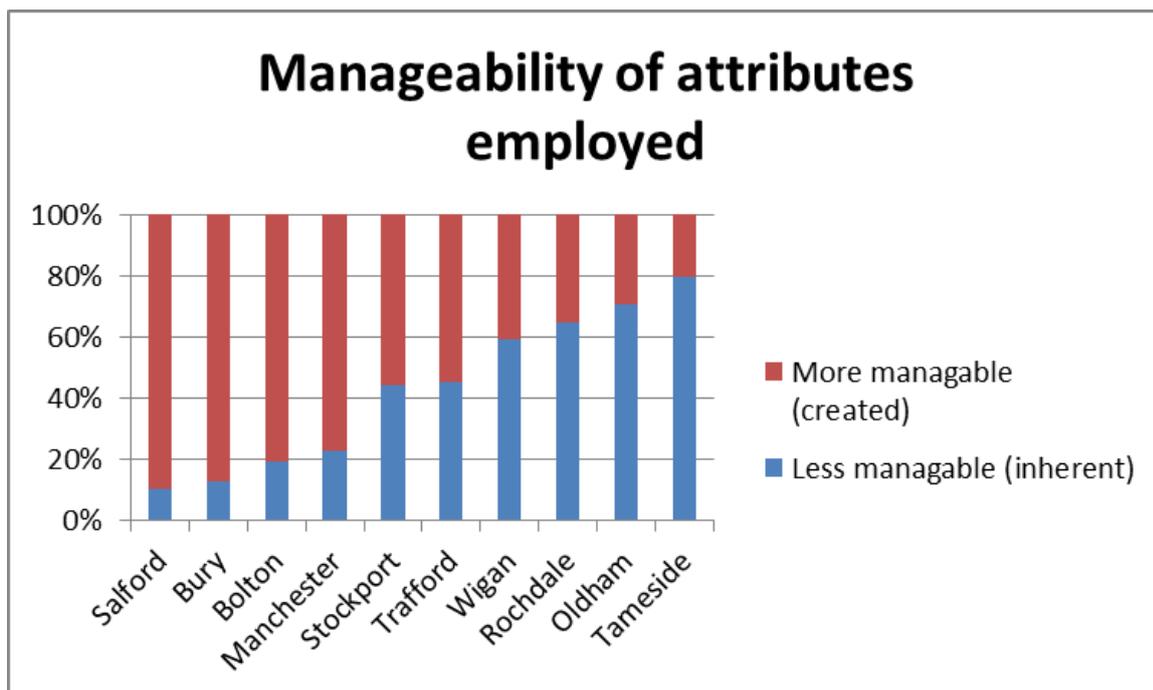
Figure 12 – Two dimensional chart illustrating row and column points



## 5.2 Level 3 – Assessing the manageability of attributes employed

Whilst level 1 and level 2 of the analysis have looked at the constitution of the brands and began the initial stage of grouping, level 3 will look at the manageability of the attributes employed. This level of analysis will serve to provide one axis of a scatter plot graph which will be used to position the boroughs' brands and allow us to create the initial taxonomy. The meronymy used as the analysis framework highlights those meronyms which can be considered more manageable (more intangible/less fixed aspects of place such as events, architectural development, artistic activity), and those which could be considered less manageable (more tangible, fixed, difficult to change, such as the geography of the place, the location of the place, the weather, the history and heritage). Figure 13 below illustrates the distribution of manageable/less manageable meronyms within each brand. As we can see Salford has the highest percentage of more manageable brand content, heavily influenced by the architectural bias in their brand. Bury, Bolton and Manchester also show a leaning towards more manageable brand content. Stockport and Trafford share a relatively even distribution, whilst Wigan, Rochdale, Oldham and Tameside possess brands which are more influenced by less manageable aspects.

**Figure 13 – Bar chart illustrating breakdown of respective brand meronyms by perceived level of manageability**

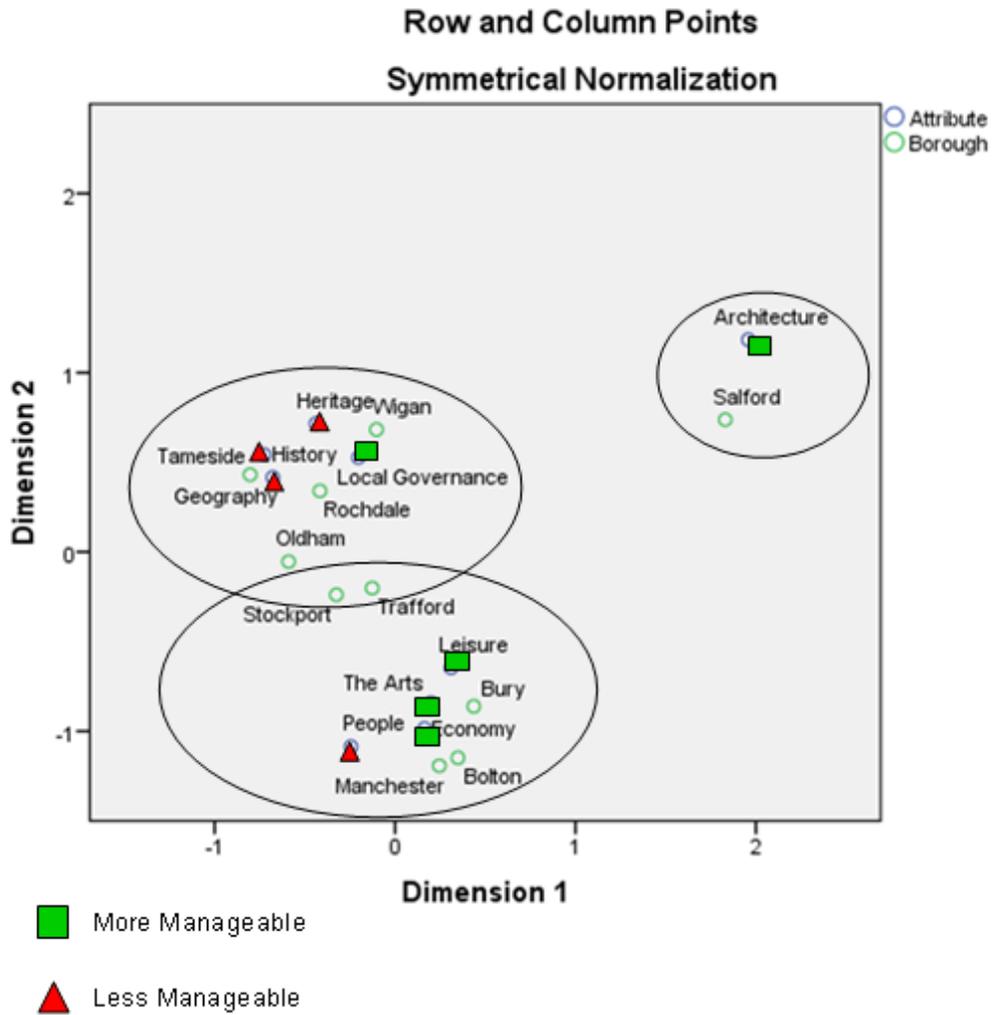


Utilising again the results from the correspondence analysis; Figure 14 below illustrates the relative relationship between the boroughs and the manageability of their brand meronyms. From this, we can now allocate the boroughs into groups based on the manageability of their brand meronyms. We can see that the group positioned towards the bottom of the diagram (consisting of Manchester, Bolton, Bury) can be classified as possessing a greater level of manageability in their brand content. Wigan, Tameside, Rochdale and Oldham's brands are more heavily influenced by meronyms with less manageable characteristics. Being an outlier with only the more manageable 'architecture' meronym in close proximity; Salford falls into the more manageable category. Trafford and Stockport could legitimately be described as operating within the boundary of both the more manageable and less manageable groupings. In order to classify them, and indeed all the boroughs, with more accuracy; their relative positions in relation to the average was calculated and used to position them on a scatter plot graph.

Figure 14 – Two dimensional chart illustrating row and column points. Row points illustrated by more manageable and less manageable split



Figure 15 – Two dimensional chart illustrating row and column points. Row points illustrated by more manageable and less manageable split with initial grouping

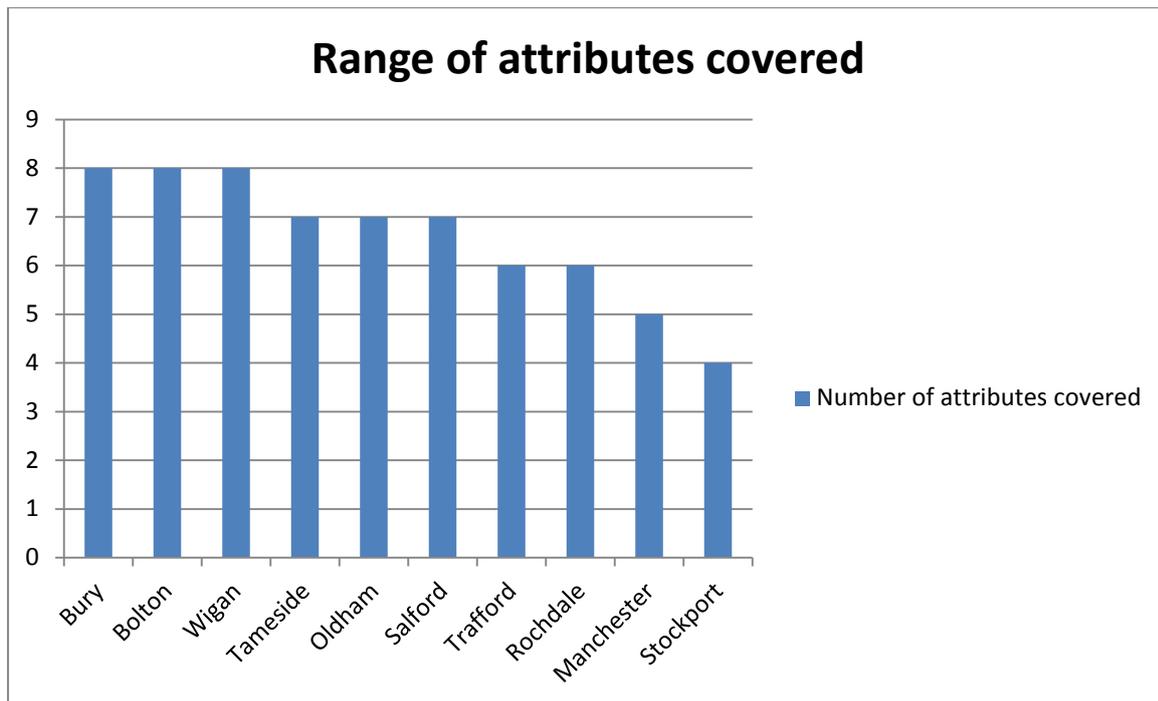


### **5.3 Level 4 – Assessing the range of attributes employed – the notion of thick and thin places**

The X axis of the scatter plot graph will be based on the ‘thickness’ of the respective place brands. As described in the literature review, places can reasonably be deemed thick or thin based on the range of attributes they possess. A place in possession of a greater range of attributes could be deemed to be ‘thick’, whilst conversely a place with a more limited range of attributes could be considered ‘thin’ (Casey, 2001). The same concept can reasonably be applied to place brands. By conducting a simple analysis of the range of meronyms each boroughs’ brand possesses; we can apportion them along the X axis of a scatter plot graph accordingly. A limitation of this methodology is that it neglects to consider the prevalence of particular ‘meronyms’, therefore we see examples such as Salford, whose brand is 49% influenced by architecture, yet six further meronyms comprise the remaining 51% of the brand content. Therefore despite the Salford brand being more heavily influenced by a single meronym than any of the other boroughs’ brands; in relation to the other boroughs it can be considered relatively ‘thick’. The same applies to Tameside’s brand and the geography meronym, and to Manchester and Bury’s brands with the leisure meronym. Despite these anomalies, the range of meronyms employed can be considered a relatively robust means of establishing place thickness in this context, and as such the research proceeds on this basis.

As we can see from Figure 16, the range of meronyms employed by the borough’s brands ranges from a maximum of eight to a minimum of four. Bury, Bolton and Wigan’s brands each possess eight meronyms, whilst Stockport could be considered the thinnest of the brands, having only utilised four of the meronyms in their brand.

**Figure 16 – Bar chart displaying range of attributes employed by borough**



By calculating an average position for the manageability of the meronyms utilised, and an average for the range of meronyms utilised – see Table 10 below, a basis has been developed in order to initiate the classification of the brands, and as such a quartile divider based on these averages can be positioned on a scatter plot graph.

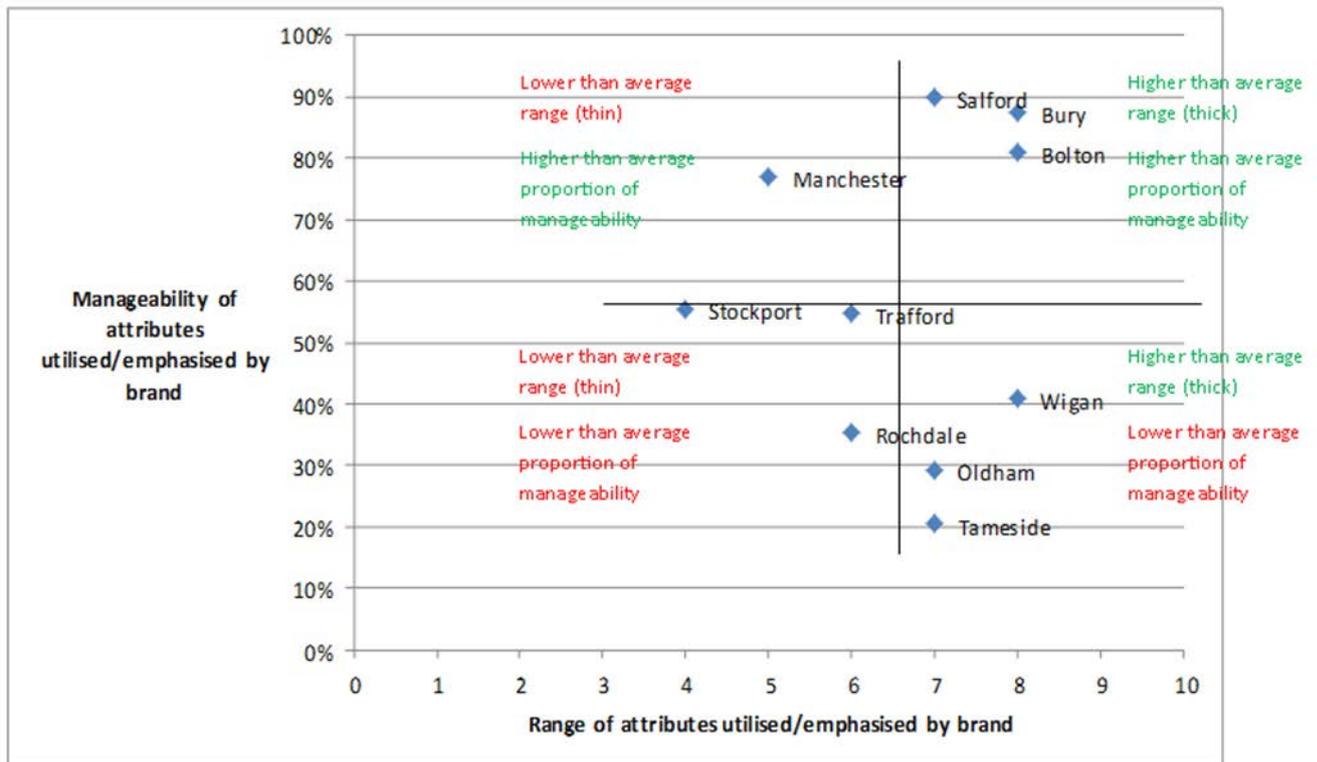
**Table 10 – Average percentage of more manageable meronyms and average range of meronyms employed across all boroughs’ brands**

Average percentage of more manageable meronyms employed	57%
Average range of meronyms employed	6.6

By then plotting each borough using the manageability and range of the meronyms utilised in their respective brands, we can position them on the scatter plot graph. Figure 17 provides the final level of analysis which can be utilised to produce the initial taxonomy. By positioning the respective boroughs on the graph, each quartile can be considered to depict a specific group. We can consider the upper right quartile to be representative of brands which demonstrate a higher than average

level of manageability and a higher than average range of meronyms (and as such can be considered 'thick').

**Figure 17 – Scatter plot graph with quartile divider positioned according to Table 10**



The upper left quartile contains brands which demonstrate a higher than average level of manageability in their brand meronyms, and a lower than average range of meronyms (and as such can be considered to be 'thin' in nature). Brands positioned in the lower right quartile possess a higher than average range of meronyms (thick), which are on average lower in their level of manageability. Finally, the lower left quartile contains brands which have a lower than average level of 'manageability' and a lower than 'average' range of meronyms (thin). From this we can now classify the boroughs' brands in a taxonomy.

#### 5.4 Level 5 – The initial taxonomy

By utilising the position of the boroughs' brands on the scatter plot graph, we can consider each quartile to represent a different class of place brand. Based on the boroughs respective positions in Figure 17; Figure 18 displays the initial taxonomy.

**Figure 18 – The initial taxonomy**

A1	A2	B1	B2
<b>Thick place with emphasis on more created, manageable aspects</b>	<b>Thick place with emphasis on natural, less manageable aspects</b>	<b>Thin place with emphasis on more created, manageable aspects</b>	<b>Thin place with emphasis on natural, less manageable aspects</b>
Salford	Wigan	Manchester	Stockport
Bury	Oldham		Trafford
Bolton	Tameside		Rochdale

From this, the suggestion can be made that Salford, Bury and Bolton possess similar place brands, as do Wigan, Oldham and Tameside. Manchester's brand appears to be distinct, whilst Stockport, Trafford and Rochdale also share similar brands.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS

**Objective 1** – Synthesise extant literature in order to produce a theoretical framework on which to build an empirical methodology

**Objective 2** – Develop, based on the extant literature, a meronomy that facilitates the deconstruction of place brands based on the constitution of attributes/ingredients employed.

**Objective 3** – Expand the meronomy to include the level of manageability of each group of attributes/ingredients featured

**Objective 4** – Conduct a content analysis of ten place brands, using the meronomy as the framework for analysis, in order to ascertain their constitution

**Objective 5** – Analyse each brand based on the constitution of attributes/ingredients employed. This will include analysis of the manageability of said attributes/ingredients as well as the range utilised.

**Objective 6** – To establish, based on completion of objectives 1-5; an initial taxonomy for the classification of place brands

**Objective 7** - Synthesise the extant literature and the primary empirical research (based on completion of objectives 1-6) to draw conclusions

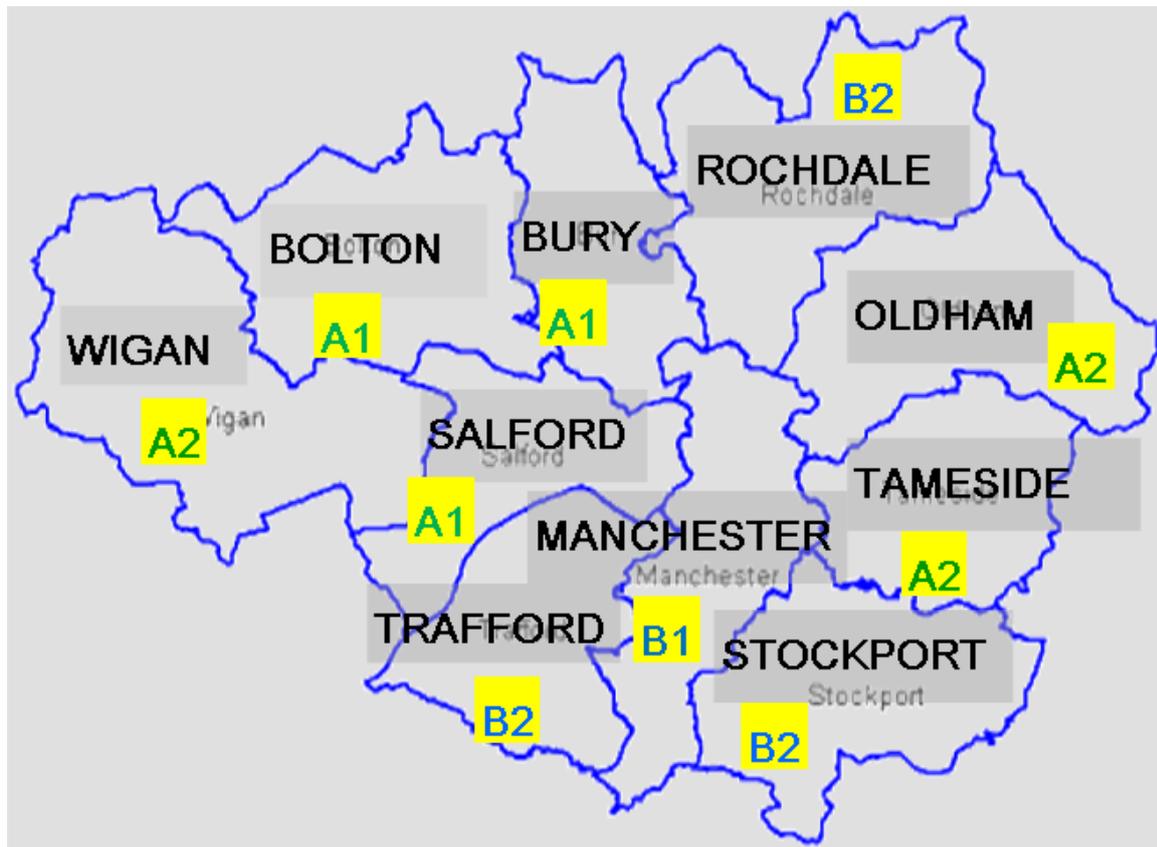


**Aim of the research: To produce a framework that facilitates, through a comparative empirical research approach, the deconstruction and classification of place brands.**

## 6.0 Discussion

The reasoning and justification for this classification has been set out and built up over the previous four chapters. It is important to emphasise again that this distinction is relevant to the respective brands only, and not the boroughs they have been designed to represent. It is nevertheless interesting to look at the places as they exist in reality in order to extrapolate any possible rationale for the characteristics their brands would suggest they do, or do not, share. By allocating each borough's respective classification to a map of the Metropolitan area, we can see that there is a certain correlation that could be explained geographically (see Figure 19). Classification A1, in particular, is tightly grouped geographically. Oldham and Tameside's brands fall into classification A2, and again we can see that geographically these two boroughs are adjacent to one another, whilst Trafford and Stockport are separated by Manchester geographically, the former two boroughs' brands share classification B2, whilst the Manchester brand occupies classification B1. The similarity in brand of those boroughs located in close proximity geographically is perhaps not surprising when it is taken into consideration that places can in effect merge into one another to an extent, in that aside from authority defined borders, in reality these borders are little more than strategically positioned sign posts, there is no abrupt cultural or physical divide, and as such places do overlap with one another.

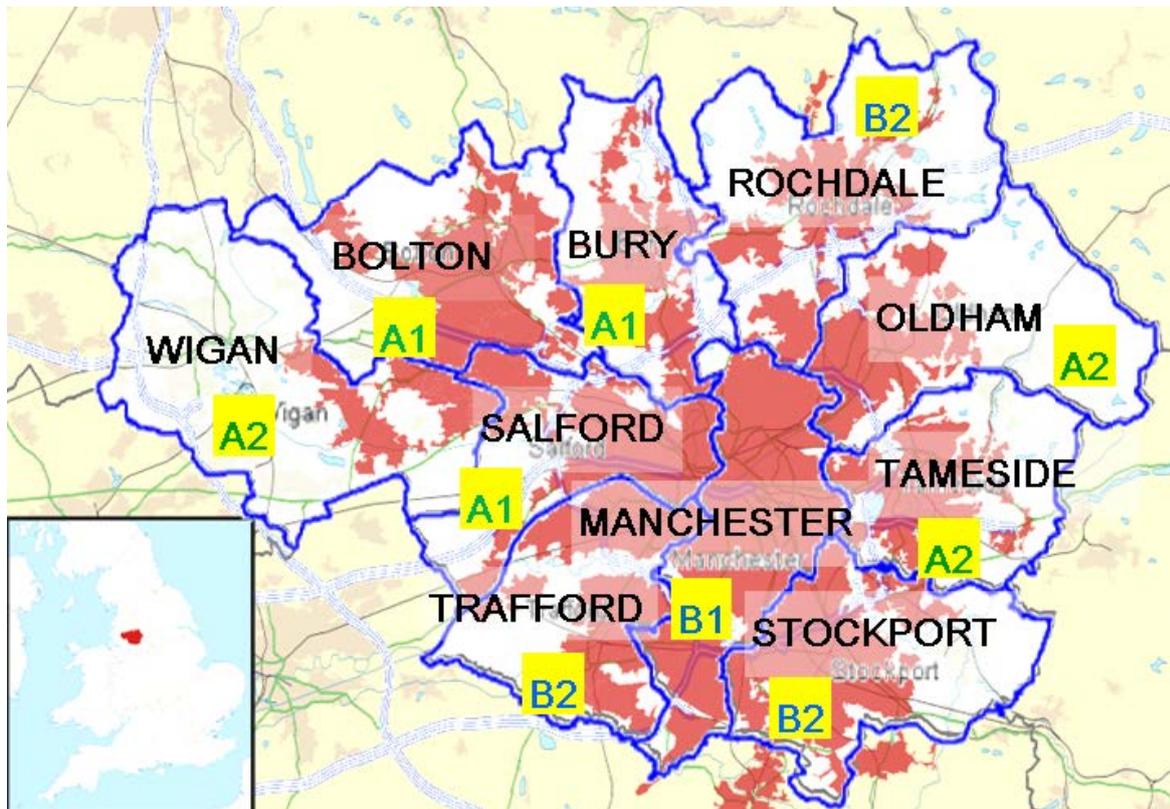
**Figure 19 – Map of Greater Manchester displaying brand classification for each borough**



As well as geographical positioning, it is interesting to also look at other potential reasons which could help to explain how the boroughs' brands are constituted. Population density as an influence on brand constitution is one such possibility. Figure 20 below illustrates high areas of population density in red, with lesser populated areas appearing in white. For the purposes of this discussion; we can reasonably assume this density disparity to be representative of urban and rural localities. We can see from this overlay of the borough brand classifications, that areas with a higher population density (which we can deem to be more urban) tend to fall into the B1 and B2 brand classifications. Whilst areas with less dense areas of population (rural) are generally occupying A1 and A2 brand classifications. However, brands such as Rochdale (B2) and Bolton (A1) do not support such a means of explanation, possessing population densities not in sync with other boroughs occupying the same brand classifications. Therefore, whilst the results do lead us to observe general links between brands which could be explained by their

geographical location and density of population, they do not explain it fully. As such the disparity between brand and reality persists, and treatment by this study of each as mutually exclusive phenomena is justified.

**Figure 20 - Map of Greater Manchester displaying brand classification for each borough, overlaid with urban density indicators**



It would seem reasonable at this stage to reiterate that many place brands appear to be very similar. Although classifications are possible, overall there are not huge differences between the constitution of the brands analysed in the research. So what are the possible reasons for this? Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008) suggest that place brands over focus on success stories. Richardson (2011), cutting to the root, suggests that urban branding could be defined as “evocative storytelling aimed at reducing.” Fesenmaier and MacKay (1996:39) suggest that branding... can leave much out.” As a result, place branding provides a “simplified impression of a place.” Sevin and Salcigil White (2010) support this by suggesting that place branding strategies are often very similar. Vargo and Lusch (2004), offer a suggestion of why

this is the case when they imply that the marketing principles of old are becoming dull and stale, and that there is an emerging realisation that it must change. Sackers (2012) suggests that “cities are very different yet they all represent themselves in a similar manner.” There is even a suggestion from Govers (2012), that “the kinds of identity being projected are at the best partial and at worst completely fictitious.” Murray (2001:12) suggests that current place branding practices, with some exceptions, “offer up the same mixture of messages for very different places, ignoring creativity and difference, and risking the alienation of local communities, often rendering the very places they are promoting unrecognisable to those that live there and to those that visit there.” Govers and Go (2009) suggest that current place marketing/branding material focuses on the past and is generally backward looking, representing places as culturally uniform, and as such constraining and diluting diversity.

Mommaas (2002: 20) adds that “the tradition of mass thinking has yielded a lot, but it does not seem capable of offering an effective response to the increasing need for individuality which, ironically enough, it has itself brought about.” Mommaas (ibid) continues, “Demand and supply seem to be sailing in opposite courses. While the public increasingly wants choice, diversity, distinguishing features and depth in order to enrich their own individuality and connect emotionally with its environment, what is on offer seems to be heading energetically towards monotony and predictability.” The suggestion being that places are losing the ability to differentiate themselves. Mommaas (ibid) continues, “they [places] are becoming impersonal, anonymous and, in the end, uninhabitable. The result being that there tends to be a similarly formulaic representation of every place” (ibid, 2002). It would therefore seem a reasonable suggestion that the practice could legitimately be referred to as ‘place blanding.’

However, aside from issues with place branding practice, there are those who take the view that it is the physical reality, as opposed to place branding’s representation of it, which is contributing to the homogeneity of place brands covered above. Florian (in Hauben et al, 2002:20) suggests that globalisation has reduced local and regional differences to such an extent that we are now living in a world dominated by a global monoculture so pervasive and so powerful that it “threatens the very identity and originality of our cities.” Florian (ibid) suggests that in marketing terms, cities are

faced with the paradoxical problem of constructing identities , “based on differences that disappear at a rate proportional to the growth of global sameness, and as the pace of globalisation increases, alternatives to the global monoculture disappear and cities are forced to compete with other cities in their region and around the world for market share using the same architectural, planning, and commercial chess board pieces given each of them by the global monoculture.” In this respect, is there little wonder that places are being marketed to appear the same – perhaps they are the same? Indeed, Dinnie (2008:163) suggests that branding/marketing is not the convenient scapegoat for the evils of consumerism and global capitalism which many would have it: “the truth, as always, is more complex and contradictory than this. It is in any case the unavoidable and necessary product of a free market economy: If nobody did branding/marketing at all, we could perhaps do without it.” But it is in use, and it is very popular, and therefore the question should be whether it is possible, despite the issues referred to above, to take steps to creating place brands which are representative, which do take into account the appropriate stakeholders, and which do reach and resonate with a wide audience of stakeholders – irrespective of whether the brand created is unique or different. After all, as Govers (2012) opines, in many cases, “people have the total set of images and associations with a place already – they cannot be fooled.” In addition, Cullen (1971) suggests, the physical and visual elements make up the brand of the place – and these cannot be faked. Again, the employment of the meronomy facilitates this requirement.

The initial taxonomy above has been produced using a clear and structured methodology which has moved through five levels of analysis to reach a conclusion. Whilst the taxonomy stands up to scrutiny, it is critical to reiterate that it deals with brands only, and should not be treated as a means of classifying the places themselves. As we have illustrated, there is a clear disparity between brand and reality. Despite the classifications of the boroughs’ brands being explicable to an extent by characteristics of the places themselves (geographical positioning, urbanity/rurality), there are clear anomalies which make this an incomplete endeavour. Furthermore, the classifications outlined in the taxonomy should not be viewed as a scale, in that there are no better or worse categories of classification, only different ones. For example, one might suggest that a brand in possession of

more manageable meronyms may be desirable, as it implies an element of flexibility and adaptability, however, equally there will exist proponents of brands which place emphasis on tangible, less manageable meronyms, particularly geographical aspects. It is impossible to suggest which is more desirable for a place brand, and indeed a place itself, to possess. What matters is that the attributes employed are authentic. Indeed, a similar differentiation in stance could be taken when looking at the range of meronyms utilised by the brands, something which we have taken to be indicative of thick and thin places. If we look at this in terms of brand and then 'reality'; the brand itself, using traditional product/corporate branding theory discussed in the review of the literature; should by 'traditional' standards be thin; targeted, focused, closed to interpretation. Whereas in 'reality' we would generally consider 'thick' places to be preferable to 'thin' places, the former in possession of multiple attributes which offer a diverse range of qualities that appeal to different types of consumer. These interpretations are at odds with another, and why we must treat the taxonomy as merely a means of distinguishing between brands, and not the places as they exist in reality, and further reason why the taxonomy is a means of classification, and not a means of ranking brands.

## **6.1 Conclusion**

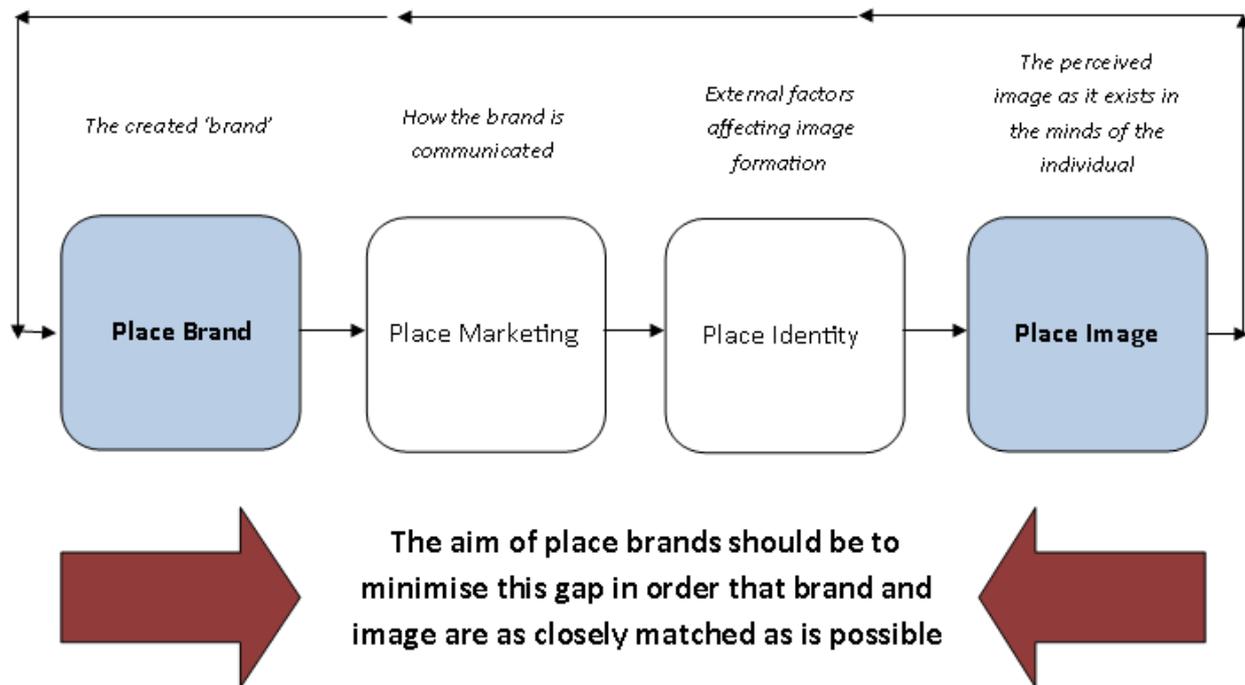
The review of extant literature has led us to the conclusion that places must be considered as living entities whose image is deciphered by its physical construct, its myriad inhabitants/visitors and the activity that takes place within – all of these factors combine to produce an image in the mind of the place consumer that forms over, as Lynch (1960 pp.1) suggests, "spans of time." As such, place image cannot be taken for granted as some kind of consistent, un-changing 'given'; instead, "they are processual, and evolve and adapt over time." (McCarthy, 2006). If we accept this notion, then we must accept that the only way to change a place's true brand – i.e. its image - is through changing the place itself. Consequently, we must accept that place images form 'organically' or 'naturally' (albeit in the sense that development of said image is linked to activity which could be deemed distant to the artificial brand cause), and over long periods. There can be no quick wins. As such, any attempt at forcing a brand on a place which does not correspond to an acceptable degree with reality – again, the image as it exists in peoples' minds - can only lead to disillusionment and negative feelings: Exactly the opposite of what the

many protagonists of place branding practice covered in the literature review are aiming to achieve.

Despite this, we must consider that an effort at influencing or re-enforcing the image of a place through the creation of a brand can be a success if it is done properly – whether or not this does influence the image or create a brand which is unique is another matter, as we have discussed. Nevertheless, place branding, when carried out using good practice in that it is representative of the place to which it is referring (read authentic, representative of a wide base of stakeholders, and possessing a rootedness gleaned from content being derived from the place itself) - may yield positive results.

We have seen that any attempt at a ‘good practice’ methodology of place brand creation could legitimately employ the use of relevant place attributes in order to inform the branding effort. However, we have also seen that ‘good practice’ should not be confused with ‘best practice’, the search for which will yield little or no success. Referring back to Figure 1, based on the findings of the research, the figure can be adapted slightly to illustrate that a successful place brand should seek to minimise the difference between what is being presented and the image that is being perceived, see Figure 21. This seems to be the achievement which all place branding attempts should be aiming for; to create a brand which can influence the image for the better, either by maintaining or improving it, in turn the gap between created brand and perceived image is narrowed.

**Figure 21 – Adaptation of Figure 1 based on research findings**



Whilst critics of place branding base their objections on a perceived lack of authenticity, the method of creating brands based on the attributes of a place is a means of ensuring to the greatest extent possible that authenticity is not compromised, whilst avoiding the complexities of stakeholder engagement. Again, instilling authenticity would therefore seem to represent the best possible means of narrowing the gap between brand and image.

However, as already opined, it appears that a 'best practice' methodology for this does not exist, as external factors affecting each individual place dictate that a more flexible stance must be taken, so by way of mitigating against the above concerns; the proposal is that 'good practice' should be the modus operandi. The creation of meronymy can assist with this. Although the meronymy was constructed in order to analyse existing brands, it also provides a logical framework for authorities to begin from when building their brand, in that it sets out a blueprint from which the brand can be created. By applying the attributes in the meronymy - as well as facilitating the development of a brand which encapsulates as many or as few attributes as desired (referring back to the notion of 'thick' and 'thin' places) - it also ensures that

the widely perceived pre-requisite for authenticity is adhered to. As such the reality of the place, which in turn informs the perceived image, is taken into account.

## **6.2 Reliability and validity of research**

There are two key aspects which could be seen as key limitations:

- The similarity of the places studied swaying the results accordingly
- The methodology employed not taking into account budgetary constraints of places

The first point is that the places being analysed are relatively similar, they are boroughs of Greater Manchester which sit adjacent to one another in a 493 square mile area. Whilst this is the case, there is a large degree of differentiation between the places covered to the extent that the reliability of the results is not adversely affected. An interesting avenue for further research would be to cross-reference the brand constitutions of places across the country, perhaps across the World, and in greater number, to form a more robust sample.

Secondly, the methodology employed, whilst robust, justified, and systematic, does not take into account factors such as budgetary constraint, this would add an interesting angle to any future research; in that the constitution of brands could be swayed by the budgets of the authority charged with it's the brand creation. Would an authority with a limited budget be forced to emphasise less manageable, more natural, aspects of place in their brand, and conversely would an authority with a larger, cross-departmental, budget choose to emphasise the leisure activities or cultural events that their budget affords? All of these are interesting angles which could be incorporated into future research.

The production of the initial taxonomy has provided a useful basis for future research aimed at deconstructing how place brands are formed, and how they can be classified accordingly. Future elaboration on this initial study should be aimed at increasing sample size and increasing the range and breadth of places covered – perhaps even cross-referencing different types of place as opposed to a single type. The methodology employed, and the results uncovered, have provided an interesting and original framework for future research which as well as allowing brands to be deconstructed and classified, may also have implications in terms of influencing how

the brands are constructed initially. Therefore from an academic and practice based perspective, there are many different routes to take, from which this research can provide a starting point. An important additional observation is that, again, the research has produced a classification tool, and not a ranking tool. So whilst the meronomy and taxonomy have many potential uses, both for practitioners and academics alike, it should not be confused as a means of establishing which brands are of a higher quality than others, the criteria for such a distinction has not been established in this research, and it is likely that any attempt to do so would be met with much contestation. Rather, the meronomy provides a means of deconstructing place brands into their constituent attributes, and the taxonomy facilitates the classification of said brands into groups based on their constitution. As a pre-cursor to any extended study that builds on this research, the results provide a useful and robust starting point.

### **6.3 Closing comments**

Despite the review of extant literature revealing that theorists are largely critiquing place branding practice; place branding is omnipresent throughout the World. This thesis has adopted a subjectivist influenced axiom in that place brands, as they have been largely perceived in the extant literature, in effect do not exist in realms that can be perceived from a singular viewpoint. True place brands are better described and perceived of as place image; natural, fragmented theoretical perceptions which people possess, these can be altered at any time by myriad factors which cannot be controlled – it therefore aids clarity to think of the ‘true brand’ as the image of the place.

However, in order to progress research in the area, it is necessary to put this view to one side and concentrate on the tangible brands that exist to promote places, to this end the objectivist viewpoint abides. Indeed, in many ways, the thesis has illustrated that the only way to examine place brands properly is by treating them as static, created interpretations of place. By removing any focus from the place the brand has been designed to represent, in effect cancelling out any question of legitimacy, we can present an uninhibited analysis of how these brands are constructed in an almost cold, considered manner. Whilst the majority of extant place brand research concentrates too much on the shortcomings of these brands and the folly of their

creation - often employing a theoretical or conceptual basis - this research has identified and accepted these shortcomings, acknowledging them as an inevitable by-product of applying branding methodology to a subject as complex, multi-levelled and ever-changing as places. By accepting that this will always be the case, to a greater or lesser extent, we can concentrate on empirically analysing the brands themselves, almost ruling the complex phenomena of place image out of the equation whilst employing a comparative approach.

So, whilst the proliferation of place branding practice shows no sign of waning, in order to research the subject, and apply a degree of objectivity that both aids the progression of theory and provides a practical benefit; it is important to view brands as mutually exclusive to the reality of place – which is too complex to be analysed and broken down for the purpose of meaningful research. ‘True’ brands exist only in the eye of the beholder in the form of the image they hold of a given place, and where place is concerned, the complex and myriad contributing factors dictate that each beholder’s view can be very different. Indeed, such is the diverse and complex nature of place, it is not possible to create a brand that is truly representative and meaningful to every consumer in that it matches the image that people hold, as the huge expanse of contributing factors that can affect our perceptions of place dictates. Instead, what has been suggested as good practice should be employed in order to best increase the probability of creating a brand which is representative of the place’s image - instilling requisite authenticity - and thereby narrowing the gap between the two and as such reducing the scope for contestation.

This thesis acknowledges the boundaries of legitimate study in the area, as such research is focused within said boundary, and is conducted on the content of the place brand, employing an empirical and comparative methodology to inform an initial classification tool which could also have an extended practical use in assisting with the formation of place brands. Unlike places, these place brands are static, and exist as their creators intended, they may not be ‘true’ brands – i.e. matching perceived images entirely (an impossibility due to external factors and the subsequent range of potential images being perceived at any time), but they are tangible and quantifiable signifiers of how places, or at least the local authorities responsible for their creation, wish themselves to be perceived. The meronymy which has been devised facilitates the initial intention of analysis which enables

classification, but it can also have an impact on how these brands are created in the first instance, and therefore the impact of this research is potentially significant.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Analysed brand prints used in content analysis

WLCT parks

# HAIGH HALL COUNTRY PARK

A great day out for the whole family

Learn More

In Cannock Chase? Here's what we do for you.

WLCT in Cannock

In Selby? Here's what we do for you.

WLCT in Selby

### What's On in Wigan?

All the great things that are happening this July

- Fri, 19 Jul • Parkvate
- Sat, 20 Jul • Rugby World Cup
- Sun, 21 Jul • Waders in Waders
- Sun, 21 Jul • Afternoon Tea
- Mon, 22 Jul • Summer Holiday Activity Days

### Haigh Hall

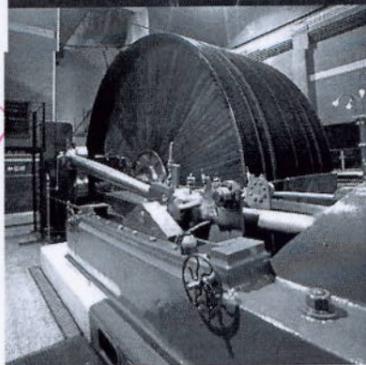
The Classic Venue for Business and Leisure

View Offers

### Visit the Museum of Wigan Life



### Steamy Sundays at Trencherfield Mill...



### Afternoon tea at the hall

Spoil yourself



## LATEST NEWS

### Rugby League World Cup trophy heads to Wigan

15 Jul 2013

MESNES Park, Museum of Wigan Life and Wigan Library are all stops on the Rugby League World Cup 2013 trophy tour.

Read More

### It's all that jazz in Wigan!

12 Jul 2013

THIS year's Wigan International Jazz Festival got off to a storming start with powerhouse performances from two popular orchestras

Read More

### Rugby league celebrations kick off

12 Jul 2013

IN the countdown to the Rugby League World Cup 2013 coming to town, the Museum of Wigan Life hosted an event to celebrate the history of the sport.

Read More

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- Open Information
- WLCT and the environment

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- Cultural Partnership
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- Haigh Hall and Country Park
- Heritage Services
- Library Services
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- Young People
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- Community Covenant

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- Home
- About Us
- Wigan Services
- News and Events
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# many places... one destination

Your online guide to all that's Oldham



17-07-2013

Search

- Home
- Accommodation
- Attractions
- Activities
- What's On
- Shopping
- Group Travel
- Food & Drink
- Travel & Maps
- Visitor Info



Welcome to the official tourism website for Oldham

Email this page | Print Page

Located in the North West, between Manchester and the beautiful Yorkshire countryside, there's more to Oldham than you think...

Vibrant cultural events and unique traditions like the Whit Friday Brass Band contests. Countryside escapes in the Peak District National Park and Oldham's country parks. Activities from outdoor pursuits to shopping in boutique shops and high street stores. Inspiring attractions like Gallery Oldham, Oldham Coliseum Theatre, historic canals and roman forts. A great choice of accommodation, perfect wedding venues and local food and drink.

This summer sees Oldham brimming with family fun and festivals! Look at our full list of events

## Accommodation Search

Type

-- Any --

Area

-- Any --

Show Results On Map

Search

+ A-Z Listing

## Itinerary Planner

Welcome to the Itinerary Planner. Use this tool to build your own journey.

Click Add to Itinerary to add an item to your Itinerary basket.

Save Itinerary

# familylife

Summer activities for toddlers to teens in Oldham

## Oldham Town Centre Flower Festival

Saturday 20 July  
from 11am to 3pm  
High Street



Get top tips from TV gardener Joe Swift

## Oldham Way Challenge

26 and 27 July



### Accommodation

Where to stay in Oldham...

Cherry Clough Farm House Accommodation 1 3 10  
Boothstead Farm 1 3 10

See more Oldham Accommodation

### Attractions

Welcome to the jungle...

Oldham Coliseum Theatre 2 10  
English Book Club Breaks 10  
Jubilee Colliery Nature Reserve 1 10

See more Oldham Attractions

### Activities

Prepare to be bowled over...

Moorland Waters 1  
Oldham Town Trail 1  
Oldham Way 1

See more Oldham Activities

### Oldham Famous Faces



Annie Kenney  
Find out about Annie Kenney here.



Carl Cox  
Find out about Carl Cox here.

### Where We Are



### Event Highlights

Off The Rails Comedy Club 17/07/2013 10 2

Adventure Based Learning Mountain Bike Taser Session 27/07/2013 1 10

See more of Event Highlights

Carl Cox



The Quays  
Home <sup>2 10</sup> What's on <sup>10</sup> Where to stay <sup>10 2</sup> What to see and do <sup>10</sup> Visitor information  
Search  Go  
You are here: Home

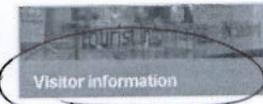
### Visit Salford | Discover the city

#### Welcome to Salford

It's a great time to find out more about the fascinating history and exciting future of our vibrant city. Ideally located next to our neighbour, Manchester, at the heart of England's north west, Salford offers enough arts, culture, sport, shopping, heritage, relaxation and stunning scenery to fill a day or a week.

2013 is set to be another packed year of fantastic events and exciting things to do in the city. Visit Salford and catch all the action at Salford City Stadium as we host the Rugby League World Cup 2013, head to MediaCityUK and explore the home of BBC in the North or explore the city's heritage with our Walks & Water programme. With all this and more lined up for the year ahead, plan your visit now. We look forward to welcoming you in 2013.



 <sup>10</sup> Summer in the City <sub>10</sub>	 <sup>4</sup> The Quays <sub>4 1</sub>	 <sup>10</sup> Visit Salford magazine <sub>10</sub>
 <sup>10</sup> Rugby League World Cup 2013 <sub>10</sub>	 <sup>10</sup> Walks & Water <sub>10 1 4</sub>	 <sup>10</sup> Visitor information <sub>10</sub>
 <sup>10</sup> What's on <sub>10</sub>	 <sup>2</sup> Visit Salford Film <sub>2 10</sub>	 Sign up for e-news

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**Our latest tweets**  
Perfect chance to get out on the water & discover #TheQuays Drive Walks & Water cruise on 28 July, 3, 7, 10 & 18 Aug  
<http://t.co/sDvAXUtDHJ>  
Check out the great line up of summer community events in Salford. Including Ordsall Festival 27 July.  
<http://t.co/IAryIOS8e>  
RT @dpates71: MaltDog Sharing Platters of Continental Meats & Speciality Cheese, soak up the heat outside with a chilled glass of farmbeds...  
Follow us on Twitter

Highlights this month  
Check out Salford's **Pinshere Project - 5. - 21. July** See this groundbreaking urban farm experiment as part of MIF 2013  
Walks & Water - Afternoon Tea Cruise - 14 July See Salford's 'two sides'; the historic surroundings of Worsley Village and the ultra-modern Quays

You are here: Things to Do > Healey Dell Nature Reserve & Tea Rooms

Search Accommodation 10

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Type: -- Any --

Location: -- Any --

Name

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Advanced Search

Location by Category

Search Events 10

Search Eating Out 10

My Shortlist

Build your own itineraries by clicking the button to add an item to your itinerary basket.

View Saved



## Things to Do

Whether you're a history fan, a walker or cyclist, a shopaholic or lover of drama you'll find plenty of things to do in and around Rochdale.

The modern Co-op movement started here and you can visit the original Co-op shop at the Pioneers' Museum in Rochdale town centre.

Littleborough and its Pennine hills are ideal for all types of countryside and outdoor pursuits. Middleton has heritage galleries and Heywood is the starting point for the East Lancashire Steam Railway - great for family fun.

Look at the pages on this site and then mix-and-match to create your ideal day out



## Recommended Things to Do

### Queen's Park



This stunning municipal park was originally presented to the people of Heywood by Queen Victoria in 1879. This Grade 2 listed park is of major landscape and historical importance, with paths and a lake to enjoy. The park also still features some fine original buildings and structures including...

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Number of items: 34, currently showing 1 to 10. Sort By: Please select

**Queen's Park**  
Municipal Park | Heywood  
This stunning municipal park was originally presented to the people of Heywood by Queen Victoria in 1879. This Grade 2 listed park is of major landscape and historical importance, with paths and a lake to enjoy. The park also still features some fine original buildings and structures including...

**Piethorne Valley**  
Lake / Reservoir | Rochdale  
Two miles from Hawley the six reservoirs in the Piethorne Valley are surrounded by open moorland. Walking allows in the lakes. The 'Moors and Waters' walk leaflet available from Rochdale Tourist Information Centre and the Manchester's Countryside website. Limited wheelchair access. Refreshments.

**Alkrington Woods Nature Reserve**  
Nature Reserve | Rhodes, Middleton  
Once part of the Alkrington Hall estate, this area of mature woodland provides an ideal habitat for a wide range of flora and fauna. Informal paths take the visitor through woodland along the banks of the River Irk and around the fishing lodges at Rhodes.

**East Lancashire Railway**  
Steam Railway | Bury  
The beautifully restored East Lancashire Railway takes you on a captivating journey to discover the region's rich transport heritage. Travel in vintage historic towns and picturesque villages and passing through some of the most beautiful scenery in the north.

**Rochdale Canal**  
Environmental Attraction | Littleborough  
First opened in 1809, the Rochdale Canal was the first trans-Pennine canal and one of the country's most spectacular waterways. An ambitious restoration programme resulted in the canal reopening along the entire 32 mile length in 2002. The canal runs from Manchester city centre, along the whole...

**Healey Dell Nature Reserve & Tea Rooms**  
Nature Reserve | Healey, Rochdale  
Healey Dell is a beauty spot and wildlife sanctuary rich in industrial archaeology, two miles from Rochdale town centre on the way to Whitehead and Bacup. The River Spoken has carved its way through the uplands down thousands of years, creating delightful scenery and spectacular waterfalls which...

**Ellenroad Engine House**  
Museum | Rochdale  
Built in 1892 on the banks of the River Irk, the Ellenroad cotton mill produced fine cotton yarn using mule spinning. Nowadays, Ellenroad Engine House is home to the largest surviving spinning-mill steam engine. See the restored 5,000 horsepower twin engine, Victoria and Alexandra, the 80 ton...

**Touchstones Rochdale**  
Museum | Rochdale  
An award winning Arts & Heritage Centre with an Art Gallery, Museum, Visitor Information Centre & Local Studies Centre & Cafe. Just two minutes walk from the town centre shopping and is convenient for car parks and public transport. Nearby attractions include Rochdale Town Hall and the Pioneer...

**Hollingworth Lake Country Park and Visitor Centre**  
Lake / Reservoir | Rochdale  
In Victorian times Hollingworth Lake was known as the 'The Weavers' Seaport'. Now once again visitors can enjoy many outdoor attractions and an excellent Visitor Centre. Spanning 118 acres with the dramatic backdrop of Blackstone Edge, the lake is one of the most popular days out in the area...

**Watergrove Reservoir**  
Lake / Reservoir | Wardle, Rochdale  
High in the Pennines above Wardle village, the area around Watergrove Reservoir includes walking trails with spectacular views, bird watching, fishing and a link to the Pennine Bridleway. The open moorland above Watergrove makes for a more rugged landscape than the lower valleys. The area...



Your guide to Manchester  
The official destination website for Manchester

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Manchester... do something different this summer

What's on

- Manchester International Festival
- SEA LIFE Manchester now open at Intu Trafford Centre
- Bolton Food & Drink Festival
- Manchester Jazz Festival
- Ironman UK Triathlon

More events

Most popular

- MOSI
- National Football Museum
- Top 5 restaurants
- Manchester United Museum and Tour
- IWM North

See what the locals like



Naomi Kashiwagi's Top 5

More locals like

Visit Manchester  
Like 11,247  
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Take an interactive tour at The Theatre of Dreams, home of Manchester United, this summer #MCRsummer  
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Blending historical exhibits with state-of-the-art interactive

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  - Apply For It
  - Say It
- Related Links
  - Museums & Galleries
  - Mossley Industrial Heritage Centre
  - Shop at Ashton
- Page Rating

Discover Tameside Home -> Leisure and culture -> Tourism and travel -> Local attractions

### Discover Tameside The Undiscovered Gem of the North West Tameside has something for everyone!

Enjoy a visit to one of our traditional market towns or relive the past at the exciting Portland Basin Museum.

#### This is a taster of what's on offer...



The Central Art Gallery in Ashton-under-Lyne has been totally refurbished to provide three excellent galleries. Paintings, sculptures and textiles are part of wide range of temporary exhibitions on show at the gallery. Also, the Astley Cheetham Art Gallery in Stalybridge has exciting exhibition programmes, plus a permanent collection of paintings from the 14th and 15th centuries.

The recently reopened Huddersfield Narrow Canal is just one of the canals to explore in Tameside and provides the opportunity to see spectacular Pennine scenery, while heritage cruises run throughout the summer from Portland Basin Museum.

Tameside has strong cultural links.

- Events Calendar
- Brass Band Festivals - Whit Friday
- Central Art Gallery
- Astley Cheetham Art Gallery
- Mossley Industrial Heritage Centre



Every June the Tameside Brass Band Festival attracts the very best brass bands from around the world. The picturesque Portland Basin Museum, situated at the confluence of three canals is the ideal place to discover the area's mining, glass making, hatting, gloving, textiles and canal heritage. With a chance to play hopscotch on the authentic 1920's street, it's a truly 'hands-on' experience.

Visit the Museum of the Manchester Regiment at Ashton Town Hall to hear the colourful story of the Manchester Regiment and see what life was like in a World War I trench.

Why not also take time to discover the Tameside Trail, the Tame Valley Way or the Etherow Goyt Valley Way which gives you the chance to experience and discover spectacular countryside right on the edge of the Pennines, with help from wardens based at the network of countryside centres. A full programme of events and walks is available on request.

- Portland Basin Museum
- Museum of the Manchester Regiment
- Countryside



There's a whole world of shopping to explore in Tameside from historic markets to mill shops and shopping centres. Ashton-under-Lyne has one of the oldest and largest markets in the North West, which attracts and fascinates visitors from far and wide.

Denton, Hyde and Mossley also offer the opportunity to enjoy the atmosphere of traditional market towns.

Ashton is host to the biggest Farmers' and Producers' Market in the region on the last Sunday of each month, with something for everyone from home-baked cakes to aromatherapy products.

- Hyde - Wed-Sat (Flea-Mon)
- Mossley - Thurs
- Droylsden - Tues, Fri, Sat

- Tameside Markets
- Car Parks in Tameside
- Shop at Ashton - www.shopatashton.com



Just seven miles east of Manchester and set in the foothills of the Pennines, Tameside offers the true blend of town and country with so much to explore.

Enjoy the hustle and bustle of market towns, idyllic Pennine villages, scenic canals, and experience the lifestyles, industries and crafts of previous generations.

While in Tameside don't miss Stalybridge Station's Buffet Bar, which retains many of the original features of the station's Victorian Refreshment Room, and take a step back in time at Wendy's Memory Lane on Stamford Street in Ashton where you'll find the largest collection of Shirley Temple memorabilia in the World!

Tameside is easily accessible - The M60, (J23,24) and the M67 link Tameside to the national motorway network.

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Page last updated: 3 May 2013



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## Visit Stockport

Welcome to Stockport



This is your one stop guide to everything you need to know in order to make your visit to Stockport memorable.

1

2

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### Museums and Galleries

Discover Stockport's museums and galleries and explore their hidden treasures



### Shop Stockport

Stockport is serious when it comes to shopping, that's why we're one of the North West's favourite shopping destinations.



### Stockport Tourist Information Centre

Discover more about Stockport at Stockport Tourist Information Centre



### Things to see and do

Explore Stockport's attractions, shopping and shows



### Tourist Information

Discover for yourself what Stockport has to offer

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- Food and Drink
- Where to Stay
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- Venues For Hire
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- Download walking routes to Dunham
- Download a Gardener's Guide
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## WHAT'S ON

- 19/07/2013 Tai Chi and Qi Gong
- 20/07/2013 Tai Chi and Qi Gong
- 22/07/2013 Summer Holiday Football Multi-sport Competitions
- 22/07/2013 Tai Chi and Qi Gong
- 25/07/2013 Trafford Business Network Conference Event
- 26/07/2013 Tai Chi and Qi Gong
- 27/07/2013 The Magical Playground
- 29/07/2013 Summer Holiday Arts and Dance Course

## Visit Trafford



Just 41 square miles Trafford is easy to get around and a short journey transports you from the urban airport and waterfront area in the North of Trafford bordering Manchester to the fashionable suburb and rural offer of the south bordering Cheshire. Visitors can sample award winning leisure attractions and recreational spots as well as having the opportunity to participate in a wide range of activities. Shopping is one of the nation's favourite pastimes, and Trafford has it all from outdoor markets to traditional town centres and the stunning Trafford Centre. If you want to take time out for something to eat or drink Trafford is blessed with a myriad of places from a light lunch to a celebration dinner.

Visit Altrincham in December for a host of Christmas events.

Explore our web site to ensure you make the most of your visit to Trafford, if you need any further help please contact our Tourist Information Centre who will be delighted to help you. You can find the details on the contact us page.

For disability access information for a range of venues please follow this link Disabled Go.

What is RSS? | All Events >>

**Trafford Tourist Information Centre**  
 Stamford New Road  
 Altrincham.  
 WA14 1EJ  
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**TRAFFORD COUNCIL**

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# Visit Bolton

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What's new 10 Group travel 10 Win a prize 10

Read all about it... Got a group? Win a prize

## Welcome to Bolton

Want to know more about one of the UK's friendliest towns? Then look no further...

Choose Bolton for a visit and you'll be glad you did. Our great location, just 20 minutes north of Manchester, combined with our ease of access to some of the North West's most breathtaking countryside makes Bolton the ideal location for a day out or short break.



Bolton is proud to host the Ironman UK Triathlon on 4th August 2013. Many hotels and guesthouses have provided special accommodation packages for the event weekend. Check out this year's spectator guide for details of how to watch the race.

This year's Bolton Food and Drink Festival takes place between Friday 23 and Monday 26 August 2013. TV celebrity chefs Michael Caines, Paul Hollywood and Mary Berry, Aldo Zilli and James Martin are performing live, with tickets available now at just £5 per person.

IRON IDS

Entries only £2

Saturday 3 August 2013

All about fun and healthy living

Register at www.ironkids.co.uk

IRONKIDS UK BOLTON ENGLAND

IRON IDS

Entries only £2

Saturday 3 August 2013

www.ironkids.co.uk



## Welcome to Bury

2010 was an exciting year for Bury as lots of changes took place to make Bury an even better place to visit, shop, work or live. Why not plan your next visit to Bury and take a look round this site to find out what's happening.... we think you will be Bury surprised!

**Bury exciting** **Bury beautiful** **Bury tasty** **Bury proud**

**Shop till you drop**

With the new the newest retail development in the UK now open for business at The Rock, Bury's shopping offer just got better. Both The Rock and the Mill Gate Shopping Centre are open 7 days a week so it really means you can really shop 'till you drop in Bury!

City Centre fashion has arrived in Bury with a new Primark, Debenhams, Prim and a bigger Next, Ever Island and M&S coming to the town centre. Coupled with the town's award winning market which provides a treasure trove of items and the borough's independent shops Bury has a lot to offer, so much so we think you will be Bury surprised!

## Bury important news

- 1st Feb 12 | Be part of it - an Olympic legacy for Bury  
Be part of it - an Olympic legacy for Bury Event organisers arranging Olympic-inspired events in Bury during 2012 are being offered the opportunity to link their event with "Bury be part of it", Bury's local Cultural Olympiad campaign. Inspired by London 2012, the aim of "Bury be part of it" is to... Read More Be part of it - an Olympic legacy for Bury
- 4th May 11 | East Lancashire Railway breaks visitor records with Day Out With Thomas, & Co!  
The East Lancashire Railway (ELR) saw a phenomenal turnout over the May bank holiday weekend as it welcomed back Thomas and Friends™ after several years of absence. The three day event from Saturday 30th April until Monday 2nd May saw close to 8,500 visitors flocking to the railway to see Thomas and Friends... Read More East Lancashire Railway breaks visitor records with Day Out With Thomas, & Co!

- 20th Apr 11 | Day Out With Thomas, & Co! Event programme launched
- 20th Apr 11 | Made in Lancashire chocolate scoops prestigious international food award
- 19th Apr 11 | Radcliffe Farmer's Markets
- 19th Apr 11 | Sunshine Chocolate Festival
- 2nd Mar 11 | Fairtrade boost for Chocolate Festival