

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL
ENVIRONMENT: THE ROLE OF PLACE BRANDING AS A TOOL OF LOCAL
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN ONTARIO, CANADA

(Thesis Format: Monograph)

By

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Abstract

Over the past three decades, place branding has emerged as a strategy for local economic development for municipalities in Canada and globally, as communities seek to (re)assert themselves in a dynamic global economic market. Due to the infancy of the research domain – as it has only been in the last 15 years that place branding has received critical academic attention – there are several major lacunae within the existing scholarship: (i) current research is primarily focussed on Europe; (ii) research has mainly focused on nation branding and the largest urban centres, so place branding within ‘typical’ municipalities is not well understood; (iii) there are few testable models or hypotheses that have been developed; (iv) most is conducted through one-off case studies, and therefore it is difficult to make generalizations or conclusions; and (v) most place branding privileges tourism attraction as the context of study.

To expand existing research, a mixed-method approach was adopted drawing on statistical, spatial, and qualitative methods to explore the breadth and depth of the place branding issue in Ontario. Statistical analysis was used to examine the usage and message of place branding in Ontario’s municipalities ($n = 414$). Spatial analysis examined the underlying spatial pattern of the place brands, and attempted to find potential locations for municipal collaborations. Finally, in-depth interviews were conducted with key stakeholders connected with place branding process to gain insight into the background, rationale, process, and utility of place branding. The results of the three phases of research show that place branding is occurring in a majority of Ontario’s municipalities (in well over 90% municipalities). The distribution of place brands show that they are not random, and that municipalities with similar brands tend to cluster together, providing an opportunity for inter-regional collaborations. Finally, the results show that municipalities are using similar approaches to ensure economic advancement and that place branding is seen as critical component of local development. The findings call for the inclusion of place branding as a local strategy for economic growth; however, it requires readjustment in the brand positioning to allow greater effectiveness in attraction of target audiences.

Keywords: Place Branding, Economic Development, Business Attraction, Entrepreneurial City, Policies, Municipalities, Ontario.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“Places are potentially the world’s biggest brands.”

(Morgan *et al*, 2002b, p. 4)

“Branding may be good for some places, but is not the universal panacea to be applied as a last resort when other policies have proved to be ineffective.”

(Ashworth, 2010, p. 251)

1.1 Research Background

Places have long felt the need to differentiate themselves from their neighbours and competitors, to assert their individuality in the quest of economic, political, and socio-psychological objectives. Anholt (2006, p. 18) has argued that this need to differentiate often is necessitated by incomplete information held by the consumer, noting that “unless one has lived in a particular city or has a good reason to know a lot about it, the chances are that one thinks about it in terms of a handful of qualities or attributes, a promise, some kind of story.” As such, place brands are more complex than simply a logo or slogan with which they are commonly associated. Within contemporary research, a place brand is described as the reputation about a place (Anholt and Hildreth, 2005), the association in the mind of the place consumer (Braun, 2012; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005; Zenker, 2011; Zenker and Braun, 2010), or a shared but selective symbol for the place (Boisen *et al*, 2011). To achieve a positive reputation or association, place brands have to be managed. If left unattended, a municipality’s reputation will continue to

develop, however it may take a form that is uncondusive to local social and economic development goals.

As a result, place branding has become an increasingly important item on the policy agenda of government at all geographic scales. The perceived need for place brands has led municipalities of all sizes to spend on place branding initiatives. Lucarelli and Berg (2011) and Seisdodos (2006) reported from the 2005 Euro-cities Questionnaire that the average per capita city marketing budget allocated for city branding was approximately €400,000/city, ranging from £130,000 to €10 million per year. In Canada, place branding is also receiving political attention and investment. In Ontario, for instance, the City of Brampton have spent considerable financial resources (approximately \$CAN 500,000 in 2012/13 as part of a \$CAN 1,500,000 strategic communications budget) to redevelop their visual identity. Brampton's B...More; B...Extraordinary' campaign was designed to compile the social and economic flavours of the city into a single focal point through the brand image (City of Brampton, 2012). As well, the City of Toronto spent \$CAN 4,000,000 in 2005 to develop its 'Toronto Unlimited' tourism and investment attraction brand.

Large cities are not the only municipalities in Ontario that are undertaking branding exercises. From 2008 to 2012 the Town of Innisfil spent \$CAN 42,000 on developing a new logo (Kirkby *et al*, 2013). Additionally, the Municipality of Port Hope spent \$CAN 100,000 (or 1% of their 2012 annual budget) in an attempt to develop a new logo (Vyhnak, 2013). The nearby Municipality of Brighton is following Port Hope's lead and undertaken a re-imaging, and has entered into the process of redeveloping their local brand. Unlike Port Hope, however, Brighton is not specifically developing a new set of

visual images, but plan to develop a final brand backbone from existing economic, social, and political programs in place (Municipality of Brighton, 2013). These are just a handful of examples that demonstrate an active process of branding or rebranding within Ontario's municipalities.

Place branding is generally viewed as an important initiative in the contemporary global landscape – which is characterized by converging markets and strong competition for increasingly mobile talent, business, and investment, compelling municipalities to differentiate themselves amongst a myriad of competitors, and appearing attractive to facilitate the best opportunities for economic growth (Allen, 2007; Anholt, 2009; Hansen, 2010; Papadopolous, 2004; Pasquinelli, 2010, 2013). Bergquist (2009) and Scott and Storper (2003) argue that many markets can now be regarded as global because of the increase in international trade and foreign direct investment; however, with the revolution in information communication technologies – facilitated by the development of the internet – it can now be argued that *all* markets are global, regardless of size, location, or type. Indeed, as processes of globalization facilitate increased interconnection within national and transnational economies, places are facing greater competition in both their external and domestic markets (Pasquinelli, 2013). Place branding, as a result, has become an increasingly important item on the policy agenda of local government at all geographic scales.

In response to the issues surrounding globalization of economies, public authorities have been forced to adopt an entrepreneurial approach to local economic development (Kirby and Kent, 2010; Pasquinelli, 2013), with officials initiating programs – including place branding – to enhance the material and fiscal state of their municipality

(Arku, 2013). In its truest sense, place branding is an exercise in economic competition as municipalities at all geographic scales vie for a stronger position in the global hierarchy. Within this jockeying for position – occurring at local, regional, and global scales – municipality assets and economic strengths are often branded to create an image and identity conducive to attracting and retaining resources (Anholt, 2005a; Kavaratzis, 2005; Papadopoulos, 2004; Pasquinelli, 2010). As Pasquinelli (2013, p. 1) argues “place branding consists in an adaptation of business theories and practices to places with an emphasis on corporate branding in order to establish a fair reputation and build a brand equity supporting the pursued development path.” In this sense, places are not dissimilar from companies, as they encounter stiff competition in the pursuit of economic development. The role of place branding for a municipality is to position itself strongly by communicating the unique advantages of the place, to make itself an attractive location for investments, tourists, or talents. According to Anholt (2005b, p. 119), “a globalized world is a marketplace where country has to compete with country – and region with region, city with city – for its share of attention, of reputation, of spend, of goodwill, of trust.” Globalization and the unbridled flow of investment have made a place’s ability to attract attention crucial to economic development (Lebedenko 2004; Pasquinelli, 2013), and therefore, place branding is essential for geographies that desire to remain economically relevant (Blakely and Green Leigh, 2013; Gertner and Kotler 2004).

The ability of municipalities, therefore, to develop and market cohesive, comprehensive brands has been identified as an important tool for continuing economic development, as well as maintaining existing relationships with investors and businesses (Allen, 2007; Papadopoulos, 2004). That is, areas best able to project a coherent, positive

image and articulate a unique and meaningful identity are likely to see economic benefits (Harvey and Young, 2012); or as Ryu and Swinney (2011, p. 82) put it, "...more likely to survive and grow compared with the ones that fail to promote this distinguishable municipality brand identity." Simply put, place branding is now regarded as a crucial policy tool of economic development for urban regions and towns, and a key resource for competitiveness. This process is integrated into the large concept of place management (Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2009; Kavaratzis, 2005; Pasquinelli, 2010), and includes a wide range of activities and approaches (Anholt, 2005b; Hanna and Rowley, 2008; Kim, 2008). It starts, however, with a careful analysis of the place's current situation – current reputation, available assets, aspirations, opportunities, and audiences (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2009). The second step is identifying and choosing a strong guiding vision and the goals of the branding initiative. This is followed by the phase of active implementation of the place brand (Ashworth and Voogd, 1994). Finally, the process ends with monitoring and regularly evaluating the results of the place brand initiatives. It is important to note that place branding, though a wide process, does not replace marketing, but works in conjunction to communicate the place's message (Kavaratzis, 2004).

Despite the increase in adoption, Anholt (2006) argues that most existing brands of municipalities do not always reflect the economic, social, political, or cultural identity. Some places do not attract the needed investment or the right kind of talent because they are ineffectively communicating to a target audience with a brand that is weak or malaise. Equally though, other places are reaping benefits from positive brands (Anholt, 2006). It is vital that stakeholders within municipalities understand their brand, and how they are

viewed by potential visitors, investors, customers, and future citizens around the world. If there is a schism between the current identity being projected and reality, decisions need to be made on how best to close the gap. This is particularly true in the era of internet communication, where municipality information is regularly accessible from any locale across the globe.

Although place branding has attracted increased academic attention over the past few decades (for example Anholt, 2007, 2010; Dinnie, 2004; Kavaratzis, 2009), it is characterized by several major lacunae. First, studies have predominantly been situated in Europe (Eshuis and Edwards, 2012; Hansen, 2010; Niedomysl, 2008). The few studies in countries such as Canada have focused on primary cities, most notably Toronto and Montreal (Lucarelli and Berg, 2011). Second, existing studies have primarily focused on case-examples, conducted on single or small groups of places (Harvey and Young, 2012; Ikuta *et al*, 2007; Lee and Jain, 2009; Ooi, 2008; Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002; Rausch, 2008). Third, a significant portion of the discourse has centred on tourism and neglected other sectors of economic development (Gnoth, 2002; Hankinson, 2004). Additionally, contemporary place branding has evolved to include discussion on advanced (Anholt, 2005b, 2009), complex and corporate brand structures (Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2009; Hankinson, 2009; Pasquinelli, 2010), even though simple visual identities are still being readily developed and utilized by municipalities of all types and sizes (Cassel, 2008; Florek *et al*, 2008; Kim, 2010). This bifurcation of the place branding research domain has led to discrete segments of research, where little is done to examine place branding in a comprehensive manner.

The present research, therefore, fills several existing gaps in place branding and economic development scholarship. First, there is little understanding on the state of place branding in Ontario: *what* places are being branded, and *how* they are being branded. As a result, an Ontario-based study, considering a higher number of distinct municipalities within a geographic region is a novel area of research. Second, considering visual identity allows several previously unasked research questions to be answered: (i) do *size*, *type*, and *location* of the municipality affect whether branding occurs? (ii) is there a relationship between municipality *size*, *type*, or *location* and the articulated identity – that is, the visual elements that are displayed through simple place branding? and (iii) do the identities in the municipalities reflect the economic reality of the province? Third, is there a structure to the spatial pattern of place brands in the province that could allow for inter-municipality cooperation?

Along with the above, several in-depth questions remain around place branding in Ontario, most notably: what is the perception amongst economic development practitioners regarding place branding? How do local practitioners perceive place branding initiatives—that is, whether the existing initiatives are perceived to be successful at fostering economic development, and whether place branding is being used appropriately. Through qualitative research involving local economic development practitioners, brand consultants, and site selectors the process of place branding as a tool of economic development is thoroughly examined from initial development to consumption. In particular, the role of private consultants in the development of place brands and issues surrounding place branding to recruit industry and their effect on site

selectors is examined. Finally, the effects of place branding on ability of municipalities to attract and retain business will help close the knowledge gap on branding outcomes.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem and Objectives

This research fills several existing gaps in the literature: i) it considers branding through a geographical context, rather than through a marketing lens, as has been previously done (see Anholt, 2005b; Ashworth and Kavartzis, 2009; Hanna and Rowley, 2008); ii) it provides a Canadian perspective at the municipality level by examining place branding in Ontario; iii) it considers the issues surrounding both simple and advanced place brands, integrating both into the issue of economic development; and iv) it considers municipality branding over a wider range of municipalities to identify the full spectrum of branding strategies and how they change over space, rather than focusing on single examples.

To address the gaps in the literature, the research was framed around a single, broad question: *What is the state of place branding as a policy tool for economic development in Ontario municipalities?* To explore this broad question, three more focused research objectives (RO) were investigated:

RO1 – To ascertain the extent of prevalence of place branding in Ontario’s municipalities, identify the brand messages being communicated, and to investigate whether municipality characteristics affect the occurrence and message.

RO2 – To contextualize place branding within the economic development issues of cooperation and competition, and to consider the potential for inter-regional place branding opportunities within the province.

RO3 – To provide an extensive and in-depth exploration of place branding, and the process of place branding, from conception and rationalization, through development and implementation, and ultimately to consumption.

To address the research question and its objectives, three stages of analysis was conducted. First, an extensive review of simple place branding in all of Ontario's municipalities was undertaken to identify the important economic sectors in which place branding is being used as a tool to promote development. Additionally, this analysis helps to identify core messages being promoted by municipalities. This stage of investigation identifies whether municipality type, size, and location in the province has any bearing on the existence or message of simple place branding efforts.

Second, spatial analysis examines the pattern of place brand distribution across Ontario's municipalities. This stage determines whether there is an underlying structure to arrangement of place brands, and identifies clusters that have the potential for cooperation. This section is situated within the context of cooperation and competition in place branding, and, more generally, economic development. The first two phases of research are framed by specific research hypotheses and tried through statistical analysis and hypothesis testing.

The third level of analysis closely examines the processes of place branding initiatives in Ontario's municipalities, providing an in-depth contextualization to the more wide-ranging analysis that occurs in the first two phases. This approach examines the messages that municipalities are cultivating and the processes involved with place branding, including: what are the motivations and rationales for place branding, key factors that help or hinder the process, the key stakeholders that shape these messages, what assets are being leveraged, what channels of communication are being used, who is the target audience of the place brand, and how the place brands consumed by the target

audience. Finally, this section also considers how municipalities track the outcome of branding initiatives. Data for this phase of analysis was obtained from three key stakeholders: (1) economic development practitioners (n = 25) who provided insight into what place branding process are currently ongoing; (2) brand consultants (n = 10) who provided an expert perspective to contextualize municipality branding efforts; (3) site selectors/location scouts (n = 10) who considered the target audience for economic development place branding, and used to identify strengths and weaknesses in the messages being presented by municipalities.

Overall this thesis is situated squarely within the issues of economic development, globalization, economic cooperation and competition, and global economic restructuring and policy responses. It explores the extent to which place branding has penetrated the field of economic development. Within the multi-method approach, the issue of place branding is investigated from multiple dimensions. As a result, this thesis considers not only *what* is being branded, but *how* the brand is being constructed, *why* there is a need for place brands, and *who* has influence on the process.

1.3 Study Area: Municipalities of Ontario

This section provides an overview of the Province of Ontario and the justification for the selection of its municipalities as the basis for the research context. The section also provides an institutional context of economic development within Ontario, as well as a brief overview of existing knowledge of economic development and place branding within the province.

1.3.1 Why Ontario?

Ontario is Canada's most populous province, home to about 13 million of Canada's 34 million inhabitants, distributed over 414 lower and single-tier municipalities. An important criterion for selection of Ontario within this study is the diversity of municipalities engaged in place branding, ranging in size from townships with 150 inhabitants to a metropolis of over 2 million residents.

Additionally, Ontario represents one of Canada's most important economic markets. In 2011, Ontario's gross domestic product (GDP) was approximately \$CAN 638 billion, contributing between 37% and 40% of Canada's total GDP and 45% and 50% of Canada's manufacturing GDP (Statistics Canada, 2012). Business activity in Ontario – manufacturing, retail trade, construction, finance – accounts for 45% of the province's GDP (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2012). The province also has strong traditions of agriculture (13% of the GDP; Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2012), culture (4%; Singh, 2004) and tourism (3%; Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, 2013), and is a centre for urban economic development through the cultivation of knowledge economies, information and technology clusters, and the creative class (Florida, 2012; Gertler, 2002; Lucas *et al*, 2009). The diversity of the economy allows municipalities a range of potential assets in which to communicate through place branding.

Since the 1980s, Ontario has been forced to cope with the challenges of significant economic restructuring caused by globalization and neo-liberal policy making. Ontario's historical strengths in traditional manufacturing sectors, such as automotive and steel, have faced restructuring; and along with emerging advanced industry sectors face increased competition to maintain their global niches (Bradford and Wolfe, 2013).

Municipalities which had previously prospered from the presence of large manufacturing complexes were forced to cope with the aftermath of industrial restructuring and shifting of capital to more productive areas of the economy and different methods of industrial organization (Tassonyi, 2005; Wolfe and Gertler, 1999). Additionally, Ontario has been affected by the ongoing global economic crisis, which started in 2008. The province has suffered from a range of economic problems, such as closures of traditional industries, fiscal stress and rising unemployment (Arku, 2013). For example, the City of London, Ontario has faced continual stress over the past two decades from the pressures of economic restructuring. Bradford (2008, 2010) notes that London faced decline of financial services in the 1990s due to the emergence of North American free trade and a major decline in manufacturing (a loss of 41% of the workforce) in the economic recession of the 2000s. London, however, is not alone in its struggles. Overall, the challenges of the changing economy have affected the fortunes of most municipalities and communities in Ontario and their approaches to local economic development (Bourne *et al*, 2010; Hutton, 2010; Vinodrai, 2010). By necessity, municipalities in Ontario have become very pro-active in their economic development efforts.

1.3.2 Institutional Context

Ontario municipalities, however, are creatures of the provincial government, and through the *Municipal Act* face a range of legislative restraints that define the scope of their power. Specifically, the province holds an array of historical institutional controls that define the tools available to municipalities in the area of economic development. Municipalities in Ontario have the authority and responsibility to provide basic services,

to develop appropriate infrastructure, and negotiate financing to carry out their mandate as set out by provincial statutes and regulations. Direct financial assistance by municipalities to business, however, has been forbidden since 1880s (Gertler 1990; Tassonyi, 2005). The subsequent *Acts* have carried this prohibition forward, with the 2001 Act, for instance stating that:

“A municipality is not permitted, despite any Act, to assist any manufacturing business or other industrial or commercial enterprise, either directly or indirectly, through the granting of bonuses.”

In essence, this statute makes it difficult for municipalities to utilize any of the following practices without explicit consent of the province: (a) giving or lending any property or money that is controlled by the municipality; (b) guaranteeing borrowing of monetary funds; (c) leasing or selling any property held by the municipality at below fair market value; or (d) giving a total or partial exemption from any levy, charge, or fee (see section 106(2) of the *Municipal Act*).

There are a few areas under the *Municipal Act* where municipalities have some flexibility. In particular, there is the ability to deliver incentives for heritage development and brownfield redevelopment within a municipality development plan (Tassonyi, 2005; Reese and Sands, 2007). A potential avenue for business expansion and retention is the ability for municipalities to waive development charges for businesses for certain areas of their jurisdiction (e.g., downtown, business parks) and to provide serviced land at competitive market prices. They also have flexibility with respect to the establishment of small businesses, acquisition and sales of properties to small businesses, and the establishment of economic development corporations.

Overall, the hierarchical restrictions on the province's municipalities have guided the approach to economic development. Gertler (1990, p. 43) argued that:

“such restrictive provincial statutes have important implications for the manner in which local governments fashion and pursue their own economic development strategies, since they are constrained from engaging fully in the kind of competitive inter-jurisdictional bidding for economic activity that American municipalities have developed.”

Due to these restrictions, municipalities in Ontario have been compelled to find creative ways to enhance the economic growth and competitiveness of their jurisdiction, particularly as other Canadian provinces (e.g. Alberta) and American states have taken a more liberal, free market approach to local economic development. As a result of the need for creativity, there has been increased emphasis on place management – including place branding – to positively promote the municipality to draw in tourists, talent, and business. The leveraging of local attributes, such as waived development charges or existing infrastructure, are methods of managing the identity, image, and reputation of the municipality. Reese and Sands (2007) have shown that the occurrence of municipality promotion has occurred at a higher rate than the neighbouring state of Michigan, which traditionally has more lenient policies toward municipality spending to attract and retain business.

1.4 Methodological Approach

The issue of place branding is one that requires both *broad* and *deep* examinations to fully explore how and why it is being increasingly used in the contemporary global economic landscape. It is broad because it is being adopted by a wide range of municipalities, and deep as each place has its own rationales, motivations, comprehensions, and understandings of place branding. Previous exploration of the issues

surrounding place branding, particularly for exploring a single phenomenon, has privileged qualitative methods of data collection. A limiting factor within the research domain, however, has been the lack of adoption of primary research techniques in favour of utilizing secondary sources. The result of this is a research field that contains description and contextualization; however, the external validity of the research results is uncertain, because of the prevalence of qualitative studies using secondary sources and a general lack of research questions, research goals, theory building or hypothesis and model development and testing. This issue is furthered by the lack of quantitative research that extends beyond descriptive statistics. With so few hypothesis, statistical or otherwise, being developed and tested it is difficult to extrapolate or transpose the information derived into other contexts. To address both the breadth and depth of the issues, this thesis utilizes a mixed-method approach to analysis, using quantitative and qualitative approaches to more fully explore the research domain.

Mixed-methods research is becoming increasingly incorporated into research designs, to the point that it has been described by Johnson *et al* (2007, p. 112) as “the third major research approach or *research paradigm*, along with qualitative research and quantitative research.” Proponents of mixed research (see Creswell and Clark, 2007; Denzin, 2010; Greene *et al*, 1989; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson *et al*, 2007) follow two general principles: first, the idea of the compatibility thesis, where qualitative and quantitative methods are compatible and therefore can be used in a single research study (Yanchar and Williams, 2006); and second, a philosophy of pragmatism, where the research should use the approach (or mixture thereof) that works best to explain the phenomenon being examined (Morse, 2003). Indeed, the approach that is best suited

should be used regardless of any philosophical or paradigmatic assumptions (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003; Johnson *et al*, 2007). Compared to the traditional approaches to research, mixed-methods research involves the use of both qualitative and quantitative methods and provides a more comprehensive understanding of the subject being studied (Johnson *et al*, 2007; Morse, 2003). It has the ability to use words, images, and narratives to add meaning to numbers, while simultaneously using the numbers to add precision (Greene *et al*, 1989). It has the ability, therefore, to contextualize information gathered in the collection process.

The rationale for adopting a mixed-method approach for this research is fourfold. First, mixed-methods allows for the answering of a broader and more complete range of research questions as the study is not confined to a single research paradigm or approach (Johnson *et al*, 2007). Second, it provides a more robust form of investigation, as insights and understanding that might be missed within only using a single method could be uncovered (Green *et al*, 1989). Third, it is an approach that produces a research design that has complementary strengths, but non-overlapping weaknesses. Therefore, a mixed-methods approach has the ability to adopt strengths from both qualitative and quantitative approaches, and also to mitigate the impact of any methodological weaknesses (Greene *et al*, 1989). Finally, a mixed-methods approach provides stronger evidence for corroboration, triangulation, drawing conclusions, and generation of theory through the triangulation of results generated by different approaches (Creswell and Clark, 2007; Downward and Mearman, 2007; Jick, 1979).

This study is comprehensive in nature, as very little is known about the place branding in Ontario, either at broad or in-depth levels. The adoption of a mixed-method

approach, therefore can be used to examine both issues simultaneously. For this research study, the use of quantitative methodology was used to provide a wide-reaching explorative analysis of the state of place branding in Ontario's municipalities. Descriptive statistics, chi-square, the z-test for proportions, and the global and local measures of spatial autocorrelation provided a wide explanation of the usage of place branding amongst municipalities in Ontario. In this sense, the quantitative methods applied, answered the question of *what is being branded?* Furthermore, the quantitative approach examined the issue of place branding over a much larger number of municipalities than would have been feasible with a qualitative approach. This allows for larger patterns within the population to be identified. Additionally, the adoption of quantitative methodology allowed for explicit research hypothesis to be developed and tested. This allows for what Pacione (2005) describes as statistical inferences to be made about the data.

A limit, however, of the quantitative approach is that it cannot adequately answer in-depth problems such as *how and why is place branding occurring?* To fill in these methodological gaps, a qualitative approach was also undertaken. There are several reasons why a qualitative method complements the quantitative approach. First, very little is known about approaches to place branding in Ontario, and the qualitative approach facilitates the examination of a phenomenon with little prior knowledge (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009). Second, this approach permits a varied and rich examination of the perceptions of economic development practitioners, place branding consultant, and site selectors. Other quantitative methods, such as statistical analysis, might not have the capacity to provide such a robust examination, or provide depth to the issue. In this

particular study, the use of in-depth interviews allow for probing questions to collect in-depth information (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). Third, the research objectives of this study clearly require a deeper understanding of the approaches to place branding as a tool of economic development. Pacione (2005) argues that, the goal of the qualitative research is to develop logical inferences rather than statistical ones. Therefore, the interviewees do not have to be sampled in a way to be representative of the population (Baxter and Eyles, 1997). Rather, respondents are selected to represent maximum variation across a range of factors related to branding and economic development (Quinn-Patton, 1990).

Together, the quantitative and qualitative approaches allow for statistical *and* logical inferences to be made about the state of place branding in Ontario (Pacione, 2005). This paints a much fuller picture of the extent and the issues surrounding the topic of place branding. In a similar vein, a mixed-method approach allows both *simple* and *advanced* place brands to be examined. The quantitative data analysis is well suited for the examination of simple place brands, as it can show the extent to which municipalities are adopting brands, and brand describe characteristics. Qualitative analysis, on the other hand, allows for a much deeper look into the complex array of issues that surround the advanced place brands in a way that quantitative analysis may not be able to easily decipher. Overall, the result of this methodological approach is an investigation that is both wide and deep in its scope and analysis.

1.5 Conclusion and Outline of Thesis

Based on the academic and political frameworks outlined in this chapter, it is clear that the issue of place branding is an important area of research. Place branding is

occurring in Ontario, but while there is emerging research on contemporary issues of place branding, there is little research or understanding as to how it is being utilized at the municipal-level within the province. To account for the complex nature of the issue, a robust and mixed-methodological approach is required to fully capture the state of place branding in the province and the implications for the larger field of local economic development. This thesis provides an investigation into these issues by drawing on quantitative, spatial, and qualitative methodologies to uncover extents of place branding, issues surrounding place branding, and implications on local and provincial policy development.

In addition to this introduction, this investigation unfolds over five additional chapters. In Chapter 2, this research is placed into its theoretical and conceptual framework providing an overview place branding and contextualizing it within contemporary geographic, economic development, and academic research domains. Chapter 3 describes the quantitative phase of research examining the extents of place branding in Ontario; while Chapter 4 presents the spatial analysis of the distribution of place branding in the province, data collection, analysis methods that were employed in the quantitative phase of research. The final phase of analysis, qualitative, is reported on in Chapter 5 through a series of 45 in-depth interviews. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a context within which the findings of this research are compared with the current literature on the pursuit of place branding and economic development. The results of the quantitative and qualitative approaches are further examined – compared and contrasted – to provide a deeper knowledge of the state of place branding the in the province. It is anticipated that the results of this study will have policy impact, as well as provide a

significant contribution to both Canadian and international scholarship on how place branding is being developed and implemented by municipalities.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In the contemporary landscape of economic development – characterized by globalization, converging markets and strong competition for increasingly mobile talent, business, and investment – place management and place branding are increasingly important as municipalities are finding the need to differentiate themselves amongst a myriad of competitors, and appear attractive to facilitate the best opportunities for economic growth (Kavaratzis, 2005; Niedomysl, 2004, 2007). As Dinnie (2004) and Van Ham (2001, 2008) have argued, the unbranded place has difficult time attracting economic attention.

As a result of the changing economic landscape and the increased attention to place branding in place management policy, the field of study has attracted increased academic attention over the past decade. Focused around the journal *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy* the field of place branding has attracted a host of studies focused on how places are developing and deploying brands to foster social and economic prosperity (e.g. Allen, 2007; Anholt, 2005a, 2006, 2008, 2010; Gertner, 2011; Gertner and Kotler, 2004; Hanna and Rowley, 2008; Kavaratzis, 2005; Lucarelli and Berg, 2012; Niedomysl, 2004, 2007; Papadopoulos, 2004; Pasquinelli, 2010, 2013; Zenker *et al*, 2013a, 2013b).

This chapter reviews the key conceptual, theoretical, and empirical studies relating to place branding. First, this chapter provides an overview and working definition of place branding to examine how place branding is integrated into contemporary economic development strategies and theory. Within the chapter, place branding is

contextualized through a geographic lens, integrating the idea of place branding with the concepts of space, place, and sense of place.

2.2 A Brief History of Place Branding: From Marketing to Branding

This section describes the trajectory that municipalities have taken to promote themselves in the face of external competition. Place branding itself is not new idea and, in actuality, its origins can be traced to hundreds, if not thousands, of years in the past. As Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005, p. 506) have argued, “the conscious attempt of governments to shape a specifically designed place identity and promote it to identified markets, whether external or internal, is almost as old as government itself.”

Indeed, the phenomenon of places transferring marketing knowledge to meet a need is not novel. As Ashworth and Voogd (1994, p. 39) describe: “since Leif Ericson sought new settlers in the 8th century for his newly discovered ‘green’ land, the idea of the deliberate projection of favourable place images to potential customers, investors or residents has been actively pursued.” Govers and Go (2009) and Hankinson (2010) trace the modern form of place branding to the North America during the 19th century with the attempts to attract settlers. It has only been in the last two decades, however, that practice of promoting a geographic area to visitors, residents, and investors has developed rapidly.

2.2.1 Boosterism

Some identify the birth of place branding with colonialism, as being an attempt to attract settlers to the New World, while in modern days the origins of place branding are traced in the US during the 19th century (Govers and Go, 2009; Hankinson 2010). The

development of place brands in North America also coincides with the modern advent of product branding, as the late 19th century saw the development of branded consumer goods such as Quaker Oats and Gillette (Hanna and Rowley, 2008; Low and Ronald, 1994). To this end, Knight (1974, p. 10) introduced the term boosterism to describe “the exaggerated proclamation of worth of a particular place over all others” in the recruitment of settlers to North America. Gold and Ward (1994) and Ward (1998) describe this place boosterism as reaction to the growing competition between places caused by the nationalization and globalization of markets. In this period, Gold and Ward (1994) describe a strong need for agricultural colonisation in newly settled lands. To achieve this need, emphasis was placed on selling the land itself and promoting the first towns to service the new settlements. Indeed, “the settling of the American West was one of the most important ever episodes of place selling” (Ward, 1998, p. 7). Government agencies, railways, and other agencies made full use of place promotion to entice farmers to the frontier (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008; Knight, 1974; Meredith, 1984). In Canada, Graham and Phillips (2005, p. 16) also suggest that the country’s “big cities have long been involved in boosterism, advertising, trade missions, twinning with international cities and generally establishing favourable conditions for business to attract newcomers.” Meredith (1985) argues that this boosterism had a great influence on the nature of Canadian development.

2.2.2 Place Branding in the 20th Century

Throughout the 20th century there have been several major advents in place branding development. First, the concept of co-marketing was employed (Ashworth and

Kavaratzis, 2009; Hankinson, 2007). Co-marketing brings two different products together to be marketed as one, allowing a strong association between the two in the consciousness of the consumer (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). The intent is to sell the product with the help of existing or shaped attributes of the place that are assumed to reflect positively upon the product, and adhere to it in the mind of the customer (Avraham and Daugherty, 2009). Strong examples of this are Belgian chocolate, Russian vodka, and Swiss watches. As Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008, p. 153) explain, “certain characteristics of the Swiss or of the country Switzerland, in this case such qualities as reliability, fastidiousness and meticulousness, assumed to be widely held by customers, are transferable by association to the physical product to the advantage of that product, which acquires added value and an improved competitive position.” Similarly, the qualities attributed to the product are then reapplied to the place. This approach, however, does not sell the place as much as it sells the product. Nonetheless, the co-production of a place brand is a similar approach to the branding and marketing of a product (Hankinson, 2007)

The mid-20th century can be seen as a period of initial formalization of place branding. As Anholt (2010) suggests, consumption boom that began in the 1950s allowed city boosterism to become a professional practice, allowing the evolution place promotion to occur in parallel to the maturation of product and service promotion. Throughout the 20th century, there was an increase in both wealth and mobility. This was back-dropped against a changing urban landscape characterized by increased functional diversity, guided by the process of suburbanization (Pacione, 2005). As a result, emphasis was placed on greater differentiation of specific spaces within the maturing urban system

(Hansen, 2010; Harmaakorpi *et al*, 2008). Due to the increased disposable income and ease at which movement could occur within, and between, urban spaces, Hankinson (2001, 2004, 2007), Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008), Papadopoulos (2004), and Pike (2002, 2009) suggest that the most wide spread place promotion during this period occurred in two areas. First, the development of the first mass-leisure societies led to the widespread selling of the tourist resort, through destination branding. The seaside, mountains, and resorts had to create cast themselves as exotic - differentiating from the norms of the urban landscape (Allen, 2007; Hankinson, 2004). A second level of competition also existed, as these places then had to sustain business in the face of competition with other similar locales to ensure a continual supply of consumers (Gnoth, 2002; Hankinson, 2004). The second area of place branding was found in the process of suburbanisation (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008). Powered by much the same economic and social trends as the rise in destination branding – income and mobility - the residential suburb had to be first built and then sustained by the marketing of its supposed attractions and benefits in relation to both the central place and to competing suburbs (Holcomb, 1994; Trueman and Cornelius, 2007; Wu, 2010). In both cases, the process of developing a place brand was again similar to the conventional commercial marketing and branding process (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008).

2.2.3 Contemporary Place Branding

A final area of place branding development over the 20th century is the branding for the purpose of developing industry, spurred by economic slowdowns of the 1970s and 1980s. Different from destination and suburban branding, “the emphasis was not so much

on place selling or marketing as on promotion, with many incentives to draw industrialists” (Ward, 1998, p. 7). This ‘smokestack chasing’ (or the more contemporary ‘call-centre chasing’) provided a different message from that of destination branding. As Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008, p. 155) note, this industrial place branding was “concerned with generating manufacturing jobs through attracting companies with subsidies, the promise of low-operating costs and ‘amenity’, a wide range of housing and educational leisure or cultural advantages over potential rivals.” The poaching of factories from other cities was a major element of local job promotion. While this approach traces its roots back to the 1930s (Burgess, 1982), it has only been over the last 30 years that emphasis has been placed on industrial recruitment through a brand by public sector place management agencies (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008)

Over the last decade, branding to attract manufacturing and service jobs in target industries has enjoyed strong support. There are still attempts at luring plants from other locations, but the promotion also includes emphasizing improvements in the physical infrastructure, education, and stressing good public-private cooperation (Giovanardi, 2012; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2012). A recent trend has been for municipalities to focus their efforts on marketing to knowledge industries, mostly due to the popularity of the creative and cultural industries as engines of economic development (Colomb, 2012; Florida, 2002; Leslie and Rantisi, 2006; Rantisi and Leslie, 2006; Zenker *et al*, 2013a, 2013b) who stressed the importance of a ‘creative class’ and outlined the conditions for its fostering. Brand messaging still includes low-operating costs, but has expanded to include the suitability of the local municipality for target industries and the more general notion of good quality of life, with an emphasis on recreational opportunities,

entertainment and culture, urban aesthetics, and the local climate (Andersson and Niedomysl, 2010; Gotham, 2007; Johansson, 2012; Johansson and Cornebies, 2010; Johnson *et al*, 2009).

2.2.4 Developing Place Management

Over the last two decades, place branding has become increasingly integrated into public policy making, and is used as an urban governance strategy for managing perceptions about places – be it for tourism, migration, or industry (Eshuis and Edwards, 2012; van Dijk and Holstein, 2007). This transformation from previous branding, which was seen as occurring apart from other urban process, allowed a fuller integration into place management (Pasquinelli, 2013). Place management is the mechanism of government for managing a wide range of challenges and opportunities that places – nations, regions, provinces, cities, towns, townships, and villages – encounter on a regular basis (Kavaratzis, 2005; Pasquinelli, 2013). It is an approach to issue management that allows an integrated and coordinated method to improve the social and economic potential of the locale. When viewed as an integral component of place management, a connection can be drawn between place branding and local and regional development policy. In the context of this thesis, place branding is viewed as an important component of economic development (Pasquinelli, 2010, 2013).

Place branding, therefore, is seen as a strategic activity that is firmly entrenched in local and regional policies (Clifton, 2004; O'Donovan and Kotler, 2004). As most literature agrees (see Gertner, 2011; Lucarelli and Berg, 2012; Pasquinelli, 2010), place branding is not simply the delivery of consistent communication, but a process with

strategic content that is crucial to the success of economic development actions (Kavaratzis, 2005; Pasquinelli, 2010). Place branding's role, therefore, is the management and integration of hard (the infrastructure of the place) and soft components (images, values, reputations, and identities) that foster a process of discovery, learning, and exchange of ideas among local, regional, and, ultimately, global actors, thus guiding development (Giovanardi, 2012).

2.3 Integrating Place Branding into Economic Development Strategy

In the field of local economic development, branding can be considered a form of what Blakely and Green Leigh (2010) describe as an attraction model. Within this context, places are considered as products that need to be packaged and appropriately displayed to facilitate consumption by a targeted audience. Evidence of this packaging can be observed in magazine and newspaper advertisements (Blakely and Green Leigh, 2010), municipal webpages (Florek *et al*, 2008), and social media campaigns (Ketter and Avraham, 2012), all of which extol the virtues of one location over another. Indeed, in an increasingly competitive global market place municipalities need to differentiate themselves in order to attract attention and gain reputation, goodwill and trust. Developing a unique brand is increasingly becoming the major avenue by which municipalities attempt to create an identity and promote themselves.

The increased adoption of place branding can be linked to the emergence of 'the entrepreneurial city' (Hall and Hubbard, 1996) and neoliberal policy programmes in American and European cities (Hackworth, 2007; Greenberg, 2008). This economic environment developed from the global economic crises of the 1970s, and the initial

stages of economic transformation away from the traditional Fordist-structure towards neoliberal policymaking (Harfst, 2006; Harvey, 1989; Hubbard and Hall, 1998; Sadler, 1993). In this period, Giovanardi (2012, p. 32) argues that there was a “crisis of the nation state as a meaningful unit of competition” and that there was a trend of “cities returning to being economic arenas of primary importance.” City administrators, however, found themselves in onset of their own crisis (Bradford, 2003; Goodwin, 1993; Kavaratzis, 2005). As Hannigan (2003, p. 353) describes, “in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a fiscal crisis in cities across Europe and North America caused by the triple problems of de-industrialisation, a falling tax base and declining public expenditure had some serious implications for cities.” Factories were closing and jobs disappearing as the industrial culture on which the economy was built had begun to erode. Concurrently, the pursuit of neoliberal policy allowed the emergence of political-economic structures and ideologies based around privatization and deregulation (Kirby and Kent, 2010). Viewed as the precursor to the terminal decline of traditional urban economies, there was a need for economic restructuring and which “stimulated the search for new roles for cities and new ways of managing their problems” (Barke, 1999, p. 486). As a result, a wide range of policy actors attempted to identify new political-economic frameworks to interpret changing state of urban markets and guide strategic action to promote development (Bradford, 1999).

The rapidly changing political economies of North America and Europe, facilitated the emergence of a new ‘entrepreneurial’ style of local economic development in which image promotion was privileged as being central by planners and politicians (Hannigan, 2003; Harvey, 1989). Entrepreneurialism captures the sense in which cities

are being run in a more businesslike manner, and the practices that have seen local government imbued with characteristics once distinctive to businesses – risk-taking, inventiveness, promotion and profit motivation (Harvey, 1989; Hubbard and Hall, 1998; Kirby and Kent, 2010). The use of place branding within this place management is a natural consequence of this entrepreneurial governance, as it presented a means of allowing cities to remain economically relevant (Pasquinelli, 2010, 2013). From this, the concept of place management emerged (Ashworth and Voogd, 1994) and has built a link between two very distinct worlds of geography and business management. At the core of this issue, place branding is considered to be an approach “to integrate, guide, and focus place management” (Kavaratzis 2005, p. 334).

Based on a free-market ideology, these programmes propose a decrease in state regulation and the introduction of private-sector strategies. Marketing-led strategies of economic development have come to play a more important role (Greenberg, 2008). Place branding, therefore, has been described as a ‘market-led’ approach to stimulating local economic development (Greenberg, 2008; Pasquinelli, 2010), as its development, refinement, and application as a place management strategy have strong links with the changing global economy (Giovanardi, 2012; Kavaratzis, 2005; Papadopolous, 2004; Pasquinelli, 2013). In fact, place branding is typically interpreted from the context of globalization (Pasquinelli, 2013), and is situated in the climate of strong inter-place competition (Cheshire, 1999).

Place branding is a form of competition in the field of economic development. It is attempt by municipalities to actively attempt to shape how their locale is perceived by potential consumers to compete against other jurisdictions (Anholt, 2005a, 2010). As

Pasquinelli (2013, p. 2) describes, municipalities “need to construct their own competitive advantage in order to position themselves in a ‘market of geographies’, an open territorial competition space where new development opportunities might spill out”. Arku (2013) identifies investment as a prime sector for competition, while Cai (2002), Harvey and Young (2012), and Pasquinelli (2013) suggest talent and tourism cultivation as strategies to offset declining industry and rising unemployment rates.

Place branding is a one piece of a larger economic development discourse on competition and cooperation, which has been given considerable attention by academics and policy makers (see, for example, Bradshaw, 2000; Cheshire and Gordon, 1998; Goetz and Kayser, 1993; Gordon, 2007, 2009). As a mechanism of globalization and neoliberal policy making, places are now forced to compete both domestically and internationally. Arku (2013) and Gordon (2007) suggest that economic development has typically been viewed as a competitive undertaking. However, some scholars have argued that competition fosters inefficiency and inequality between municipalities (Goetz and Kayser, 1993; Gordon, 1999), and limits the development and promotion of a regional economy. In many regards, the limitations of competition in economic development as a whole propagate through place branding issues. Strong place brands with a strong marketing campaign attached are likely to produce positive results. However, the uneven distribution of population and resources make it difficult for smaller municipalities – with small populations, tax bases, and staffing resources – to remain relevant in the competitive global marketplace. Additionally, place branding is typically undertaken at a local level, causing difficulty producing place promotion at a regional scale.

To overcome these identified pitfalls of competition, some authors argue that cooperation is a more effective strategy for economic development (Arku and Oosterbaan, 2014; Blakely and Leigh, 2010; Gordon, 2007) and in place branding (Cai, 2002; Osgood, 2010; Pasquinelli, 2013; Smith, 2008). Operating as a group, rather than individually, provides increased decision-making capacity (Arku, 2013), to achieve greater economy of scale (Arku, 2013; Pasquinelli, 2013), and to achieve a ‘critical-mass’ of resources, reputation, and influence through strength in numbers (Bellini, 2007; Cai, 2002; Pasquinelli, 2013). Proponents, such as Pasquinelli (2013) have suggested that municipalities need to remove political and social barriers to cooperative efforts, and to establish inter-jurisdictional partnerships to produce mutual economic benefits.

2.4 Place Branding: working towards an understanding

Place branding’s establishment as a practice employed within urban management has attracted the interest of many academic commentators from various disciplines including sociology (Bond *et al*, 2003), urban development (Kim, 2010; Stubbs *et al*, 2002), marketing (Kotler *et al*, 1999), migration (Niedomysl, 2007), tourism (Hankinson, 2001, 2010; Pike, 2002), economic development (Metaxas, 2010; Pasquinelli, 2010, 2013), nation building (Anholt, 2006, 2009; Dinnie, 2004; Ooi, 2008), cultural studies (Negra, 2001), and corporate brand management (Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2009; Hankinson, 2009; Kavaratzis, 2005, 2010). The multidisciplinary nature of the research has made the already idiosyncratic issue of place branding increasingly complex. As Allen (2007, p. 62) argues, “a place brand is, by its very nature, a complex amalgam of strategic and tactical initiatives involving the management of multiple layers of

stakeholder groups and multiple channels of communication, often across diverse geographies, histories, and cultures.” As a result, there is little formal agreement on the terminology and meaning of place branding (Hanna and Rowley, 2008; Gertner, 2011). This assertion is echoed by Anholt (2005b) who affirms a confusion not only about what branding is, but also about its objectives. Showing a review of place branding definitions, Table 2.1 highlights this lack of agreement on the meaning of place branding. To further examine this issue Table 2.1 groups the definitions of place branding into four categories: i) *purposed-based*, in which the definition states the purpose or goals of place branding; ii) *functional*, describing the elements that are associated with place branding); iii) *negative*, describing what place branding is not; and iv) *contextual*, which explains place branding through the context in which it is situated (see Pasquinelli, 2012).

Table 2.1: Consolidating Place Branding Definitions

<i>Place Branding Definition</i>	<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Definition Topology</i>
A self-defence (often pre-emptive) against the tendency of the marketplace to vulgarize, trivialize, and summarise in ways which are often unfair.	Anholt, 2005a	Purposed-Based
<i>Simple</i> Refers to a designed visual identity — name, logo, slogan, corporate livery. It is the way in which the identity of the company, product or service is dressed, and therefore recognized.	Anholt, 2005b	Functional
<i>Advanced</i> Includes the simple definition but goes on to cover a wide area of corporate strategy, physical attributes, consumer and stakeholder motivation and behaviour, internal and external communications, ethics and purpose.		
It is not giving a name or a symbol to a place but it is about doing something to enhance the brand image of the place, that is a way to make places famous	Anholt, 2010	Negative
An attempt to transfer selected meanings (assumed to add value to the place) to the operational environment of place management.	Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2009	Purposed-Based
Strategic image management. An ongoing process of researching the place image, segmenting and targeting specific audiences, positioning to support the desired image, communicating the attractions to the target groups	Gertner and Kotler, 2004	Functional
A strategically produced and disseminated commercial sign (or a set of signs) that is referring to the value universe of a commodity	Johansson, 2012	Purposed-Based
It refers to building brand equity in relation local identity: brand equity is built through brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality	Govers and Go 2009	Purposed-Based
(a) a clear and distinct image of the place, which truly differentiates it from other competitors, (b) associations with quality and with a specific way of retailing to the final consumer, (c) ability to deliver long-term competitive advantage and (d) overall, something greater than a simple set of nature attributes.	Mextaxas, 2010	Functional

Identifying the essence of a nation or a place and communicating it in a coherent manner	Hansen, 2010	Purposed-Based
The practice of applying brand strategy and other techniques and disciplines - some deriving from commercial practice, others newly developed - to the economic, social, political and cultural development of cities, regions and countries.	Journal of Place Branding and Public Diplomacy, 2013	Functional
The appropriate way to describe and implement city marketing.	Kavaratzis, 2004	Purposed-Based
Communicate value or the unique selling proposition to existing or potential customers.	Kerr and Balakrishnan, 2012	Purposed-Based
A brand is condensed into representational form (logo, slogan, or symbol) that evokes the values associated with the brand and associates the brand with certain values, thus conjures psychological and social connotative meanings	Khirfan and Momani, 2013	Purposed-Based/ Functional
An adaptation of business theories and practices to places with an emphasis on corporate branding in order to establish a fair reputation and build a brand equity supporting the pursued development path.	Pasquinelli, 2013	Purposed-Based
The broad set of efforts aimed at marketing places. The intent of such efforts typically is to achieve one or more of four main objectives: enhance the place's exports, protect its domestic businesses, attract or retain factors of development and generally position the place for advantage domestically and internationally in economic, political and social terms.	Papadopoulos, 2004	Contextual
Embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design	Zenker and Martin, 2011	Contextual
The associations in the consumers' mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place is	Zenker and Braun, 2010	Functional

None of these definitions provide an exhaustive explanation of place branding, since they do not stress the multiple aspects of interest. For example, many scholars are

interested in how to brand a place, others in why policy-makers should undertake such initiatives. One possible way to state a more comprehensive definition consists in building on the diverse statements resulting from precedent research in this field. The following paragraph attempts to summarize a selection of place branding definitions, showed in Table 2.1, into a single statement in order to offer a more exhaustive definition that have both purpose and function. That is:

Place branding is:

- *A process with the goal of developing a strong reputation through the brand. The place brand, therefore, needs to convey the strengths and virtues of the local to produce a positive image.*
- *Primarily concerned with differentiating one place from another, to facilitate consumption and achieve social-political-economic goals.*
- *Generally limited to a single place-entity*
- *Based on the concepts of image and identity, and the strategies designed to change or reinforce them.*
- *Based on strategies and techniques that have been drawn mainly from corporate and product branding. This approach requires additional theoretical development to account for the complex nature of most places.*
- *A tool of economic development, as all place brand issues revolve around facilitating some form of consumption. This ultimately implies an economic implication, be it direct (for instance recruitment of business) or indirect (increased civic pride, which allows the retention of labour, talent, and a tax-base).*

Though this provides definition on what place branding is, it does preclude several important components. In particular, the issues of function and scale have to be considered. Function, or brand typology, has several dimensions, including: destination branding, place of origin/export branding, foreign direct investment promotion, cultural and entertainment branding, and heritage – essentially any area where a place brand can be used to generate notice (Hanna and Rowley, 2008). Despite the different functional domains – requirements, goals, and outcomes – of these branding typologies, these fields of activity should not be considered as isolated. Hanna and Rowley (2008) depict

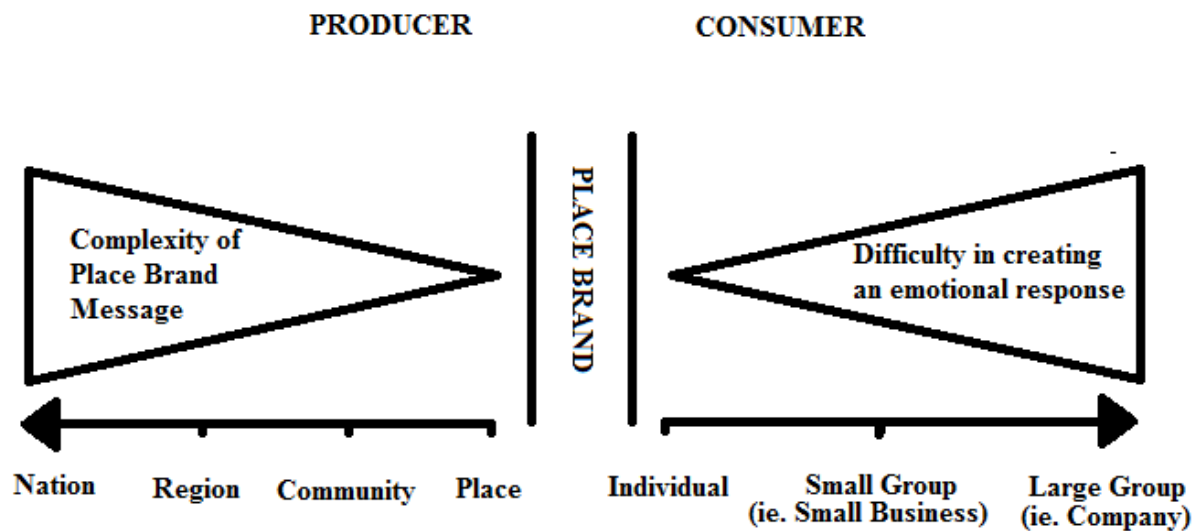
typologies as part of a continuum. Similarly, a suggested approach is through integrated place branding (Kavaratzis, 2005; Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2009). This implies a holistic reading of the place and an understanding of the place brand as an umbrella under which multiple aspects of development are pursued (Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2009).

Scale needs to be considered in two dimensions – that of the producer, and that of the consumer (see Figure 2.1). Kerr and Balakrishnan (2012) identify a hierarchy of scale at which production occurs that includes the entities (from largest to smallest): *regional block, nation/country, province/state/region, city/town/village, and precinct/neighbourhood/street*. Arguably, as the scale increases the complexity in developing strong place brands increases, because of the need to find a compromise with diverse stakeholders and interest groups (Allen, 2007). The same is true within a single hierarchical level, as a city has a much more complex urban environment than that of a village.

The second level at which scale needs to be considered is that of the consumer. The attraction of a single individual or small group is a much simpler proposition than a large company or societal class (Anholt, 2009; Hansen, 2010; Morgan *et al*, 2002b; Stock, 2009). Similarly to production of a brand, the complexity of effectively delivering a brand for consumption increases as scale increases (Anholt, 2012; Eshuis and Edwards, 2012). As greater numbers are involved in the decision-making process, the less likely the brand will be influenced by the emotional response invoked by the brand. A second issue is that accuracy of messaging. From a functional perspective, a place brand will have multiple targets (Pasquinelli, 2013). Depending on the topology, the target audience may change. Targets may include external investors, labourers, migrants, and business;

however, the brand may also be used to establish a dialogue with internal groups in order to retain them. The greater the number of groups that the brand speaks to, the more diluted and less effective the brand is likely to become (Anholt, 2009). Therefore, care has to be taken to ensure that the correct message is received by the correct groups.

Figure 2.1: Scale and complexity of place brands



2.4.1 Components of Place Brands

Branding is not only a differentiation of the product; it is also a differentiation of the consumer. The objective of place branding is to develop brand equity, loosely defined as the extent and nature of the consumers' knowledge of the brand, which is the sum of brand value, brand awareness and brand loyalty (Jacobson, 2012). The first is the balance of positive or negative associations, the second, the degree of recognition of the distinctiveness of the brand and the third, the consistency of these variables over time (Jacobson, 2012). Branding is a mode of communication and communication is always a

two-way process; it is something “done with and not to the consumer” (Morgan *et al*, 2002b, p. 24). From the consumer’s side, central to the concept of the brand is the brand image, which incorporates perceptions of quality and values as well as brand associations and feelings (Kavaratzis, 2005). The strength and consistency of this image is what will ultimately produce brand equity. De Chernatony and Riley (1998) discuss the brand as a multidimensional construct, the boundaries of which are, on the one side the activities of the firm and on the other side the perceptions of the consumers. The brand becomes the interface between these two (De Chernatony and Riley, 1998; Hislop, 2001; Stock, 2009). Place brands, therefore, can be divided into two key elements: the image, which is the external reputation of the brand; and the identity, which is the internal view. The image is defined by Kotler and Andreasen (1993, p. 141) as “the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have of a place” and by Martin and Eroglu (1991, p. 194) as “the total of all descriptive, inferential and informational beliefs one has about a particular [place].” Ultimately, the consumer’s ideas, beliefs, and impressions of a place are the result of processing these different pieces of information (Anholt, 2007; Fan, 2006; Papadopoulos, 2004), which in some instances may be nothing more than a vague image or conception (Anholt, 2006). It is also universally acknowledged that this information reaches the image holder through various channels (Fan, 2006; Anholt, 2007), including tourism promotion, export brands, policy decisions, business audiences, cultural exchange, people of the country and the media (Anholt, 2007). The common theme, central to the understanding of place image is that it is an external occurrence for the consumer, formed on the basis of information one has about the place (Stock, 2009).

Although the image created by the place brand constructs the reputation or outside perception. This reputation can be defined as the “collective understanding...of the features presumed to be central and relatively permanent, and that distinguishes the [place] from other [places]” (Fan, 2008, p. 6), that functions as the sum of individual perceptions (Saunders *et al*, 2007). Hatch and Schultz (2002, p. 27) argue that the internal identity and the external image need to be aligned, as “who we are cannot be completely separated from the perceptions others have of us and we have of others.” This speaks to the authenticity of the brand, which has to realistically portray the ‘pulse’ of the place. If what is communicated does not match the reality, the brand will be weakened and more likely to produce a negative result than a positive one (Hansen, 2010). Balmer and Soenen’s (1999) ACID test identified four elements that need to be aligned to produce a strong, representative identity. While they were originally designed to explain corporate brand orientation of companies, they can be adapted to apply to place brands. The elements of the ACID test are (Balmer and Soenen, 1999, p. 84):

Actual identity – the values held by the politicians, practitioners, and public of the municipality; as well as the economic, political, and social climate and how these values are concretely manifested.

Communicated identity – both controllable communication including advertising and PR, and non-controllable communication, such as public discourse, rumours and commentaries made about the municipality in the media. When considering simple brands, the communicated identity becomes what visual elements exist in the slogan and logo.

Ideal identity – the optimum positioning the municipality could achieve in its market or markets.

Desired identity – the politician and practitioner vision and the corporate mission of the municipality.

Municipalities must manage these multiple identities to have the best chance to achieve their desired economic development. In the ACID model, the communicated identity is what will contribute the information that should ultimately form the basis of the external image and reputation (Balmer and Soenen, 1999). If the identity elements diverge, then it will be difficult to promote an accurate meaningful identity. Stock (2009) and Fan (2005, 2008) suggest that another dimension, the conceived identity needs to be considered. It is how the present identity is currently viewed, regardless of the realities of the situation. To create a situation where positive brand equity can be achieved, the identities of the producer must be aligned.

2.4.2 Types of Place Brands

Places can be seen as products (Blakely and Green Leigh, 2012). They are produced, packaged and sold to consumers. The better the product and sell job, the more successful the product will be. Therefore, places with strong brands will likely see greater attention and economic benefit (Anholt, 2006). While the place-as-product analogy provides a useful filter through which to understand a place-brand approach, there remain fundamental differences in the implementation of brand theory in the place environment. These include, among others, the role of government organizations, the difficulty in defining the entity to be branded (city, region, or country), the challenges of aligning internal stakeholders (residents, business owners, frontline workers), and the difficulty of sustaining brand consistency and resources over time in the face of competing societal, as opposed to corporate, interests (Allen, 2007; Kavaratzis, 2009).

To reconcile these issues place brands can be viewed as being divided into two broad categories: *simple* and *advanced* (see Anholt, 2005b). Anholt (2005b, p.117) defines the simple understanding of place branding as referring to a “designed visual identity — name, logo, slogan, corporate livery. It is the way in which the identity of the company, product or service is dressed, and thus recognized.” Within the content and style of the visual identity there is an indication of the nature or intentions of product. Through this visual identity, images representing a locale are a simplification of a large number of associations and pieces of information connected with a place, framing large amounts of information about a place into a small set of manageable ideas (Florek *et al*, 2008; Kim, 2010). As Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2009, p. 521) describe, “cities all over the world use several conduits to promote themselves to relevant audiences such as investors, visitors and residents and in their efforts they commonly include striking logos and captivating slogans that feature in welcoming websites and advertising campaigns in national and international media.”

This approach is very much drawn from the product marketing domain, where strong associations are made between a company’s goods or services and a logo (Hanna and Rowley, 2008; Low and Ronald, 1994). However, there are limitations to the simple branding approach, as it does not have the ability convey a large number of ideas, and can only represent a small portion of the place management that is occurring.

The visual identity, therefore, while an important part of the branding process is not the only element (Ashworth and Kavaratzis, 2009). Anholt (2005b) identifies the more complex advanced branding to expand on what constitutes a brand. According to Anholt (2005b, p. 117):

“The advanced definition of branding includes the simple definition but goes on to cover a wide area of corporate strategy, consumer and stakeholder motivation and behaviour, internal and external communications, ethics and purpose. Companies which espouse this understanding of branding use it to navigate through the complex web of relationships between the personality of the company, product or service – the brand itself – and the people who produce and deliver it, as well as the people who consume it or otherwise come into contact with it.”

Anholt (2005b) and Kim (2010) suggest that through this advanced understanding of a place brand there is the implication that the functional or physical attributes of places become less relevant, and instead, the intangible or brand-related qualities become paramount. Allen (2007) and Giovanardi (2012), however, suggest that a balance needs to be struck between representationalism and functionalism in the dimensions of place branding. Table 2.2 outlines the hard and soft elements that can be leveraged in the development of a place brand.

Table 2.2: Hard and Soft Factors Associated With Place Branding

Hard Factors	Soft Factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic stability• Productivity• Costs• Property availability and accessibility• Communication infrastructure• Strategic location• Incentive schemes and programmes• Transportation Infrastructure• Available Labour Force and Labour Force Skill• Proximity to universities• Proximity to research establishments• Municipal Infrastructure (water/sewer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sense of Place• Quality of Life• Culture• Reputation• Personnel• Local Government/Management• Flexibility and dynamism• Professionalism in contact with the market• State government promotion• Chamber of Commerce/Local Business Association support• Regional image

(Sources: Allen, 2007; Eickelpasch *et al*, 2007; Giovanardi, 2012; Kotler *et al*, 1999; Taha, 2013)

An important component of the advanced place brand approach is the integration of corporate brand theory. The corporate approach involves concepts such as corporate image, corporate identity and corporate communications into the branding process (Kavaratzis, 2009). In an attempt to define the corporate brand, Knox and Bickerton (2003, p. 1013) state that: “a corporate brand is the visual, verbal and behavioural expression of an organisation’s unique business model.” The brand is expressed through the company’s mission, core values, beliefs, communication, culture and overall design (Simoes and Dibb, 2001). The goal of branding as it has evolved during the last 30 years has been to identify value propositions that increase the equity of the basic product or service, enhancing brand preference and loyalty (Keller, 2000; Knox and Bickerton,

2003). Balmer and Greyer (2002, p. 76) note that “corporate brands are fundamentally different from product brands in terms of disciplinary scope and management, they have a multi-stakeholder rather than customer orientation and the traditional marketing framework is inadequate and requires a radical reappraisal.” In many ways, this approach suggests similarity between corporate and place branding. Allen (2007), Hankinson (2007), Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008), Trueman *et al* (2004) have identified several areas of similarity: both have multidisciplinary roots; both address multiple groups of stakeholders; both have a high level of intangibility and complexity; both need to take into account social responsibility; both deal with multiple identities and both need a long-term development. In particular, stakeholder alignment is an important factor in a brand creating positive value, awareness, and loyalty (Therkelsen and Halkier, 2008; Trueman *et al*, 2004). Allen (2007), however, suggests that the place brand remains a much more complicated proposition, and therefore cannot be fully explained by corporate branding principles. Table 2.3 outlines differences between the two. As a result, Anholt’s (2005) advanced approach provides the most encompassing definition of a place brand.

Table 2.3: Differences between Place Brands and Corporate Brands

Place Brands	Corporate Brands
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple, possibly unrelated components • Fragmented stakeholder relationships • Higher organizational complexity, potential for a greater number of stakeholders • Potential for public input • Experiential • Collective orientation • Sub-brand inequality and rivalry • Public Initiative or Public/private partnerships • Explicit local government role • Product attributes subject to seasonality • Inflexibility of product offering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single component with a focused message • Cohesive stakeholder relationships • Lower organizational complexity, fewer stakeholders • No public input • Individual orientation • Sub-brand coherence • Private enterprise • Lack of overt government role • Product attributes consistent • Flexibility of product offering

The final issue needing addressing is how the visual identity coalesce with the corporate elements and the hard and soft brand dimensions of the advanced brand.

Although the simple brand is contained within the advanced, the two have to be in alignment (Keller, 2000; Knox and Bickerton, 2003), or else the identity on which the brand stands will not be strong (Balmer and Soenen, 1999; Fan, 2008; Stock, 2009).

Ultimately, the simple brands need to be a strong visual representation of all the values and ideals locked up in the advanced brand. As Anholt (2001, p. 128) argues,

“The true art of branding is distillation: the art of extracting the concentrated essence of something complex, so that its complexity can always be extracted back out of the distillate, but it remains portable and easily memorable. The distillate, rather than actually attempting to contain all the detail of the [place] in question, is simply the common thread, the genetic constant, which underlies the basic commonality between the different parts of the brand.”

The simple brand, therefore, can be seen as a signpost for the larger meaning of the brand. Indeed, a place should not attempt to pack all meaning into a single logo or slogan, but be content with a sign which can represent, and later accurately call back to, the whole experience, once it is more familiar to the consumer. As Anholt (2009, p. 92) describes, “one has to have the wisdom and patience to accept that this sign will not be wholly meaningful to the consumer at the start, but it is a vessel which will become more and more replete with meaning as meaning is absorbed.”

2.5 Integrating Place Branding into Geography – Place, Space, and Sense of Place

Places are fundamentally experiential in nature. This experience is cultivated in the way a place presents the environment, delivers its services and products, facilitates psychological experiences, grows experiences and perception over time, and through all manner of sensory encounters (Allen, 2007). Allen (2007) and Anholt (2005a) argue that, the experience of a place can extend ahead of actual consumption. This before-place experience includes the period during which an intent to consume is formed, and extends to the post-place experience of memory formation, loyalty reinforcement, and word-of-mouth dissemination and communication (Leisen, 2001). The perception of a place formed by potential customers prior to actually engaging in the consuming of the place is of critical importance within the branding process (Allen, 2007; Anholt, 2006). Similar to consumer products and services, formulating predisposition and intent to buy is one of the central drivers of brand investment and decision-making (Allen, 2007). The goal is to create a proposition that compels the customer to buy into the ideas being presented. As Anholt (2006, p. 18) puts it,

“All of people’s decisions, whether they are as trivial as buying an everyday product or as important as relocating a company, are partly rational and partly emotional. No human activity is exempt from this rule, and the brand images of cities and countries underpin the emotional part of every decision and strongly affect the rational part too.”

Place branding, therefore, can be seen as the conscious attempt of governments to shape a specifically designed place identity and to promote it to desired markets and consumers (Allen, 2007; Eshuis and Edwards, 2012; Fan, 2005; Stock, 2010). Any consideration, therefore, of the fundamental geographical idea of sense of place must include the deliberate creation of such senses through place branding.

This description of places as an experience draws heavily from the humanist propositions of place, space, and sense of place. The ultimate goal is to develop a strong enough connection with the consumer – potential capital investors, labourers, and industry – that it affects their decision-making process (Anholt, 2006). One of the main goals is to create imagery and narrative that are developed to attract external attention – essentially attempting to improve economic standing at the municipal level through the creation of place and sense of place (Hansen, 2010).

Gregory *et al* (2009) describe ontology as the attempt to account for what is in the world. Ontologically, the core of place branding are space and place. While place ultimately becomes the dominant explanation of what comprises the world, understanding of space is a required underpinning. In this regard space provides a context from which the idea of place can spring; or as Tuan (1976) argues, place is explained in the broader frame of space. Tuan (1971) defines space as formless and profane, devoid of any true meaning; contrasted with place, which incarnates the experiences and aspirations of people. Contextually, this space-place relationship can be used to explain the political-

economic environment of an increasingly globalized world. As homogenization continues - where cities are increasingly providing similar services and infrastructure, and improvements in communication and transportation allow increased connectivity – the exceptional becomes the mundane (Scholte, 2005). In this sense, cities still have a location fixating them within space; but meaning and uniqueness are diminished. From the decision-maker trying to find a location for labour, capital, or industry the lack distinguishable features over space can make it appear formless. Therefore, in the context of economic development, branding becomes important because it provides meaning. Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2007) and Hankinson (2001) argue that branding allows for meaning and association to be developed for a city, differentiating itself from its contemporaries, and ultimately becoming a place within the larger political-economic space.

If ontology explains how branding can allow a place to stand out within a formless, homogenous space, epistemology explains its creation and why it has meaning to potential consumers (Cloke and Johnston, 2005). While place is framed in the broader context of space, Tuan (2001) argues that it needs to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of those who have given it meaning. This connects with Gregory *et al* (2009) definition of epistemology, namely defining knowledge and understanding of the world. Therefore, in its most general form, the epistemological element for the study lays within the concept of sense of place (Cloke and Johnston, 2005; Richards, 2009). The epistemological underpinnings are used by those branding to develop the sense of place. Additionally, the consumer understands and connects with the embedded messages of the brand to create their own meaning and sense of place.

In place branding, there are three critical epistemological elements that help explain the creation of a sense of place: phenomenology, existentialism, and idealism. Phenomenology is based on the idea that all knowledge relates to experience; and is the study of how the individual gives meaning to the environment (Relph, 1970; Tuan, 1971). Existentialism is the defining of oneself through the creation of an environment. Therefore, environments and landscapes can be read as biographies, as representations of a person or city creating themselves. Idealism's approach in human geography is the attempt to understand the development of earth's cultural landscapes through discovery of the thought that lies behind them (Gregory *et al*, 2009). To an idealist, all actions result from rational thought ensuing from a theoretical construct present at the back of the decision-maker's mind (Guelke, 1974; Harris, 1971). Relating back to branding, phenomenology helps explain the consumer relationship of the place-brand, as it speaks to how their personal experiences and values affect how they interpret and understand its meaning. Existentialism speaks to the values held by those creating the brand. By examining the components of the brand being displayed, it can be read like a landscape to identify what values, thoughts, and motivations are held by its creator.

2.8 Conclusion

Place branding is becoming an integral part of place management to ensure the economic relevance and competitiveness of municipalities. Place branding, nevertheless, poses a challenge to city and economic development officials, and is exacerbated by the complex, multifaceted nature of place branding. Further, while there has been significant case study (mainly in Europe) and conceptual (mainly through a corporate branding lens)

academic examinations of the subject, there is limited knowledge to the extent that place branding is occurring below the nation-scale, and what approaches (simple, advanced, corporate-dominated, a hybrid) and specific techniques are being used. Further, there is little verification of whether the place branding approaches of municipalities and their economic development departments are appropriate. Finally, little has been done to examine whether the approaches used by municipalities to brand themselves actually have an effect on the decisions that companies make when considering relocation. In view of the limited knowledge about the exact approaches to place branding for economic development, this research aims to (1) examine the perceptions of economic development officials about their practices within the current global economy, and (2) examine the approaches being implemented to ensure positive brand equity, municipality awareness, and economic competitiveness within the current global economy. The research uses mixed-method approach qualitative interviews with various economic development officials in municipalities across Ontario.

CHAPTER THREE

THE EXTENT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF PLACE BRANDING IN ONTARIO: A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction: Setting the Scene with Descriptive Statistics

As noted in Chapter 2, branding is a technique traditionally associated with companies imparting a name, design, symbol, or message onto its products designed to distinguish them from those offered by other providers of similar products (Bennett, 1998; Khirfan and Momani, 2013). In this sense, branding is the process of creating a relationship or a connection between a company's product and emotional perception of the consumer (Hislop, 2001). Branding, therefore, when viewed through a lens of post-modernism is purposed with the generation of segregation within competition; claiming superiority, novelty, and relevance with the consumer, and ultimately building loyalty among customers through psychological and social connotative meanings (Kavaratzis, 2004; Danesi, 2006; Johansson, 2012). This differentiation that is described is primarily attained through the manipulation of symbols (Florek *et al*, 2008; Johansson, 2012, Khirfan and Momani, 2013). Essentially, as Johansson (2012, p. 3611) suggests, this differentiation is about “the management of meaning, as a claim to be different is a discursively constructed position.” The emphasis on symbolic consumption does not only concern products and services, but has also been extended to places (see Urry, 1995; Anholt, 2005a, 2006, 2009; Johansson, 2012) where the municipality has become a primary unit of analysis for the marketing of these place brands (Kavaratzis, 2004, 2009; Florek *et al*, 2008; Harvey and Young, 2012; Khirfan and Momani, 2013; Rantisi and Leslie, 2006; Ryu and Swinney, 2011).

As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, there has been little emphasis placed on determining whether there are characteristics of a municipality that affects whether it uses a place brand, and if so, what its brand message is. This chapter, therefore, focuses on the simple place brands that are being adopted across municipalities in Ontario. This phase of the research examines the thesis' first research objective: *to ascertain the prevalence of place branding in Ontario's municipalities, identify the brand messages being communicated, and to investigate whether municipal characteristics affect the occurrence and message*. To analyse this broad objective, four research questions (RQ) were investigated:

- RQ1: To what extent is place branding occurring in Ontario?

The first research question (RQ1) is exploratory in nature, using basic descriptive statistics to examine the extent to which place branding is occurring in Ontario. Based on this exploration, the three subsequent research questions were developed.

- RQ2: Does population size, municipality type, or location of the municipality influence whether place branding occurs?
- RQ3: Does size, type, or location of the municipality influence what place branding elements are utilized in the visual identity?
- RQ4: Does the pattern of place branding observed in Ontario municipalities reflect the economic realities of the province?

To guide the investigation, several hypotheses about the state of place branding in Ontario were developed. These hypotheses were then tested within the process of appraising RQ2 through RQ4. More specifically, RQ2 and RQ3 were conducted to test whether characteristics of the municipality influenced the communicated identity (or image) that was projected. Finally, RQ4 examined whether the communicated and actual identities (see Balmer and Soenen, 1999) within these municipalities were aligned by

comparing the occurrence of place brand elements against the province's gross domestic product (GDP).

To examine the outlined research questions, this chapter presents the investigation as follows: first, a rationale for quantitative analysis is provided; second, the methodology is outlined, identifying the data sources used, data collection techniques, the hypotheses developed, and the statistical tests used to analyze the data; third, the findings of the analysis are presented; and finally the results and their policy implications are discussed.

3.2 Rationale for Quantitative Research

This section details and provides reasoning for the quantitative analysis performed in this research. The study of geographic phenomena often requires the application of quantitative methods to facilitate exploration and generate insight (Burt and Barber, 1995; Rogerson, 2010). At the core of this method is the desire to form and test hypotheses – an area that place branding research has yet to fully adopt (Gertner, 2011). There are also two primary approaches of quantitative analysis: explanatory, which is used to explore the data and suggest hypotheses to be tested; and confirmatory methods of analysis, which are used to help validate hypotheses (Rogerson, 2010).

There are several strengths of a quantitative approach; but in particular, the ability to generalize research findings drawn from a large population is an important consideration. In addition, the research design may be able to eliminate the confounding influence of many variables, allowing the identification of cause-and-effect relationships. Finally, the quantitative approach allows for hypothesis to be constructed prior to data

collection and for these hypothesis to be tested and validated (Burt and Barber, 1996; Rogerson, 2010). The quantitative components of this research set out to establish how place branding has been utilized by different geographical entities.

3.3 Methodology

In the context of this study, municipal brand identity focuses on what Dinnie (2011), Johansson (2012) and Khirfan and Momani (2013) describe as the symbolization of the municipal brand, in essence the brand image. In particular, the brand images will be identified through the logos that each municipality has developed. Though they do not *explicitly* provide information into the politics and motivations behind the brand – elements that comprise the municipal identity – they do provide insight into how the municipality wishes to be perceived by consumers through a projected image. There is also meaning in the logo, as a condensed representational form that evokes the values associated with the municipality's brand (Avraham, 2004), that associates the brand with certain desired positive values (Dinnie, 2011). By examining these brand image components, inferences can be drawn on the economic development goals of municipalities; specifically, the areas of the economy in which the locale desires to be recognized and presumably improve its standing against global competition.

3.3.1 Data Sources

To conduct this statistical analysis, there were six pieces of data required to fully explore the issues around municipal place branding in Ontario: the presence of a place brand; the presence of a logo; the presence of slogan; the place brand dimensions associated with each municipality; the population of each municipality; the type of each

municipality; the location of each municipality in the province; and the economic data that represents the ‘actual’ identity, in particular the contributions of industrial, heritage, tourism, cultural, and agricultural sectors of the economy to the provinces overall gross domestic product (GDP); For the population, type, and location data the 2011 Statistics Canada census subdivision dataset was used.

The economic data used in this study was derived from a number of sources, all produced by the federal or provincial government. Ontario's gross domestic product was approximately \$CAN 638 billion (Statistics Canada, 2012), of which business activity in Ontario – manufacturing, retail trade, construction, finance – accounts for 45% (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2012), 13% agriculture (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2012), 4% culture (Singh, 2004; Ministry of Finance, 2013) and 3% tourism (Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport, 2013).

3.3.1.1 Simple Brand Data Collection

The variables for brand presence, logo presence, slogan presence, and brand images were acquired through an extensive content analysis completed on Ontario's 414 single and lower-tier municipalities (acquired from Government of Ontario 2001; Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing 2014). The goal was to determine whether municipalities were communicating some form of local identity through a logo or slogan. Data was collected through a systematic cataloguing of municipal logos and slogans. Municipal websites were used as the starting point for data collection. As the internet is a primary medium for contemporary communication, as it is increasingly becoming the initial point of contact between a municipality and its target audience. A municipality that

desires to communicate its brand will therefore display it prominently on its website. As a result, the logos and slogans appearing on municipal websites were considered to be the primary ones used by the municipality. The data collection was limited to main municipal brands only. Subservient brands of municipal departments or economic development corporation (EDC) were not included in the analysis. In instances where no logo or slogans were displayed or no website existed, direct inquiries were made to ensure a complete dataset was developed.

A simple binary (yes/no) system was utilized to record the presence or absence of a place brand, logo, or slogan for the 414 municipalities in Ontario. For the brand image content data, a second binary coding system was developed in which the image categories present within each municipality's logo or slogan were recorded. In instances where a municipality's logo contained symbology consistent with multiple brand categories, each were recorded (given a value of 1; the categories that were not were assigned a 0). Due to the binary nature of the coding system, in instances where multiple symbolic elements referenced the same brand category a value of 1 was assigned to the categories identified as present (and again, 0 to the ones that were not). In essence, the analysis of brand images was focused on the presence and not the strength of the elements found within a logo. The resulting dataset produced by the content analysis was categorical in nature, as it was developed from a classification scheme that parsed the set of municipal place brands into discrete categories.

To facilitate the placement of brand images into defined categories, Hanna and Rowley's (2008) classification scheme was used to guide the semiotic analysis and classify the content of place brands into the following broad categories: culture, industry,

agriculture, recreation and recreational tourism, nature and environment-focused tourism and heritage. An immediate distinction was made between the similar concepts of tourism and heritage. Heritage was considered to represent the built environment, particularly references to history and classical architecture, while tourism divided into two categories, the natural environment and recreation. Each of these tourism categories had different messages and imagery associated with it. Industry was considered to be a loose term, referring to any sort of industrial development, urban cityscape, business, or general consideration of economic progress. Additionally, a final category – stylization – was included to capture abstract elements that did not obviously fall into one of the existing brand dimensions. Prior to the analysis, a series of themes, key imagery, and keywords were developed to guide the placement of content into each category. The list of priori guidelines are summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: Guidelines for categorizing visual identity elements*Table 3.1a: Guidelines for categorizing logos*

Category	Associated Images
Culture Music	Gastronomy/Food, Sports, Film, Theatre, Artwork, Literature, Maple Leafs, Beavers, Trillium
Industry and	Factories, Modern buildings and city-scape, Freight transport (rail ship), Tools, Natural Resources
Agriculture	Farm land, Farm equipment, Barn yards, Farm animals
Environment	Natural environment – wildlife, plants, forest, river, lake; Escape, Nature
Recreation	Boating, Adventure, Hiking, Discovery, Exploration
Heritage	Historical buildings and city-scape, Colonial military, Tall ships

Table 3.1b: Guidelines for categorizing slogans

Category	Associated References
Culture Leisure,	Gastronomy/Food, Sports, the Arts, Creativity/Creative Class, Spirit, Community
Industry the	Strength, Perseverance, Industry, Business/Business Relocation, Future, Modernization, Urban, Natural Resources, Opportunity
Agriculture	Agriculture, Farm land, Farm equipment, Growth, Cultivation
Environment Nature,	Natural environment – wildlife, plants, forest, river, lake; Escape, Nature,
Recreation	Boating, Adventure, Hiking, Discovery, Exploration
Heritage	History, Past, Heritage, Fatherland/Motherland

Eco (1976) defines semiotic analysis as concerning itself with anything that can be understood as a sign, either comprising or embedded in a text. Signs can take the form

of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. In the context of this study, the semiotic analysis focused on the *logo* and *slogans* that were identified. Contemporary semiotic analysis examines signs through the structure of a larger system, rather than in isolation (Aiello, 2012; de Lencastre and Corte-Real, 2010; Manning, 2010). It concerns itself with the study of how meanings are developed. The analysis ultimately focuses on two elements: the construction of meaning and its communication. Semiotic analysis provide a way for the simple brands to be examined and classified in way that statistical and spatial analysis can be carried out.

In its most basic form, semiotic analysis aims at examining the social meaning produced by the arrangement of signs within text. In this context, text refers to written and verbal communication, as well as that which information is transferred through visual imagery (Moriarty, 2004). Regardless of the form, the foundation of semiotic analysis was developed by Saussure (1916) and Pierce (1958). Saussure (1916) suggested a dyadic model, where any sign is comprised of two elements: the *signifier*, which refers to the form that the sign takes; and the *signified*, or the concept it represents. The sign, therefore, is the resultant interaction between the signifier and the signified. It is the relationship between these two elements that provides the sign with its meaning. Peirce (1958) postulated a triadic model that contained the elements: *representament*, or the form which the sign takes; the *interpretant*, the interpretation of the concept the sign communicates; and the *object* which the sign represents. Similarly to Saussure (1916), the mode of communication is identified, as well as the interpretation. The object is the entity – for instance, a municipality and its economic development aspirations – that the sign represents.

Between these two models, it is apparent that a sign must have both a form of communication (signifier or representament) and a concept to be interpreted (signified or interpretant). Since this is the relationship that provides meaning, a sign cannot have a completely meaningless signifier or a completely formless signified (Saussure, 1916; Pierce, 1958; de Lencastre and Corte-Real, 2010). A sign is the recognizable combination of form with a particular concept. In the case of place branding, the form becomes the place brand image, while the concept is the identity that the municipality selects to communicate. The meaning from this relationship manifests itself in the sense of place that is developed.

Through examination of the image form and the concept it represents, semiotics help define *what* signs mean, and *how* they mean them (de Lencastre and Corte-Real, 2010; Sturrock, 1986). Based on Saussure's (1916) and Pierce's (1958) models, Morris (1970) developed a classification to further define semiotic relationships. The elements that comprise this relationship are: *semantics*, what signs stand for; *syntax*, the structural relations of signs; and *pragmatics*, the relation of signs to its audience. Semantics are the meaning or concept behind the sign (signified or interpretant), essentially the visual coding of a municipality's identity. Syntax explains the relationship of all elements in the simple brand. Often, more than one symbol is incorporated into the brand image. The relationships of these symbols, configuration, size, and colour were used to identify which brand dimension was most prominent. Finally, pragmatics explains the interpretation of the sign by the audience – the image or sense of place that is created (Moriarty, 2004).

3.4 Data Analysis

To answer RQ1 – *to what extent is place branding occurring in Ontario?* – the results of the classification were counted. This allows for the categorical data to be expressed as a total or a percentage, describing how often branding was occurring, how often *logos* and *slogans* were used and by who, what the most common brand elements were, how often municipalities deployed more than one dimension in their simple brand, and the frequency of different combinations of two or more brands occurring. In essence, it also allowed the summarization of state of place branding in Ontario which satisfies the requirements of RQ1. This statistical approach is limited, however, as it does not explain any relationships that exist within the data and therefore cannot be used to investigate RQ2 through RQ4. As a result, two other approaches – Pearson’s chi-square test for independence and the z-test for proportions – were used as they allow for relationships to be identified and verified through hypothesis testing.

3.4.1 Developing Hypotheses about Municipality Characteristics and Place Branding

RQ2 and RQ3 consider whether there is a difference in the level or type of place branding that is observed because of particular characteristics of a municipality, specifically *size*, *type*, and *location*. To analyze the data to satisfy the research questions, a series of testable research hypotheses were developed. To compare the use of logos and slogans across the province, four independent variables were identified: population size; self-identified municipal type; and municipality’s location in the province’s core or periphery. The research objectives consider whether there is a difference in the level of place branding that is observed because of particular characteristics of a municipality.

Different municipalities will have different levels of resources to develop and maintain brands, and may have structural or political desires to differentiate themselves from associated entities. As such, a potential explanation is that municipalities with larger populations are more likely to have a place brand than smaller ones due to access to greater financial resources or larger government to more easily allow develop and maintain its brand. Furthermore, it is probable that municipalities that comprise the economic core of the province are more likely to implement place brands, as they are more fully integrated into the global economic markets.

Finally, a consideration needs to be given as to how municipalities have historically viewed themselves and their place in the political hierarchy of the province. While the *2001 Municipal Act* redefined municipalities into upper, lower, and single-tiers, its *1990* predecessor maintained a historical precedent by delineating municipalities into cities, towns, townships, villages, and generic municipalities (Government of Ontario, 1990). Though partially defined by population, such as the minimum of 10,000 people for city status, there was considerable latitude in determining municipal distinction. In part, these distinctions indicate social and economic complexity at the municipal level, as well as the size of local government. This distinction is important for several reasons in this investigation: first, place branding can be a long term process, and the historical municipal definitions may influence contemporary place branding usage; and second, though the designations of the *1990 Municipal Act* were largely removed by its successor, there remain lingering elements in which municipalities are provided the opportunity to self-identify as a city, town, township, village, or generic municipalities (the one restriction is that a city still requires a minimum population of 10,000). As a

result, the self-identified municipal type may provide insight into underlying reasons for difference in observed place branding. It is expected that as municipality complexity decreases, from city (most) to villages (least), there will be differences in usage of place branding. Specifically, in the larger municipal governments of cities and towns there may be greater opportunity to develop brands than smaller local governments employed in townships or villages.

If true, this relationship should be identifiable between municipality size, municipality type, location in the core or periphery and place branding usage and message. As a result, to explain RQ2 and RQ3, the hypothesis is postulated that *municipal characteristics influence both the occurrence of place branding and the brand messages that are being communicated*. To examine questions postulated in RQ2 and RQ3, and the resulting research hypothesis, a series of testable statistical hypotheses were developed. For RQ2 the testable hypotheses can be generalized as:

H₀ : municipality characteristics (population size, municipal type, and location) do not influence the rate of place branding;

H_A : the rate of place branding is influenced by the characteristics of the municipality.

These tests were developed to consider overall branding, as well as respective logo and slogan usage rates. Similarly, in RQ3 the hypotheses for the relationship between municipal characteristics the elements being branded are generalized as:

H₀ : municipality characteristics (population size, municipal type, and location) do not influence the elements incorporated into local place brands;

H_A : the elements incorporated locally in municipal place branding is influenced by the characteristics of the municipality

These hypotheses were developed to consider overall branding elements as a whole visual identity, rather than as slogan and logo subgroups, as it was assumed that there would be continuity between the messages between the two channels of communication.

3.4.2 Developing a Hypothesis about Actual and Communicated Brand Identities

Finally, RQ4 was examined exclusively using a one-sample test for proportions. Each brand element is reflective of a sector of Ontario's economy. RQ4 compared the rate that brand elements occurred to that of sector's contribution to provincial GDP – considered analogous to importance within Ontario's economy. As a result, comparing the proportion of each brand element to the contribution of the corresponding sector of the economy allow for examination of whether brand identities are reflective of the economic realities of the province. Culture and heritage were grouped together as they were considered to be representative of the same economic sectors (Singh, 2004). Based on preliminary observation (based on RQ1 and reported in Chapter 5), it was noted that there are high levels of tourism and agriculture brands, even though they represent a small portion of the provinces economy. Based on this framework, the hypothesis developed was that *the levels of place branding in the province do not match the economic realities*. To examine this hypothesis, it was defined as:

H_0 : the use of place brand elements reflects the sector's contribution to the province's economy

H_A : the use of place brand elements does not reflect the sector's contribution to the province's economy

Simply put, the null hypothesis is that the rate of branding for each category of element does not differ from the provincial GDP contribution. This was contextualized with

Balmer and Soenen's (1999) ACID test to determine whether Ontario's municipalities branding strategy is in sync with the economic reality of the province. In this instance, the relationship being considered is the one between actual and communicated identity.

3.4.3 Testing Hypotheses with Pearson's Chi-Square and the Z-Test for Proportions

Due to the categorical nature of the dataset, there are limitations on the analysis that can be performed to answer the research questions. Since the place brand data collected through the content analysis was separated into discrete classes and is predicted to be affected by the characteristics of the municipality, it can be used as the dependent variable in a contingency table. In this study, Pearson's chi-square test for independence was used to examine the relationships between branding and various classes of municipalities, based on their size and type ($\alpha = 0.05$). Additionally, it was used to compare the overall occurrence of different brand dimensions to their economic sector's contribution to the province's GDP.

Pearson's chi-square statistic (X^2) is defined as:

$$X^2 = \sum_{i=1}^n \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i} \quad (3.1)$$

where n is the total number of observations, O is the observed value at ij , E is the expected value at ij (calculated as sum of row i multiplied by the sum of column j , divided by n). Pearson's chi-square test is intended to test how likely it is that an observed distribution is due to chance. It is also called a goodness of fit statistic, because it measures how well the observed distribution of data fits with the distribution that is expected if the variables are independent. The test for independence utilizes the null hypothesis that the two variables being compared do not affect each other (Burt and

Barber, 1996). If the null hypothesis is rejected, it can be concluded that there is a relationship that exists between variables

An issue with Pearson's chi-square test is that on tables larger than 2x2, it is difficult to determine whether all relationships are significant or whether a single relationship influences the outcome (Agresti, 2013). Therefore, a second level analysis was needed to better understand the dynamics of the relationships within the data set. For relationships that were found to be significant using Pearson's chi-square test, a one-sample test for proportions using the z-statistic ($\alpha = 0.05$) was applied. The one-sample test for proportions is defined as:

$$z_0 = \frac{p - p_0}{\sqrt{\frac{p_0(1-p_0)}{n}}} \quad (3.2)$$

where p is the observed proportion, p_0 is the true proportion, and n is the number of observations. For example, this test compares whether the proportion of municipalities within a category that brand (p) differ from the overall proportion found in all 414 municipalities (p_0 ; Rogerson, 2010). The null hypothesis is that the rate of branding for each category of municipality does not differ from the provincial average. The advantage of this approach is that it shows what categories of municipality over- and under-use branding techniques.

3.4.4 Summarizing the Variables

In this study, municipalities were classified into five groups of municipality types based on their description in the 2011 Canadian census: cities ($n = 51$), towns ($n = 87$), townships ($n = 208$), villages ($n = 11$), and generic municipalities ($n = 57$). The municipalities were also classified into six classes based on population size. The classes

were defined by population thresholds that traditionally helped define municipalities in Ontario: less than 500 people (n = 32); 500-1,000 people (n = 48); 1,000-2,000 (n = 36); 2000-10,000 (n = 155); 10,000-75,000 (n = 110); and having a population greater than 75,000 (n = 33). The first four categories were defined by the *1990 Municipal Act*; while the latter two were developed from Arku (2014), as a method of separating mid-sized and large municipalities.

Location in the province was assigned based on each municipality's Municipal Influence Zone (MIZ) rating from the 2011 Canadian census. This approach subdivides municipalities into seven categories that capture the social and economic integration of municipalities with the urban core of the province (du Plessis *et al*, 2002). Category 1 (n = 85) and 2 (n = 13) are considered primary urban areas, with full economic and social integration. Category 3 MIZs (n = 38) are characterized by a strong influence by core urban areas, and have high integration as at least 30% of the workforce occupies jobs in the urban core. Category 4 (n = 87) is considered moderately integrated, with between 5% and 30% of residents holding employment in a core urban area. Category 5 (n = 126) suggests weak integration as there is little interconnection (less than 5%) between the municipality and the core. The last two, categories 6 (n = 48) and 7 (n = 10) have no integration with the provincial core. In general terms, the MIZ provide a way of characterizing municipalities as being located in the province's core or periphery.

To answer the research questions, the variables used in this study are:

Dependent variables: The dependent variables examined in this study are all derived from the content analysis. The data was represented in categorical and ratio form. Categorical variables include: overall branding use, slogan use, and logo use. These were

binary (yes/no) variables based on whether a visual identity was identified for the municipality. A fourth dependent variable, brand elements, was also categorical, but contained multiple categories (culture, industry, agriculture, heritage, and tourism-recreation, tourism-natural environment) based on the brand dimensions outlined by Hanna and Rowley (2008).

Independent variables: The following independent variables were examined in this study to see how they influence the dependent variable: municipality type, municipality population size, location based in MIZ, and GDP. Municipality type, population size, and location are categorical data. The final independent variable, provincial GDP, considers the contribution of culture, agriculture, industry, tourism, and heritage to the Ontario economy and is measured as a ratio variable.

3.5 Findings of the Quantitative Analysis

The results show that 92% of municipalities in Ontario (381/414) utilize some form of simple place branding, with 90% using some form of logo. Six municipalities were identified as using a slogan, but having no logo; however, the usage of slogans was lower overall. Only 68% of municipalities incorporated a slogan into their place brand.

The survey of the 414 municipalities in Ontario identifies that 341 (85%) have some form of easily identified visual imagery that is specifically contained within a logo. Additionally, 12 municipalities employed solely stylization, and therefore did not specifically identify with a brand element category. Within the visual identities, 610 individual elements were identified. Among the case study municipalities, references to the tourism-environment brand image category were most commonly occurring, with 214

(35%) elements identified. Heritage is the next most prevalent category (n = 100 elements, 16%), followed by agriculture (n = 89, 15%), recreation (n = 84, 14%), and industry (n = 69, 11%). Culture was the least common brand element to be observed, with only 54 (9%) examples of it being adopted into visual identity.

Overall, there were 176 instances whereby municipalities included multiple elements in their visual identity. The most common juxtaposition was between environment and agriculture (n = 59). Noticeably, the municipalities that are juxtaposing tourism and agriculture are predominantly townships and municipalities (n = 54) – urban centres with low levels of central political control.

3.5.1 The Influence of Municipal Population Size on Place Branding

In general, there is a pattern of declining usage of brands as population decreases (Table 3.2). Every large municipality in Ontario was observed to deploy some form of branding (100%), as did all but two mid-sized municipalities (98%). Additionally, 96% of municipalities between 2,000 and 10,000 in population engage in branding, while municipalities with a population between 1,000 and 2,000 utilizing it at a rate of 83%. Interestingly, there was a slight increase in the rate of branding observed in municipalities between 500 and 1,000 people, as they deployed a brand 85% of the time. Finally, the smallest municipalities used place branding the least frequently, as logos or slogans were only observed 59% of the time.

The same pattern of usage rates was observed for both logos and slogans (Tables 3.2b and 3.2c). In both cases, the largest municipalities were the most frequently using a logo (100%) or slogan (91%). As with overall branding, mid-sized municipalities were

the next most frequent employers of logos (97%) and slogans (75%); however, while logo usage is very similar between these two classes of municipalities (a 3% change), it is notable that there is a much greater difference in slogan usage, as a 22% drop in usage is observed. Following a similar trend to overall brand usage, there were declines in usage in the 2,000-10,000 population class (95% for logos; 67% for slogans) and then again in the 1,000-2,000 class (81% and 56%), followed by an increase observed application in the 500-1,000 class of municipalities (81% and 63%). Finally, the smallest municipalities were again the least likely to use both logos (59%) and slogans (41%).

Table 3.2: The Influence of Municipality Population Size on Place Branding*Table 3.2a: Overall Branding vs Municipality Population Size*

<u>Population</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>
>75000	33	0	33	1.00	1.69
10000-75000	108	2	110	0.98	2.38*
2000-10000	150	5	155	0.97	2.18*
1000-2000	30	6	36	0.83	-1.93
500-1000	41	7	48	0.85	-1.69
<500	19	13	32	0.59	-6.82*
Total	381	33	414	0.92	-

For Chi- Square: DF= 5; CV = 11.07; $\chi^2 = 66.38$; H_0 rejected

For z-test: $\rho_0 = 0.92$; $\alpha = 0.05$; CV = +/-1.96; * = significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (H_0 rejected)

Table 3.2b: Logo Use vs Municipality Population Size

<u>Population</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>
>75000	33	0	33	1.00	1.85
10000-75000	107	3	110	0.97	2.40*
2000-10000	148	7	155	0.95	2.09*
1000-2000	29	7	36	0.81	-2.06*
500-1000	39	9	48	0.81	-2.21*
<500	19	13	32	0.59	-6.04*
Total	375	39	414	0.90	-

For Chi- Square: DF= 5; CV = 11.07; $\chi^2 = 59.2$; H_0 rejected

For z-test: $\rho_0 = 0.90$; $\alpha = 0.05$; CV = +/-1.96; * = significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (H_0 rejected)

Table 3.2c: Slogan Use vs Municipality Population Size

<u>Population</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>
>75000	30	3	33	0.91	2.86*
10000-75000	83	27	110	0.75	1.75
2000-10000	104	51	155	0.67	-0.14
1000-2000	20	16	36	0.56	-1.55
500-1000	30	18	48	0.63	-0.76
<500	13	19	32	0.41	-3.27*
Total	280	134	414	0.68	-

For Chi- Square: DF= 5; CV = 11.07; $\chi^2 = 29.4$; H_0 accepted

For z-test: $\rho_0 = 0.68$; $\alpha = 0.05$; CV = +/-1.96; * = significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (H_0 rejected)

Based on the trends observed in place branding in municipalities of differing populations, there appears to be evidence to reject the null hypothesis that *population size does not influence the rate of branding*. This pattern is verified by the results of the chi-square tests, in which the null hypothesis was rejected for overall branding, logo use, and slogan use signifying the existence of a relationship between variables (Table 3.2). The further analysis through the z-test for proportions (Table 3.2a) pointed to municipalities between 10,000 and 75,000 ($z = 2.38$) and 2000-10,000 ($z = 2.18$) as primary contributors to the independent relationship identified by the chi-square analysis, as both were found to be using place branding at a rate significantly higher than the provincial average. Alternatively, municipalities with a population less than 500 were a primary contributor to the relationship for overall branding, as they underperformed the provincial average ($z = -6.82$).

When logo usage is examined (Table 3.2b), it is noticeable how there are two distinct grouping of municipalities. Every large municipality used a logo, though the group size was not large enough to be significant ($z = 1.85$). The next two classes however (10,000 to 75,000: $z = 2.40$; and 2,000 to 10,000: $z = 2.09$), were found to use logos at a rate higher than the provincial average that were significant. In contrast, the three smallest classes of municipalities were all found to use logos at a rate significantly lower than the provincial average (1,000-2,000: $z = -2.06$; 500-1,000: $z = -2.21$; and less than 500: $z = -6.04$).

Finally, examination of the rates of slogan usage identified only two population classes were found to deviate significantly from the provincial average. Interestingly, these classes were the largest and smallest groups of municipalities. The largest

municipalities were shown to use slogans at a rate that was 24% more frequent than the provincial average ($z = 2.86$), while the smallest class of municipalities adopted a slogan 27% less often ($z = -3.27$).

Overall, ten of eighteen relationships considered between municipality size and place branding were identified as significant. This again indicates that there is some connection between the population characteristics of a municipality and whether branding is occurring. Additionally, it should be noted that the municipalities with the largest populations (above 75,000) demonstrated the highest rate of logo, slogan, and overall place brand usage. Due to the small size of the class ($n = 33$), however, a significant relation that rejected the null hypothesis could not be identified. Nonetheless, at least observationally there appear to be further relationships that were constricted by the design of the analysis that indicate an overall relationship between population size and place branding usage.

3.5.1.1 Municipal Size and Place Branding Elements

The comparison of municipality size with branding element usage is summarized in Table 3.3. The null hypothesis which suggest that *population did not affect the elements used in the brand* was again rejected ($X^2 = 74.4$; $CV = 37.652$), indicating some form of relationship between municipality size and visual element usage.

Table 3.3: Cross Tabulation Brand Elements vs Population Size

Population	<u>Culture</u>	<u>Industry</u>	<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>Recreation</u>	<u>Nature</u>	<u>Heritage</u>	<u>Total</u>
>75000	8	16	1	1	14	5	45
10000-75000	16	22	25	21	57	32	173
2000-10000	19	25	44	35	85	42	250
1000-2000	2	1	6	7	18	6	40
500-1000	7	2	6	11	30	12	68
<500	2	3	7	9	10	3	34
Total	54	69	89	84	214	100	610

DF = 25; CV = 37.652; $\chi^2 = 61.02$; H_0 rejected

The z-test for proportions (Table 3.4) identified nine significant deviations from the population averages: municipalities greater than 750,000 included industry ($z = 5.13$) and culture ($z = 2.11$) more often than the provincial average, but referenced agriculture ($z = -2.35$) and recreation ($z = -2.25$) less often. The only other significant relationships were in communities between 500 and 1000 people that did not emphasize industry ($z = -2.18$); and those with less than 500 ($z = 2.15$) placed emphasis on imagery that conveyed a message of recreational tourism. These identified relationships coincide with several generalized patterns observed in the brand element usage. In general, as municipality population declines the usage of industry elements declines, while the use of agriculture and recreation increases.

Table 3.4: Z-test Comparing Element Occurrence vs. Population Size

<u>Population</u>	<u>Culture</u>			<u>Industry</u>			<u>Agriculture</u>		
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>
>75000	8	0.18	2.11*	16	0.36	5.13*	1	0.02	-2.35*
10000-75000	16	0.09	0.18	22	0.13	0.58	25	0.14	-0.05
2000-10000	19	0.08	-0.70	25	0.10	-0.65	44	0.18	1.35
1000-2000	2	0.05	-0.86	1	0.03	-1.76	6	0.15	0.07
500-1000	7	0.10	0.42	2	0.03	-2.18*	6	0.09	-1.35
<500	2	0.06	-0.61	3	0.09	-0.46	7	0.21	0.99

<u>Population</u>	<u>Recreation</u>			<u>Environment</u>			<u>Heritage</u>		
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>
>75000	1	0.02	-2.25*	14	0.31	-0.56	5	0.11	-0.96
10000-75000	21	0.12	-0.62	57	0.33	-0.59	32	0.18	0.75
2000-10000	35	0.14	0.11	85	0.34	-0.36	42	0.17	0.17
1000-2000	7	0.18	0.68	18	0.45	1.31	6	0.15	-0.24
500-1000	11	0.16	0.58	30	0.44	1.56	12	0.18	0.28
<500	9	0.26	2.15*	10	0.29	-0.69	3	0.09	-1.19

Notes:

$\alpha = 0.05$; CV = +/-1.96; * = significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (H_0 rejected)

ρ_0 rates: culture (0.06); industry (0.10); agriculture (0.22); heritage (0.16); environment (0.36); recreation (0.08)

3.5.2 The Role of Municipal Type on Place Branding

When considering the relationship between municipal type and place branding usage, the null hypothesis postulated that the *type does not alter the rate of branding*. However, when the rates of branding are examined there is a consistent trend that occurs within overall, logo, and slogan usage rates. In general, as the complexity of the municipality declines, the rate of branding declines as well. Overall every city uses branding of some form, as do 98% of towns, 88% of townships, 73% of villages, and 93% of generic municipalities. Similar patterns of usage were observed in the usage rates of logos and slogans when compared by type of municipality (Tables 3.5b and 3.5c).

In the case of overall branding, logo use, and slogan use, the chi-square test rejects the null hypothesis. As a result, in all three instances there is a relationship where there is a difference in the branding occurrence when compared across the five types of municipalities. From the results of the z-test for proportions for the same null hypothesis (Table 3.5a), cities and villages consistently are found to significantly deviate from the provincial standard. In fact, those two classes are the only two found to have significant differences. When considering overall branding cities are shown to have a rate branding usage that exceeds the provincial average ($z = 2.10$), while villages implement branding less often than the provincial average ($z = -2.36$). These results, therefore, exceed the significance threshold 1.96 at $\alpha = 0.05$, and therefore reject the null hypothesis. This pattern also holds true for logo usage (city $z = 2.30$; villages $z = -2.03$; Table 3.5b). Finally, the same classes are shown to have a rate that significantly differs from that of all the municipalities in the province, with cities again utilizing the brand form more often ($z = 2.85$) and villages less often ($z = -2.86$; see Table 3.5c).

Table 3.5: The Influence of Municipality Type on Place Branding*Table 3.5a: Overall Branding vs Municipality Type*

Type	Yes	No	Total	Rate	Z
City	51	0	51	1.00	2.10*
Town	85	2	87	0.98	1.95
Township	184	24	208	0.88	-1.90
Village	8	3	11	0.73	-2.36*
Generic Municipality	53	4	57	0.93	0.27
Total	381	33	414	0.92	-

For Chi- Square: DF= 4; CV = 9.49; $\chi^2 = 11.91$; H_0 rejected

For z-test: $\rho_0 = 0.92$; $\alpha = 0.05$; CV = +/-1.96; * = significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (H_0 rejected)

Table 3.5b: Logo Use vs Municipality Type

Type	Yes	No	Total	Rate	Z
City	51	0	51	1.00	2.30*
Town	82	5	87	0.94	1.17
Township	182	26	208	0.88	-1.52
Village	8	3	11	0.73	-2.03*
Generic Municipality	52	5	57	0.91	0.17
Total	375	39	414	0.90	-

For Chi- Square: DF= 4; CV = 9.49; $\chi^2 = 10.2$; H_0 rejected

For z-test: $\rho_0 = 0.90$; $\alpha = 0.05$; CV = +/-1.96; * = significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (H_0 rejected)

Table 3.5c: Slogan Use vs Municipality Type

Type	Yes	No	Total	Rate	Z
City	44	7	51	0.86	2.85*
Town	66	21	87	0.76	1.64
Township	130	78	208	0.63	-1.58
Village	3	8	11	0.27	-2.86*
Generic Municipality	37	20	57	0.65	-0.44
Total	280	134	414	0.68	-

For Chi- Square: DF= 4; CV = 9.49; $\chi^2 = 13.5$; H_0 accepted

For z-test: $\rho_0 = 0.68$; $\alpha = 0.05$; CV = +/-1.96; * = significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (H_0 rejected)

3.5.2.1 Municipal Type and Place Branding Elements

Table 3.6 summarizes the results of the Pearson's chi-square test comparing municipality type against the occurrence of brand elements. The hypothesis that guided this test was that *municipality type does not affect the elements being branded*. In this test the null hypothesis is rejected as the X^2 value of 69.0 was greater than the critical threshold of 30.14, allowing the conclusion that there is interdependence between municipality type and brand elements.

Within the results, there are several noticeable trends on the sector of the economy that the different types of municipalities chose to incorporate into their brand imagery. The more urban municipalities tend to incorporate industry at a higher rate (cities = 30%) than the more rurally situated municipalities (townships = 11%, villages = 7% and municipalities = 8%). In contrast, the rural municipalities (municipalities = 21%) invoke agricultural themed images at a higher rate than their urban counterparts (cities = 3%).

Table 3.6: Cross Tabulation Brand Elements vs Community Type

	<u>Culture</u>	<u>Industry</u>	<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>Heritage</u>	<u>Environ.</u>	<u>Recreation</u>	<u>Total</u>
City	11	23	2	7	22	11	76
Town	7	7	15	12	34	12	87
Township	11	13	6	20	40	31	121
Village	1	1	1	1	5	6	31
Municipality	24	25	65	44	113	40	15
Total	30	44	24	40	101	60	610

DF = 20; CV = 31.14; $\chi^2 = 584.76$; H_0 rejected

These patterns were reflected in the results of the z-test for proportions (Table 3.7), where six relationships were found to be significant. As identified, cities ($z = 5.22$)

incorporated industry at a rate higher than of the province as a whole, using agriculture imagery less ($z = -2.95$). Townships ($z = 2.74$) and villages ($z = 2.47$) invoked heritage imagery more often than expected. Finally, municipalities – generally rural – emphasize agriculture at a significant rate ($z = 3.15$).

Table 3.7: Z-test comparing Element Occurrence vs. Community Type

	<u>Culture</u>			<u>Industry</u>			<u>Agriculture</u>		
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>
City	11	0.14	1.73	23	0.30	5.22*	2	0.03	-2.95*
Town	7	0.08	-0.26	7	0.08	-0.96	15	0.17	0.70
Township	11	0.09	0.09	13	0.11	-0.20	6	0.05	-3.00*
Village	24	0.07	-0.30	1	0.07	-0.57	1	0.07	-0.87
Municipality	1	0.08	-0.70	25	0.08	-1.82	65	0.21	3.15

	<u>Heritage</u>			<u>Environment</u>			<u>Recreation</u>		
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>
City	11	0.14	-0.45	22	0.29	-1.12	7	0.09	-1.15
Town	12	0.14	-0.66	34	0.39	0.78	12	0.14	0.01
Township	31	0.26	2.74*	40	0.33	-0.47	20	0.17	0.88
Village	6	0.40	2.47*	5	0.33	-0.14	1	0.07	-0.80
Municipality	40	0.13	-1.68	113	0.36	0.46	44	0.14	0.19

Notes:

$\alpha = 0.05$; CV = +/-1.96; * = significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (H_0 rejected)

p_0 rates: culture (0.06); industry (0.10); agriculture (0.22); heritage (0.16); environment (0.36); recreation (0.08)

3.5.3 The Influence of Municipality Location on Place Branding

Table 3.8 summarizes the rates of place branding based on the MIZ location within the province. Again, the null hypothesis suggested that *the location of the municipality does not influence the rate of branding*. The results of Table 3.8, however, show that there is a trend of decreased overall brand and logo usage as the municipalities became more peripheral. Every municipality rated in MIZ categories 1 and 2 employed a

logo, and as a result, an overall brand. The usage rate for logos and overall brands then decreased in each subsequent MIZ category (from 97% in category 3 to 50% in category 7). In both cases, the branding rate in category 7 was considerably lower than the others; as between categories 1 and 6, no overall or logo usage rate fell below 82%.

The usage rates of slogans, however, were more sporadic across the MIZs; though a very general downward trend was identified as the rate of integration with primary urban centres decreased. The urban core represented in MIZ category 1 was found to use slogans three-quarters of the time, while municipalities in category 2 were observed to have slogans 92% of the time. This decreased to 58% in category 5. Interestingly, there was a slight increase to 71% in category 6, once municipalities no longer had any integration with core areas.

In the chi-square tests, the null hypothesis was rejected for all three relationships between location and place branding, signifying the existence of a relationship between variables. For overall branding, it was the municipalities in the core (MIZ category 1) and the extreme periphery (MIZ category 7) that deviated significantly from the provincial average, while the middle categories did not vary enough to present a significant differentiation. As expected, the core municipalities exceeded the provincial standard ($z = 2.71$), while the peripheral municipalities failed to reach it ($z = -4.91$). The same pattern was observed in logo usage, with the core out-pacing the rest of the province ($z = 2.97$) and the peripheral regions lagging behind (MIZ category 6: $z = -2.22$; category 7: $z = -4.39$). Slogans were noted to have a sporadic distribution across the seven MIZ classes, and as a result only category 5 deviated from the mean with any level of significance, as branding was more infrequent compared to other municipalities ($z = -2.32$).

Table 3.8: The Influence of Municipality Location on Place Branding*Table 3.8a: Overall Branding vs Municipality Location*

<u>MIZ</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>
1	85	0	85	1.00	2.71*
2	13	0	13	1.00	1.06
3	37	1	38	0.97	1.22
4	81	6	87	0.93	0.37
5	112	14	126	0.89	-1.30
6	48	7	55	0.87	-1.30
7	5	5	10	0.50	-4.91*
Total	381	33	414	0.92	

For Chi- Square: DF= 6; CV = 12.59; $\chi^2 = 13.5$; H_0 rejected

For z-test: $\rho_0 = 0.92$; $\alpha = 0.05$; CV = +/-1.96; * = significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (H_0 rejected)

Table 3.8b: Logo Use vs Municipality Location

<u>MIZ</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>
1	85	0	85	1.00	2.97
2	13	0	13	1.00	1.16
3	36	2	38	0.95	0.88
4	80	7	87	0.92	0.44
5	111	15	126	0.88	-0.95
6	45	10	55	0.82	-2.22
7	5	5	10	0.50	-4.39
Total	375	39	414	0.90	

For Chi- Square: DF= 6; CV = 12.59; $\chi^2 = 17.00$; H_0 rejected

For z-test: $\rho_0 = 0.90$; $\alpha = 0.05$; CV = +/-1.96; * = significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (H_0 rejected)

Table 3.8c: Slogan Use vs Municipality Location

<u>MIZ</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>
1	64	21	85	0.75	1.51
2	12	1	13	0.92	1.90
3	30	8	38	0.79	1.49
4	58	29	87	0.67	-0.19
5	73	53	126	0.58	-2.33*
6	39	16	55	0.71	0.52
7	4	6	10	0.40	-1.87
Total	280	134	414	0.68	

For Chi- Square: DF= 6; CV = 12.59; $\chi^2 = 13.8$; H_0 accepted

For z-test: $\rho_0 = 0.68$; $\alpha = 0.05$; CV = +/-1.96; * = significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (H_0 rejected)

3.5.3.1 Municipal Location and Place Branding Elements

Table 3.9 summarizes the cross-tabulation of location of the municipality in the province (based on MIZ) with the elements communicated in the municipality branding. Again, the null hypothesis suggested that *the location in the province does not influence place branding*. In the Chi-Square tests, the null hypothesis was rejected $X^2 = 68.63$; $CV = 43.77$), indicating a relationship between location and elements being branded. Again, there are several trends within the data. As MIZ decreases, indicating less connection with the core, the use of industry imagery decreases, while the communication of references to the natural environment increases. Municipalities in the mid-distances also promoted heritage (24%) than those in the core and the periphery (7%).

Table 3.9: Cross Tabulation Brand Elements vs Community Location

<u>MIZ</u>	<u>Culture</u>	<u>Industry</u>	<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>Heritage</u>	<u>Environment</u>	<u>Recreation</u>	<u>Total</u>
1	13	27	14	8	39	17	118
2	3	5	3	4	8	2	25
3	11	6	11	10	18	15	71
4	11	11	34	13	46	26	141
5	12	12	20	28	68	30	170
6	3	8	6	17	32	10	76
7	1	0	1	4	3	0	9
Total	54	69	89	84	214	100	610

DF = 30; CV = 43.773; $\chi^2 = 68.63$; H_0 rejected

Examining the relationships in more detail through the z-test (see Table 3.10) reaffirm these observations, as municipalities within the urban core (MIZ 1) emphasized industry ($z = 3.97$), as it appeared 23% of the time, while deemphasizing recreational tourism ($z = -2.20$) as it appeared at a rate of only 6%. Municipalities in the mid-range (MIZ 4) emphasized agriculture (24%; $z = 3.30$) in their place branding. Finally, the

municipalities identified as being in the provinces geographical periphery (MIZ 6 and 7) used recreational assets at a rate of (22%; $z = 2.17$ and 44%; $z = 2.67$, respectively).

Table 3.10: Z-test comparing Element Occurrence vs. Community Location

<u>MIZ</u>	<u>Culture</u>			<u>Industry</u>			<u>Agriculture</u>		
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>
1	13	0.23	0.83	27	0.23	3.97	14	0.12	-0.84
2	3	0.20	0.55	5	0.20	1.37	3	0.12	-0.37
3	11	0.08	1.97	6	0.08	-0.76	11	0.15	0.22
4	11	0.08	-0.44	11	0.08	-1.32	34	0.24	3.20
5	12	0.07	-0.82	12	0.07	-1.75	20	0.12	-1.04
6	3	0.11	-1.51	8	0.11	-0.22	6	0.08	-1.65
7	1	0.00	0.24	0	0.00	-1.07	1	0.11	-0.30

<u>MIZ</u>	<u>Heritage</u>			<u>Environment</u>			<u>Recreation</u>		
	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Z</u>
1	17	0.14	-0.58	39	0.33	-0.46	8	0.07	-2.20
2	2	0.08	-1.13	8	0.32	-0.32	4	0.16	0.32
3	15	0.21	1.08	18	0.25	-1.72	10	0.14	0.08
4	26	0.18	0.66	46	0.33	-0.61	13	0.09	-1.57
5	30	0.18	0.44	68	0.40	1.34	28	0.16	1.02
6	10	0.13	-0.76	32	0.42	1.28	17	0.22	2.18
7	0	0.00	-1.33	3	0.33	-0.11	4	0.44	2.67

Notes:

$\alpha = 0.05$; CV = +/-1.96; * = significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (H_0 rejected)

ρ_0 rates: culture (0.06); industry (0.10); agriculture (0.22); heritage (0.16); environment (0.36); recreation (0.08)

3.5.4 Place Branding and Ontario's Economic Realities

The rough comparison of communicated identities (as interpreted through the brand image) to actual identity shows that there is a consistent gap between the rate of image usage and the economic realities of the province. As seen in Table 3.13, heritage and culture appear 25% of the time, but the contribution to the provincial economy is

considerably smaller at roughly 4% (the percentage contribution to the provincial GDP). If broken down into the constituents, culture (9%) falls more in line with the provincial rate. This indicates that from an economic development perspective, heritage (16%) is used at higher rate than its economic return would suggest. Similarly, tourism elements comprise nearly half of the imagery identified by this study, but annually contributes approximately 3% of the provinces economic output, producing the greatest difference between what is communicated and its utility (rate difference = 0.46). Agriculture also is over-represented in its usage, but it is more closely aligned to its economic output (15% to 13%). Of the four sectors compared it presents the smallest gap between the communicated usage and economic realities. The only sector that is under represented is industry. It produces the greatest contribution to Ontario's economy, but is the least applied brand image category. Based on these results, there appear to be significant differences in all economic sectors between the usage rate in municipality brands and the economic significance.

These patterns are confirmed by the z-test for proportion that compares the rate that each element was used against the contribution to the province's GDP (see Table 3.11). The results show that only agriculture usage is in line with their contribution to the Ontario's economic development, as it had the smallest difference between brand image usage rate and GDP contribution. As identified, culture ($z = 3.35$) and tourism ($z = 17.86$) are significantly over-represented, while industry ($z = -13.15$) is under-represented based on the size of the contribution that each sector make to the provinces economy. Framing these results within Balmer and Soenen's (1999) ACID test, from a provincial perspective there appears to be a systematic gap between the communicated identity and the actual

identity. The gap is widest in the promotion of tourism and industry, and based on the z-test results only agriculture has an alignment between the two identities. From an economic development perspective, this suggests that municipalities are generally not promoting themselves in a manner that is reflective of their reality. This gap in identities indicates a potential weakness in the branding messages that are being communicated.

Table 3.11: Element Occurrence vs. Economic Contribution

	<u>Culture/ Heritage</u>	<u>Industry</u>	<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>Tourism</u>
Occurrence	154	69	89	298
Sample Rate (ρ)	0.25	0.11	0.15	0.49
Population Rate (ρ_0)	0.04	0.45	0.13	0.03
Difference	0.21	-0.34	0.02	0.46
Z-statistic	3.39*	-13.15*	0.14	17.86*
$\alpha = 0.05$; CV = +/-1.96; * = significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ (H_0 rejected)				

3.6 Discussion of Results

From this investigation, it is clear that place branding is a strategy that municipalities in Ontario are adopting. It is not, however, a ubiquitous process with delivery method varying across municipalities. 273 municipalities use both a logo and a slogan, while 101 municipalities had a logo but no slogan, and additionally only six had a slogan but no logo. Additionally, variation in the application of brand images is observed in the differences between brand elements utilized by each municipality when classified by size, type and, and location. The results are not surprising, as cities and towns are expected to be the most urban of municipalities, and therefore would be unlikely to support agriculture as a primary economic sector. In contrast, townships tend to include rural areas where farming is prevalent within their political boundaries. Similarly, it is

expected that cities would incorporate industry as they are the economic engines of the province.

The ultimate goal of these delivery methods is to promote a positive sense of place for the municipality. In the case of economic development, the sense of place needs to be designed to stimulate interest and connection with their target audience. Consider the slogans used by municipalities that resonate in several sectors for economic development, as they imply a certain characteristic about the city and its desired areas of growth. Several slogans provide a specific intent, such as Barrie's '*Canada's most investment ready city*' or Markham's '*Canada's high-tech capital*' suggest explicit goals for the city's development. As the new economy has grown in stature within the province, several municipalities have developed brands that reflect this, focusing on talent attraction. Kingston implies both a historic and a modern connection within its brand ('*where history and innovation thrive*'), while Collingwood draws on elements of new urbanism to promote a positive lifestyle ('*A place to live, work, and place*'). Similarly, Wollaston ('*Live naturally, Play naturally*'), contextualizes the positives lifestyle elements – important for engaging and attracting talent and service workers within a more general tourism brand. Brampton is more subtle in its approach, though its '*B...More; B...Extraordinary*' campaign that highlights the creative elements through the discovery of the city's 'Guggenheim' or creative and innovative core.¹ Tourism is a common message with brands, as municipalities in the province that have adopted

¹ Though Brampton has traditionally used the 'Flower City' slogan, through direct inquiry it is now understood that the 'B...more' economic development brand is being phased in as the new primary brand for the city, and will be replacing the 'Flower City' brand as it is phased out over the next three years. Though not a true city brand yet, its inclusion reflects the direction being taken by a primary urban centre in Ontario.

tourism include: Belleville (*‘On the Bay of Quinte’*) and Brockville (*‘City of the Thousand Islands’*) that attach themselves to local natural features; or Coleman (*‘Over 2 billion square feet of opportunity’*), Dryden (*‘Welcome to the wilderness city’*), and Kawartha Lakes (*‘Catch the Kawartha Spirit’*) that taps into the exploration, discovery, and relaxation available in their cities. The implication within all of these brand messages is that it creates a central point in which the sense of place can be built around, further developed nuanced, and used to attract attention and investment from a desired audience.

Regardless of its delivery method, it is clear that place branding is widely adopted within the province. There are several potential explanations for the use of logos and slogans to promote a brand. First, the nature of place identities is changing. Neoliberal approaches have led to a decentralisation of political power, the increased emphasis on the municipalities as the functional unit for development, and ultimately a thinning of regional identities (Reese, 2010; Terlouw, 2012). As a result, the entrenched institutional emphasis on the municipalities has shifted the responsibility of identity development and promotion to these local tiers of government. At the municipality level, therefore, efforts need to be made to actively promote themselves and participate in the global market. In this context, the logo and slogan becomes an important tool to communicate the brand and create a foray into the market, and to attract the attention of the consumers.

The analysis further identified that one-quarter of the municipalities project an identity in multiple dimensions. As noted, the municipalities most likely to promote multiple facets of identity are townships and municipalities. There are two potential explanations for this pattern: first, these municipalities – located on the periphery, away

from the economic core of cities that are clustered in southern Ontario – feel the need to promote themselves in multiple brand categories in an attempt to capture economic development in any form; and second, that as smaller municipalities (averaging a population of 6,800) there are fewer financial resources available for developing a singular brand. Instead, traditional liveries or modern derivations are used; these liveries tend to contain multiple visual elements.

Regardless, this juxtaposition of any two elements creates a somewhat problematic brand, as divergent concepts are being projected for the same place. As Allen (2007) and Blakely and Green Leigh (2010) have discussed, the strongest brands are those that are coherent and provide a message that is consistent. A complex, confused message weakens the strength of the brand image that is created, and limits the ability to create a strong, singular sense of place. Therefore, a step to strengthen brand messages in these municipalities would be to select a single, primary image, most indicative of the municipality's aspirations.

3.6.1 Reasons for Place Brand Development

Several reasons accounts for the strong emphasis on place branding initiatives in the province. The first relates to economic challenges and competitiveness of the global environment. As noted in Chapters 1 and 2, these realities have compelled municipalities and communities to be proactive in their economic development efforts, and also adopt approaches that aim at differentiating themselves from their competitors.

The second potential explanation relate to municipal restructuring that occurred in the province in the 1980s and 1990s. As municipalities merged through amalgamation,

thought was needed on how best to represent these new, emerging municipalities; in essence forcing new local governments to consider how best to brand and promote themselves.

A third potential explanation is that municipalities are adopting strategies that they observe in others. Sands and Reese (2008) argue that municipalities tend to utilize ideas that have been implemented with positive results in other locales, even ones external to the region. Additionally, Arku (2014) demonstrates that in Ontario there is formal and informal passing of ideas between practitioners. This suggests that there is a continual interchange of ideas, and provides an explanation as to why branding has proliferated: municipalities are viewing what strategies their local and global competitors are using, and adopt the approaches that appear to be the most promising.

A fourth potential explanation for the widespread branding initiatives in the province involves the availability of funding opportunities for brand development provided by the Government of Ontario. Rural municipalities (for example, Brighton and Port Hope) have access to the Rural Economic Development (RED) Program through the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), in which branding is one of the three priority areas of development (OMAFRA, 2013). Offering between \$CAN 4.5 million and \$CAN 15 million per year, the RED program covers between 50% and 90% cent of project costs, providing strong incentive for municipalities to undergo a branding exercise (OMAFRA, 2013). With provincial funding and support, a climate that prioritizes branding in Ontario has been fostered, and further explains its recent emphasis as a development technique within the provinces' municipalities.

3.6.2 Discussing Place Branding and Economic Realities

A consideration needs to be made on whether branding initiatives in the province reflect the economic realities. When comparing the results from the z-test to proportion of the identity dimensions of Balmer and Soenen's (1999) ACID test, several conclusions can be drawn. On the whole, the communicated identity of the province does not converge with the actual identity, particularly in the areas of tourism and industry. The overuse of tourism is not surprising, as the main brand of the province is in this economic sector (*'Yours to discover'*). Additionally, the majority of municipalities incorporating tourism are municipalities and townships. The economic history of these regions is predominantly agricultural and destination based, and therefore, this pattern can be seen to be holding true in the emerging global market (Harvey and Young, 2012). Despite the strong emphasis on tourism, Ontario faces local and international competition to attract visitors. Within North America, tourism is limited due to the near parity between the Canadian dollar and that of its major market, the United States. Additionally, improved transportation has allowed access to more 'exotic' locales, creating a larger and more competitive market for tourist investment (Gnoth, 2002; Hankinson, 2004). As such, tourism is becoming a less productive strategy of promoting economic growth, and spending public funds may not be prudent.

3.6.3 Policy Direction

When policy direction of the province is considered, the desired and actual identities of Ontario (see Balmer and Soenen, 1999) do not align with the communicated identity. Over the past two decades, the province has been emphasizing knowledge-based

industries as a strategic sector in its economic development efforts (Gertler *et al*, 2002; Lucas *et al*, 2009; Florida, 2012). Additionally, quality of life is becoming increasingly important in local policies (Rantisi and Leslie, 2006; Insch and Florek, 2008). Interestingly, none of these elements are articulated in the simple brands of Ontario's municipalities and communities. A similar issue of poor communication occurs in the use of stylized logos as a method of communicating an identity. While it does project a modern feel, it does not explicitly communicate any true information about the goals of the municipality employing it. This creates a gap between the communicated and the actual identities. It is possible that these dimensions of economic development demonstrate a boundary of usefulness, as it is difficult to portray creativity or knowledge economy in a logo.

Policy issues extend beyond the place branding elements to the more general consideration of place branding usage. There are some classes of municipality that are not projecting a brand through a logo or slogan as frequently as others. In general, smaller municipalities – mainly townships and villages – that have weak integration into the urban core are lagging behind the rest of the province. This may be due to a lack of financial resources or people within the municipalities to develop and maintain its brand. Additionally, Bergqvist (2009) notes, distance challenged regions, in this case municipalities on the geographical and economic periphery of the province need to develop logistical and infrastructure capabilities in order to support existing business and to attract new business. The development of logistics capabilities, however, is not sufficient, and place marketing is becoming an essential tool for attracting new business. If these small townships fall too far behind the rest of the province, they risk economic

stagnation. A role of the provincial government moving forward, therefore, could be to incentivize these municipalities into adopting branding and promotional strategies. An additional strategy could be to initiate formalized cooperation between municipalities. This is already occurring in some sectors of economic development (see Arku, 2014), and provides an avenue to help reduce the costs associated with branding. By developing municipal partnerships, an economy of scale is developed, and financial burden on each individual jurisdiction is reduced.

It is, therefore, vital that politicians and practitioners within municipalities understand their brand, how it is communicated, and how they are viewed by potential visitors, investors, customers, and future citizens around the world. Municipalities that are not adequately promoting themselves face the problem of losing relevance in the global marketplace. This is particularly important in the internet era, where municipal information is regularly accessible through a few keystrokes. As such, it is incumbent on municipal leaders and practitioners to have a well-developed point of initial contact through a visual identity that successfully communicates the virtues of the locale. As previously noted, the RED Program provides opportunity for funding as these municipalities continue to develop.

It should be understood, however, that the development of logos and slogans on their own do not constitute a brand for municipalities (Kavaratzis, 2009). These are meant to be distillations of the values, goals, and realities of each municipality (Khirfan and Momani, 2013), and therefore simply developing a logo or slogan for the sake of doing so can be a frivolous expense of resources in a time of tightening budgets. It is necessary that the municipalities that wish to undertake the development and communication of a

brand understand that it has to be representative of the current economic, social, and political climates; and that visual tools to promote the brand need to reflect this local identity. The development of a brand requires the expense of public funds, taken from the taxpayer, and therefore care needs to be taken to ensure that the branding and its communication ensures responsible public spending. This is particularly true in Ontario where there is a movement towards public-private partnership for economic development. Eshuis and Edwards (2012) and Klijn *et al* (2012) argue that the process of branding a municipality must be a democratic one, and that public participation is important to developing and articulating an accurate local identity that can effectively draw attention to the municipality. Indeed, a lack of public backing can undermine any positive messages being communicated. It is important, therefore, that local governments balance the issue of private sector participation in economic development to ensure that the strongest brand is developed and promoted.

3.7 Conclusion

This first, quantitative phase of the study has demonstrated that place branding is a policy tool for local economic development that is being used in some form by a majority of the municipalities in Ontario. From these results, it appears that the main focus of place branding has been to attract tourists, despite that sector's relatively low contribution to the overall economy of the province. It also appears that there are some municipalities, generally smaller and on the economic and social periphery that use place branding less often than their contemporaries. From these results, the concern has been raised as to whether the current place branding strategy observed within the province is a

prudent one. Place branding is heavily funded from public sources, which can prove to be problematic as municipalities face greater pressures to provide services to their residents on limited budgets. With potential financial stresses, it stands to reason that other potential avenues for promotion need to be considered that more efficiently utilized local resources. The next phase of the research draws from emerging economic development theory and practice to consider whether there is potential for municipal collaborations within the province. The next chapter outlines and reports on spatial analysis of the distribution of place brands in Ontario's municipalities, and identifies potential areas where cooperation and collaborations could occur.

CHAPTER FOUR

CONTEXTUALIZING PLACE BRANDING WITHIN THE REALM OF COOPERATION AND COMPETITION: A SPATIAL ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

The results of the first phase of the research (Chapter 3) indicate that place branding is occurring in the majority of Ontario's municipalities and communities. The widespread adoption was, in part, attributed to globalization and its accompanying force. Within this context, place branding allows a municipality to position itself strongly by communicating its unique advantages, with the goal of making it an attractive location for investments, tourists, and talents. Globalization and the unrestrained flow of investment have made a place's ability to attract attention crucial to economic development (Lebedenko, 2004; Pasquinelli, 2013), making place branding essential for regions that desire to remain economically relevant (Blakely and Green Leigh, 2013; Gertner and Kotler 2004).

In other areas of economic development, this unbridled competition has been criticized as inefficient and creating inequality; particularly amongst municipalities that may not have the resources or institutional capacities to compete against global challengers. As such, scholars and policy evaluators have strongly urged local development practitioners to engage in cooperative efforts (Arku, 2014; Arku and Oosterbaan, 2014; Blakely and Green Leigh, 2013; Gordon, 2007, 2009). This call has been extended into the domain of place branding, as it has been argued that municipalities can utilise cooperation to enhance their competitiveness (Bellini, 2007; Cai, 2002; Pasquinelli, 2013). The alliance of multiple branding municipalities can have several

positive effects, as there can be an amalgamation of functional assets, increasing attractiveness to potential investors. These include: a larger population; a more diverse economy (e.g. workforce, and businesses); and a greater selection of recreational activities. Additionally, the collaboration of multiple municipalities enhances decision-making ability, ensures economies of scale, improves market strength of network members, and reduces the financial burden placed on each participant, as resources can be pooled.

While collaborative place branding efforts are rare in Ontario, there has been movement in the domain of economic development to promote co-operation between municipalities. Existing research has been characterized by the identification of existing regional collaborations, rather than the identification of new potential partnerships (see Allmendinger and Haughton, 2009; Kunzmann, 2004; Lemmetyinen and Go, 2010; Simon *et al*, 2010; Smith, 2008). This phase of research, therefore, considers the special case of the Province of Ontario to empirically determine whether potential for inter-jurisdictional or regional collaborations exists and suggest policy direction for future development.

Specifically, Chapter 4 seeks to: *contextualize place branding within the economic development issues of cooperation and competition, and to consider the potential for inter-regional place branding opportunities within the province*. To achieve this, the spatial distribution of place brands amongst the province's municipalities to identify both global and local patterns of place branding, and to identify clusters of neighbouring place brands that could be prime candidates for collaboration.

4.2 Rationale for Spatial Analysis

The spatial analysis conducted in the quantitative phase of research provides additional strengths. An assumption of most statistical analysis is that the observations are independent of each other and that there is no spatial pattern within the data. Observations that are not independent can affect the statistical rigour and affect the ability to judge significance. As Rogerson (2010, p. 257) argues “understanding the effects of spatially dependent observations in statistical analysis provides an important motivation for learning more about spatial patterns.” A primary component of spatial analysis is that of spatial autocorrelation. Spatial autocorrelation is based on one of the tenants of geography, Tobler’s (1970, p. 236) First Law, where “everything is related, but near things are more related than distant things.” Spatial autocorrelation measures the degree of dependency among observations in a geographic space (Getis, 2008). Positive spatial autocorrelation indicates that there is clustering; for example, a pattern of nearer municipalities having similar brands. Oppositely, negative spatial autocorrelation would indicate that neighbouring jurisdictions tend to have different brands. Finally, no autocorrelation would describe a random pattern of branding. The measure of spatial autocorrelation can be identified at both a global scale and a local one. This method of analysis, therefore, provides an approach to identifying and understanding underlying structures to a phenomenon.

4.3 Methodology

Two research questions were investigated:

- RQ5: Is there a global spatial pattern to the distribution of place brands?

- RQ6: Does the local spatial pattern of place brands identify clusters of similarly-branded municipalities?

Both RQ5 and RQ6 consider the distribution of place brands in municipalities across Ontario, and measure the local and global spatial autocorrelation to determine whether these brands show a pattern of clustering, dispersal, or random distribution. Due to the pattern of municipalities in Ontario, with a spatially confined economic core of cities and a periphery seemingly focused on tourism and agriculture, the hypothesis for this research objective is that: *the pattern of place branding will demonstrate clusters of municipalities with similar brands*. To examine the research hypothesis, the local and global spatial autocorrelation of place brands within the province was examined. As a result, the statistical hypothesis, both locally and globally is defined as:

H_0 : There is no spatial autocorrelation amongst brands, and therefore no clusters exist

H_A : Spatial autocorrelation is occurring and clusters of like brands exist

The dataset was developed from the content analysis (see Chapter 3), utilizing categorical data that identified the primary brand for each municipality (either culture, agriculture, industry, nature, recreation, heritage, or none). This differs from the dataset used in quantitative analysis phase, as it considers only the *primary* place brand for each municipality based on the occurrence and the prominence and of the visual imagery. From a semiotic perspective, it is considering the main theme of each visual identity. As each municipalities brand is placed into one of seven discrete classes, the resulting data set is categorical.

4.3.1 Join-Count Statistic

Due to the categorical nature of the dataset, a join-count statistic for spatial autocorrelation was applied to appraise the research hypothesis (Getis, 2008). Join-count pattern analysis considers the brand of a municipality, as well as the brands of its neighbours, connected by a join, to identify patterns of clustering or dispersal (Cliff and Ord, 1970; Getis, 2008). It examines whether the observed brand in a municipality is independent of the brands of the neighbouring municipalities (Rey, 2001). This compares the nature of each join between neighbours (for example, industry-industry, industry-culture; see Table 4.1 for a summary of relationships within the dataset), and compares the total number of observations (OJ) of each relationship with an expected total (EJ) based on occurrence within the population of 414 municipalities (n ; summarized in Table 3.1 in Chapter 3). The municipalities examined in this study were represented as a contiguous set of polygons derived from the 2011 Statistics Canada census subdivision dataset (Figure 4.1) and their relationship was quantified through a Queen's case weight matrix.

Table 4.1: Place brand dimensions and probability of occurrence

	<u>Culture</u>	<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>Industry</u>	<u>Recreation</u>	<u>Environ.</u>	<u>Heritage</u>	<u>None</u>
Culture	0.00						
Agriculture	0.01	0.02					
Industry	0.00	0.02	0.01				
Recreation	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.01			
Environment	0.02	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.12		
Heritage	0.01	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.05	0.02	
None	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.01	0.01

The join count is defined as:

$$Joins [Z] = \frac{Observed [OJ] - Expected[EJ]}{Standard Deviation [ES]} \quad (4.1)$$

Where EJ:

$$EJ_{same\ brand} = kp_{brand1}^2 \quad (4.2)$$

$$EJ_{different\ brand} = 2kp_{brand1}p_{brand2} \quad (4.3)$$

Where k is the total number of observed joins within the dataset, and p is the probability of a brand occurring, derived from occurrence rates observed in the data. The standard deviation of the expected joins (ES) is:

$$ES_{same\ brand} = \sqrt{kp_{brand1}^2 + 2mp_{brand1}^3 - (k + 2m)p_{brand1}^4} \quad (4.4)$$

$$ES_{different\ brand} = \sqrt{2(k + m)p_{brand1}p_{brand2} - 4(k + 2m)p_{brand1}^2p_{brand2}^2} \quad (4.5)$$

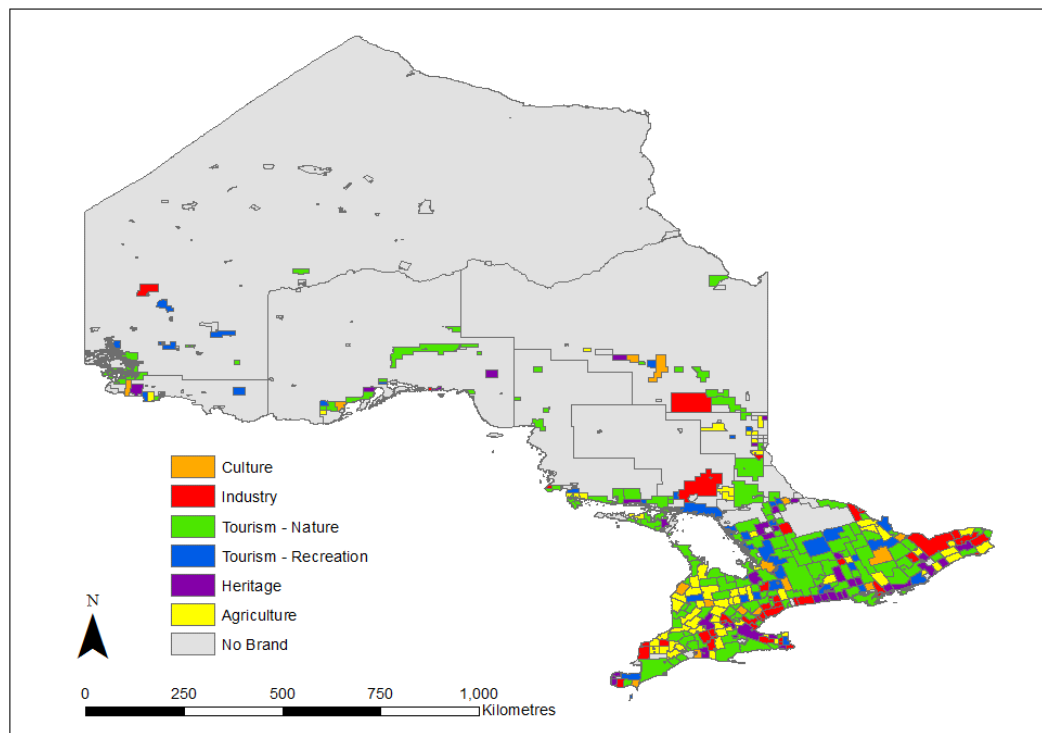
Where:

$$m = 0.5 \sum_{i=1}^n k_i(k_i - 1) \quad (4.6)$$

The join-count analysis was completed at both the global and local level, testing the null hypothesis that spatial dependency was not occurring at a confidence of $\alpha = 0.05$. The global level considered the overall pattern of spatial autocorrelation within Ontario, and identified which place brand dimensions showed indications of clustering through the rejection of the null hypothesis. The global autocorrelation result was also used to identify specific neighbouring-brand relationships that showed evidence of clustering. Second, the local analysis identified specific municipalities that had a significant number of neighbours with similar brands. Clusters of three or more municipalities showing positive autocorrelation of these same brand dimensions were isolated as potential locations for inter-jurisdictional cooperation. This final step ensures that territories of

greater size were being suggested. Further, due to the small number of joins at a local level (ranging from zero to ten), the threshold of three adjacent municipalities reduces the risk of areas with few neighbours (i.e. zero or one) being identified

Figure 4.1: An overview of the community place brands in Ontario



4.4 Findings of the Spatial Analysis

In Ontario, tourism-nature is the most commonly occurring place brand, with 145 (35%) of municipalities applying it in some form. Agriculture is the next most prevalent brand (n = 65 municipalities, (16%)), followed by heritage (n = 59, 15%), tourism-recreation (n = 45, 11%), and industry (n = 44, 11%). Culture was the least common

place brand to occur, with only 18 municipalities (4%) adopting it as the primary element of their visual identity. Finally, 38 (9%) municipalities did not have a brand.

4.4.1. Global Analysis Results

Based on the results of the global join-count analysis (Table 4.2), the evidence suggests that the distribution of the brands across the province is not random, but rather guided by an underlying structure. Of the 28 potential brand relationships examined in this study 5 were found to be significant and 23 were found to be non-significant (at $\alpha = 0.05$). Within these relationships, there is a pattern to the z-values. Relationships involving the same brands (i.e. two neighbouring municipalities each promoting agriculture) generally produced positive spatial autocorrelation that was significant; in contrast, the spatial autocorrelation among relationships between differing brands (i.e. agriculture and industry) was typically negative and non-significant. Described in Table 4.2, the join-count analysis shows that five brand-neighbour relationships – for industry ($z = 2.21$), agriculture ($z = 3.98$), nature-tourism ($z = 2.00$), recreational-tourism ($z = 2.05$), and heritage ($z = 2.27$) – all are significant at $\alpha = 0.05$ ($z \geq 1.96$); therefore rejecting the null hypothesis. Of the 23 remaining significant relationships, none could reject the null hypothesis, indicating a random pattern of dispersion, and as a result, no discernible spatial autocorrelation.

Simply put, the results of the global join-count analysis establish that like-brands tend to cluster in spatial proximity, while differing-brand relationships do not. This suggests that within the province municipalities with similar brands tend to cluster together, while municipalities with differing brands tend to be dispersed. As a result, the

overall research hypothesis can be accepted – that the pattern of place branding *does* demonstrate clusters of municipalities with similar brands.

Table 4.2: Results for global spatial autocorrelation of place brands

	<u>Culture</u>	<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>Industry</u>	<u>Recreation</u>	<u>Environ.</u>	<u>Heritage</u>	<u>None</u>
Culture	-0.42						
Agriculture	0.21	3.98*					
Industry	0.24	0.43	2.21*				
Recreation	-0.54	0.28	-0.48	2.05*			
Environment	-0.13	-0.33	-0.46	-0.21	2.00*		
Heritage	-0.24	-0.37	-0.08	-0.19	-0.63	2.27*	
None	-0.07	0.19	-0.47	-0.69	-0.31	-0.34	0.22

$\alpha = 0.05$; CV = +/-1.96; * = significant at ($\alpha = 0.05$)

At a macro level, this indicates that within Ontario there are general areas where municipalities with similar brands congregate. Based on the spatial distribution of the place brands depicted in Figure 4.1, several general patterns can be inferred. In many respects, the pattern of brand distribution indicates a core-periphery pattern occurring in the province. From the distribution of brands, the industry focused brands occur around the Toronto and Ottawa city-regions. The areas immediately around this core are characterized by regions that appear to have similar brands. Municipalities promoting agriculture appear to be most prevalent in the south-west region of the province. Similarly, to the direct north-west of Toronto appears a grouping of municipalities that all promote recreation. Drawing on Figure 4.1, the main area where municipalities promote heritage occurs is a narrow band between Toronto and Ottawa, following the north shore of Lake Ontario. Finally, to the north of this band of heritage-promoting municipalities,

and sprawling over much of the central section of Ontario, are municipalities that promote outdoors or nature-based tourism.

4.4.2 Local Analysis Results

Within the scope of this analysis, the results of the global spatial autocorrelation (Table 4.2) suggest that the focus of cluster identification should be on municipalities with similar place brands, rather than complementary ones. The overall pattern of dispersion among differing brands suggests that it is not suitable for the systematic approach of this analysis. Based on the global join-count analysis, therefore, the test for local spatial autocorrelation focused on municipalities with brands of industry, agriculture, nature-tourism, recreational-tourism, heritage, and no brand to identify clusters.

In the local analysis, 128 municipalities within these five brand categories showed positive spatial autocorrelation ($\alpha = 0.05$). Of this initial group, 104 municipalities had a sufficient number of adjoining neighbours to form a cluster, resulting in nineteen clusters being identified (Figure 4.2). This indicates that even within the general global pattern of clustering seen in Ontario there are smaller clusters of municipalities (an average of 5.5). The results appear to fall in line with the brand clusters identified by Pasquinelli (2013), who identifies twelve regions ranging in size from two to ten entities. The local spatial analysis, therefore, suggests that the ideal size for clusters within the province is smaller than the sizes of current collaboration efforts which currently average approximately 30 members. Based on these results, it is suggested that the size of regional collaborations presently being used in Ontario are too large. Municipalities are complex entities with

multitudes of actors, firms, and organisations interacting and forming diverse relationships (Jacobs, 1961), as the number of municipalities collaborating increases, the complexity will magnify, creating difficulty in creating and projecting a strong, coherent image. Smaller clusters, therefore, have the advantage of limiting the complexity.

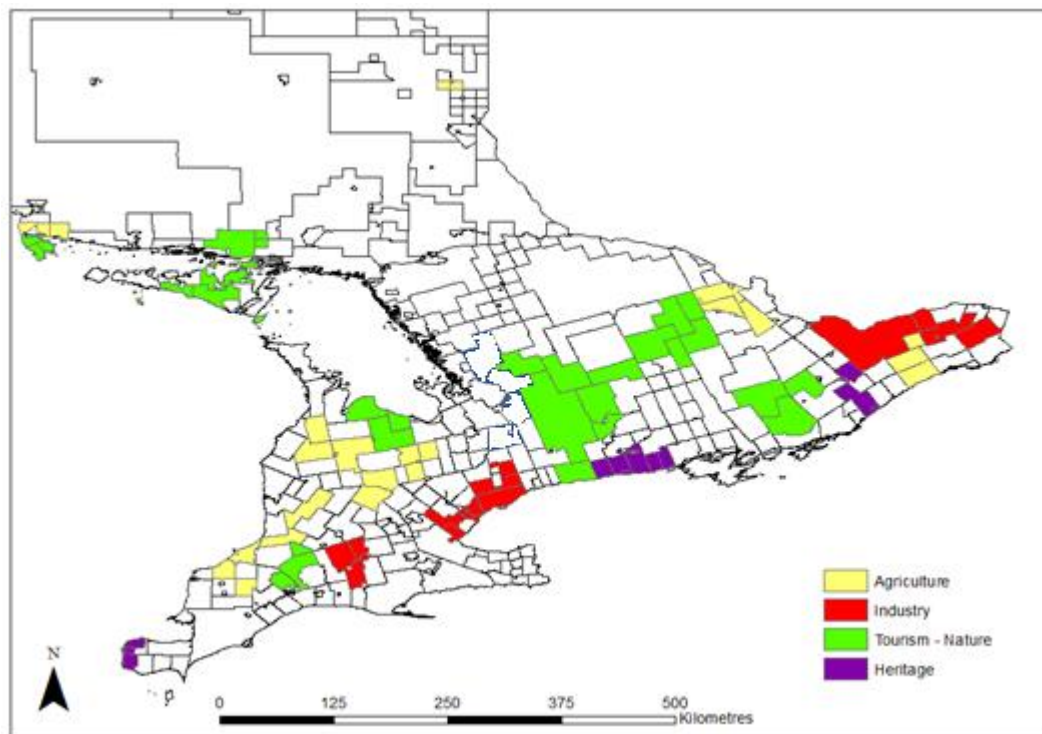
Though summarized in greater detail in Table 4.3, seven clusters identified in the analysis were identified as promoting agriculture, six as tourism-nature, three as heritage, three as industry-based, and one as a tourism-recreational group. The majority of the identified clusters occurred in southern Ontario, while the northern municipalities of the province showed a dispersion of municipal brands.

While the simple place brand similarities help guide the identification of candidates for inter-jurisdictional collaboration, deeper connections help strengthen the potential bond. An example is the heritage-brand cluster of municipalities that includes Cramahe, Brighton, Cobourg, Port Hope, Alnwick/Haldimand, and Hamilton. This cluster of municipalities has a strong historical connection dating back over 200 years. In particular, the municipalities of Brighton and Cobourg were politically connected, with both separately serving as the seat of governance in the early 1800s. The area of governance included the four municipalities, showing a strong, historical inter-relationship that can now be leveraged to promote economic growth.

While this analysis has primarily considered the simple place brand, the complex elements of a brand also need to be considered. Turok (2009, p. 14) describes municipalities and their brands as “complex adaptive systems comprising multitudes of actors, firms and other organisations forming diverse relationships and evolving together.” Warnaby (2009, p. 411) furthers this sentiment, suggesting that “advantage

would arguably arise from the value propositions created through the resource integration arising from the interaction of the networks of actors that are responsible for the development and implementation of place marketing activities.” Drawing from corporate literature, the place brand is explained through the interaction of the stakeholders (Kavaratzis, 2005, 2009). The clustering of municipalities, therefore, would allow a more robust organisation of stakeholders, increasing the knowledge and experience base to conceptualise, develop, and communicate the brand.

Figure 4.2: The locations of brand clusters based on the local spatial autocorrelation.



An example of this is the Ottawa-led industry cluster. Ottawa, through a public-private economic development office, has strong ties to the local corporate municipality (Andrew and Doloreux, 2011; Novakowski 2010). Through this relationship, a strong, meaningful brand that is relevant to investors and businesses can be developed and promoted through corporate connections. The cluster proves beneficial, as the collaboration increases the corporate-base to integrate into the branding process; but also increases the available assets, such as housing and office spaces.

Table 4.3: Clusters identified through local join-count analysis

<u>Industry</u>	<u>Number of Communities</u>	<u>Municipalities in the Cluster</u>	<u>Population</u>
Agriculture	3	Evanturel, Englehart, Charlton and Dack	2642
Agriculture	3	Plummer Additional, Johnson, Laird	2457
Agriculture	3	Laurentian Valley, Admaston, North Algoma-Wilberforce	15374
Agriculture	3	North Dundas, Russell, South Dundas	37266
Agriculture	3	Mulmur, Amaranth, Melancthon	10193
Agriculture	5	Wellington North, West Grey, Brockton, Mapleton, Arran-Elderslie	49994
Agriculture	5	Brooke-Alvinston, South Huron, Lambton Shores, Huron East, Plympton-Wyoming	39989
Tourism – Nature	3	Jocelyn, St. Joseph, Hilton	1669

Tourism – Nature	7	Bupree and Mills, Espanola, Central Manitoulin, Baldwin, Billings, Sables-Spanish River, Northeastern Manitoulin	14468
Tourism – Nature	3	Grey Highlands, Meaford, The Blue Mountains	27073
Tourism – Nature	3	Middlesex Centre, Lucan Biddulph, Strathroy-Caradoc	41803
Tourism – Nature	3	Tay Valley, Central Frontenac, South Frontenac	28240
Tourism – Nature	12	Killaloe, Minden Hills, Clarington Highlands East, Carlow/Mayo, Bracebridge, Hastings Highlands, Galway-Cavendish, Kawartha Lakes, Smith-Ennismore-Lakefield, Madawaska Valley, Brudenell	217428
Heritage	3	Windsor, Amherstberg, LaSalle	261090
Heritage	4	Elizabethtown-Kitley, Brockville, Smiths Falls, Montague	44055
Heritage	6	Cramahe, Brighton, Cobourg, Port Hope, Anlwick/Haldimand, Hamilton	69053
Industry	4	Zorra, Woodstock, South-West Oxford, East Zorra- Tavistock	60192
Industry	8	Toronto, Newmarket, Vaughan, Whitchurch-Stouffville, Milton, Mississauga, Markham, Burlington	4296260
Industry	5	Ottawa, North Glengarry, Clarence-Rockland, Russell, La Nation	943742

4.5 Discussion

These patterns observed in both the distribution of brands in the province (Figure 4.1), the clusters identified (Figure 4.2), as supported by the results of the tests for global and local spatial autocorrelation, suggest that there are underlying forces guiding economic development. Based on the broad grouping of similarly branded municipalities observed, there are several potential explanations: geography; infrastructure; economics; history; and knowledge transfer. A geographic explanation draws on the same principles that underpin the spatial autocorrelation analysis: that in proximity, municipalities are more likely to be similar than those that occur at a distance (Tobler, 1970). Municipalities found in the same vicinity would have a greater chance of accessing similar natural resources, landscapes, and physical features. Several economic sectors examined in this analysis could be potentially affected by geography: agriculture, which is dependent on soil and weather conditions; and outdoor nature tourism, which is reliant on abundance of natural landforms, such as lakes and forest, which are needed to promote the ideas of escape and exploration. Since both of these areas of the economy are reliant on features that extend over large regions, it is justifiable that the municipalities contained within these landscapes would tend to promote the strong natural features that are available, resulting in similar brands occurring in close proximity.

Available infrastructure is the second factor guiding potential clustering. Transportation, particularly large highways and multi-municipality light rail, allow for greater interconnection between municipalities, allowing a regional identity. In the example of the Toronto city-region, the light rail services seven cities and a dozen other large municipalities. This interconnection allows the capacity-base of Toronto to enlarge,

increasing the labour force, the housing market, access to universities, and the corporate base. Infrastructure can have the additional effect of sustaining the economic development strategy of a region. Recreational tourism north of the Toronto region is sustained by access along major highways, allowing a continuous flow of visitors into the area.

The third potential explanation for the observed clustering of similar brands is economic and based on the uneven distribution of assets – people, businesses, resources, and attractive tourist propositions that exist within the province. The focus of economic development, and by extension the local brands, should reflect this distribution. Ontario, when considered at a global level, can be characterized as having a core-periphery economy. Much of the greatest economic development, attraction of talent, direct investment, and business occurs in a select few regions, including the Greater Toronto Area, the Greater Ottawa Area, and within the Regional Municipality of Waterloo (Andrew and Doloreux, 2011; Sands, 2010). The rest of the province, therefore, is forced to be less reliant on these sectors for economic development, instead focusing on unique local assets. Outside of the heavily urbanized and industrial areas that comprise the province's core, there is a pattern of smaller local municipalities reliant on agriculture, heritage, and tourism to attract attention and lower scales of investment and migration. This assertion is demonstrated in the pattern of branding, as Toronto and Ottawa are included in industrial brands, while the rest of the province is predominantly tourist, heritage, and agriculturally branded.

A fourth explanation for the brand clusters that were observed is strong historical links that bind an area together, even if there are considerable differences in the types and

sizes of municipalities that comprise the region. The shared traditions and histories help bind a region together by creating a shared identity. Indeed, historical local and regional identities can be similar to national identities and have strong mobilising power for within a population (Terlouw, 2012). In Ontario, the north shore of Lake Ontario was the first areas of the province to be settled by Europeans during the 18th and 19th centuries. The identity of this region was further strengthened throughout this period, as it was primary migration point for British Empire Loyalists emigrating from the United States. Additionally, this region held political significance in the 19th century, as the City of Kingston acted as the first capital of Canada.

Finally, there is a knowledge transfer component that explains the spatial structure of the place based on the formal and informal passing of information between municipalities. Arku (2014) and Reese and Sands (2007) have identified flows of information between municipalities in Ontario, and therefore some of this shared knowledge may inform local branding practices. This could take the form of formal knowledge or experience exchange, or through less-formal mimicking of techniques that seem to be providing one municipality an edge over its competitors. Over time, the most successful municipalities would be neighboured by municipalities with similar brands, creating the clusters observed in the results. In Ontario, Toronto and Ottawa are two of the primary locales for industry and act as primary economic engines for the province. It can be argued that nearby municipalities that are in competition for business and talent will make use and exploit the successful urban centres to help generate the development of local clusters which can be presented through place branding. Similarly, a more formal passing of information through cooperation could explain potential branding

convergence. As cooperation becomes more engrained in the culture of local economic development within the province, there will be even greater potential for inter-municipality branding. This passing of information, or copying of successful strategies, may create a homogenisation within the province. Kalandides and Colomb (2010) and Turok (2009) have suggested a global (world-wide) tendency towards brand homogenisation, with diversity between municipalities being lost. This suggests a role for collaboration, as the convergence of urban structures, assets, and messages within several municipalities allows for an easier integration.

4.5.1 Cooperation Amongst Ontario's Municipalities: Policy Implications

While inter-jurisdictional cooperation has permeated other domains of local economic development, place branding has been predominantly undertaken in isolation at the municipality level in Ontario. This isolated development has occurred despite similarities that exist between municipalities, including overlapping resources, municipal policy, and economic development aspirations; resulting in a homogenisation of place brand messaging. The result is repetition in place brand development and waste of scarce local resources being spent to compete with neighbours. Since municipality-led place branding efforts in the province are predominantly subsidized through public funding, any potential avenues to save limited financial resources are important. In many of Ontario's municipalities, public spending is being cut, and therefore the level of investment in place branding is being reduced wherever possible to help maintain the fiscal integrity of municipalities and their governments. Consequently, there is potential to extend cooperative efforts already occurring between municipalities to encompass place branding. Efforts of municipalities could be coordinated, and brands harmonized

for mutual economic development benefits. These considerations are important in Ontario, as there appears to be a new phase of municipality branding and re-branding underway as urban localities attempt to redefine themselves in the face of proliferation of global economic markets and restructuring provincial economy.

Regardless of the ultimate reason for the patterns observed, this research has identified the scope for inter-jurisdictional cooperation on branding as being a viable policy option for Ontario. Nearly one-third of the municipalities demonstrate some form of local brand similarity with their neighbours, and nearly one-quarter have been identified as having sufficient similarity with a group of neighbours to form an inter-jurisdictional brand. In terms of policy, the study indicates that there is potential for future place branding economic development in the province. In particular, as the province of Ontario continues to recover from the ongoing economic instability, there is the need to balance fiscal prudence with growth and development as well as a reappraisal of local approaches to economic development. Inter-jurisdictional cooperation achieves this goal for several reasons, mainly by strengthening the *complex* elements of the brand. First, as Cai (2002) and Pasquinelli (2013) have argued, there is a critical mass that can be achieved through collaboration. This critical mass can take several forms. In the case of the industrial centres, the joining of various municipalities raises the population and, by extension, the labour force. This also increases the available area for development and allows for the combination and marketing of more local assets such as transportation infrastructure which can be presented as serving this larger area. In this study, in the case of Toronto, by itself, it has a population of 2,615,060 but, as the clustering of brands found by this study suggest, this would create a city-region with a population of

4,296,260, nearly twice the size of the city proper. By expanding the area being branded, a new Toronto region brand can be created to include Canada's largest airport located in neighbouring City of Mississauga. In this situation, cooperation allows for Toronto to appear more competitive within the global economy.

The second benefit of a policy of inter-jurisdictional cooperation relates to economy of scale. By collaborating with neighbours, the financial and infrastructural resources needed to develop, maintain, and communicate a brand can be reduced for each municipality. Alternatively, the resources of each municipality could be pooled to facilitate more extensive branding campaigns. The promotion of collaboration amongst municipalities should therefore be a policy priority of the local and provincial governments. By incentivising and facilitating formal cooperation this could enable the provincial government to help stimulate potential growth and continue the province's economic recovery.

These opportunities provided by cooperation appear particularly beneficial to municipalities that have smaller populations, and therefore a lower tax-base and political infrastructure but which are still forced to compete within the global economy. For example, municipalities with tourism-reliant economic development strategies which have to compete as a destination on a global scale. Adopting a policy of local cooperation among several neighbouring municipalities could increase the value propositions available to be incorporated into a regional place brand. Cooperation can open up more of the natural environment, with greater opportunities for exploration or recreation to be promoted on a much greater scale, facilitating the marketing of more robust and appealing product.

Regardless of which sector of the economy is being branded, it must be recognized by these municipalities that they exist and compete in a global market, and therefore have to develop and deploy policy that allows their brand and reputation to be successful. Through this, a municipality or region can improve its standing in the global hierarchy, and reap the associated economic benefits.

The approach of inter-jurisdictional cooperation, however, has several potential challenges, which in part explain why the approach has not been more readily adopted. Wolfe and Gertler (2001) have noted that in Ontario, globalization has accentuated the significance of the local context for economic activities. If the parameters of *local* are changed through cooperation, it is possible that municipalities will feel a loss of the sense of place that once made them unique. This was an issue already observed in Ontario through the municipal amalgamations of the 1980s and 1990s. As municipalities merged in response to a changing economic environment, there was concern that local identities would be lost (Stern and Hall, 2010; Sancton, 2000; Zimmerbauer and Paasi, 2013). The approach of this study helps to alleviate this concern, by suggesting collaboration of municipalities with similar economic aspirations, and therefore allowing the message to remain more rooted in the local context.

A consideration for future research is whether cooperation should occur between municipalities with differing economic aspirations. The advantage of this approach is that each municipality is able to focus on particular section of the economy, while relying on neighbours to provide focus on other segments, giving the cluster breadth and robustness in economic aspirations and expertise. This approach has the additional advantage of removing local competition, as neighbouring municipalities are competing for investment

from differing segments of the economic market. Potential pitfalls to this approach include determining the appropriate place brand message for the cluster that would convey the economic reality, while ensuring that the messages are not overly complex. Kavaratzis (2005, 2009) has argued that places are often individually too complex to brand, and therefore creating an adequate brand for a group of municipalities with varying messages may not be feasible. Further, it may be difficult convincing all potential members to buy into the cooperation and new brand. Based on the results of this study, the collaboration of municipalities with differing brands appears to have less utility in Ontario compared to the potential for the clustering of similarly branded locales. This assertion is drawn from the results of the global spatial autocorrelation. Statistically significant positive spatial autocorrelation, signifying clustering, was only identified in brands neighbouring municipalities that used similar place brand messaging (i.e. industry-industry). Relationships between differing – or complementing – place brands (i.e. industry-agriculture) we uniformly found to be either evenly distributed or dispersed across the province. This indicates that complementary-branded clusters of municipalities are not readily apparent in Ontario. From a policy perspective, therefore, emphasis should be placed on identifying and leveraging clusters of similarly branded municipalities as that is what is observed to be naturally occurring. This approach, however, could be practical in other geographic contexts.

Another concern, similar to the loss of sense of place, is that one municipality will dominate the cluster and reap the benefits associated with cooperation, leaving the smaller municipalities at an economic disadvantage. The clusters identified as being led by Ottawa, Toronto, and Waterloo Region all have potential for this to occur, as these

cities have a competitive edge in terms of population size and economic base over their neighbours. At an inter-jurisdictional level, therefore, it is important that policy and practice align to ensure that each member of a cluster has a fair representation and reasonable access to available resources.

A final issue that has been identified is place ambiguity. As the context of the geographic entity being branded changes, it becomes increasingly different from how urban patterns are perceived and understood. As Anholt (2006) and Harvey and Young (2012) argue, there is considerable brand value in a municipality name and an identifiable location in space. Cooperation and the associated formation of a new geographic entity create ambiguity around a name and location. As a result, it can be more difficult to tie a sense of place created through a brand with a particular locale.

4.6 Conclusion

Based on the results of the first two phases of this research, it is evident that place branding is heavily used in Ontario. While there is potential for collaborations among municipalities to consider a more inter-regional approach to place branding there are limits to this line of research. Similar to the quantitative analysis presented in the previous chapter, this research is unable to identify underlying issues of place branding or rationales behind it. To fully explore the issues of place branding, and the issues of cooperation and collaboration discussed in this chapter, greater depth to the analysis is needed. For example, the issues of collaboration need to be further explored to see if there is any consideration being giving to that form of strategy at the municipal level. Therefore, guided in part by the results of the first two phases of research (described in

Chapters 3 and 4), qualitative research through in-depth interviews will further explore place branding within Ontario's municipalities (Chapter 5).

CHAPTER FIVE

ASSESSING STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVES ON PLACE BRANDING: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter aims at providing an analysis of the dynamics of place branding from the perspective of those who are directly involved in the design, implementation, and management as well as those who may be influenced by it. Specifically this phase of research aims to provide an extensive and in-depth exploration on place branding, and the process of place branding—from conception and rationalization, through development and implementation, and ultimately to consumption. Four specific sub-objectives were investigated:

RO1 – *to define how place branding is understood, and what elements comprise it;*

RO2 – *to examine how place branding fits into the larger processes of globalization and neoliberal policymaking, and explore why place branding is becoming an integral component of economic development efforts in Ontario;*

RO3 – *to explore the process of developing and implementing a place brand, including the motivations to do so, the challenges associated with place branding, and the communication channels used to promote the brand; additionally identifying important stakeholders and the extent of their relationship with one another;*

RO4 – *To examine the effectiveness of place branding, including how success is measured by municipalities.*

This phase of the research is based on qualitative data, collected through in-depth interviews with 45 key informants with direct knowledge and understanding of local economic development and place branding. The overall group of interviewees was comprised of three distinct sub-groups, each with differing understanding, knowledge,

and perspective on place branding in general and Ontario in particular: (1) Economic development practitioners; (2) Place branding consultants; and (3) Site selectors.

For this research study, in-depth interviews provide a platform to focus on the perceptions of these individuals, interpret those perceptions, and employ inductive reasoning to contribute to conceptual understanding of place branding and its relationship with economic development. The following chapter presents: the rationale for qualitative research; the methodological approach employed, including the selecting of participants, conducting of interviews, and coding and analysis; the findings of the study; and discussion of how the findings fit into the larger issues of place branding and economic development and the existing academic literature.

5.2 Rationale for Qualitative Research

A qualitative approach to research has many strengths, and importantly is adept at examining a limited number of cases or perspectives in depth (Winchester, 2005). Additionally, qualitative research can describe in rich detail phenomena as they are situated and embedded within local context (Hay, 2005). In the case of place branding, the motivations, rationales, processes, and local identities that coalesce to form the brand are context specific to each municipality (Hansen, 2010). Considering the unique characteristics of each municipality examined, the process of branding takes place in a very particular context. Indeed, issues concerned with branding a specific municipality or place are examples of circumstances that require in-depth analysis, focusing upon a small number of cases (Carson *et al*, 2001; Hankinson, 2009). Qualitative methods in general are especially appropriate to understand the particular context within which the

participants act and the influence this context has on their actions (Maxwell, 1998).

Furthermore, an objective of this research was to develop an understanding of the knowledge and perspective of economic development practitioners, consultants, and site selectors concerning the process of producing and consuming a municipality's brand, and to shed light on the patterns of motivations of their actions. Such explanations are the direct outcome of qualitative methodologies (Corbin and Strauss, 1990).

Ultimately, qualitative research is concerned with elucidating human environments and experiences within a larger conceptual framework (Winchester, 2005). Compared to quantitative analysis, qualitative research more easily accesses and explores social structures and experience (Hess-Biber and Leavy, 2004; Winchester, 2005). As a result, this approach is able to examine human agency within the larger conceptual context, which in this study is the concept of place branding (Guba and Lincoln, 2004; Harding, 2004). As a methodological field, qualitative research is well suited to investigate both small and large phenomena, as well as historical, comparative, observational, and interactive modes of knowledge (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004; Winchester, 2005).

5.3 Methodology

The following section outlines the methodology used in the qualitative phase of the research. The research was focused around 45 in-depth interviews with expert subjects associated with place branding, its development, and its consumption.

5.3.1 In-Depth Interviews

The first two phases of research provide a perspective on the breadth of the issues surrounding place branding, showing their extents and identifying underlying factors that influence its usage and messaging. These approaches, however, do not provide background into the deeper issues that surround place branding. While the visual imagery presented in logos and slogans can be used to develop an initial sense of place from the image the place brand creates, that approach can only be used to conclude meaning. As Stock (2009) noted, the place brand becomes the interface of the internal identity and the external image. Analysis of the place brand imagery encompassed in the logo and slogan only provide information on one half of this relationship. The identity that is produced locally is the result of political intentions, interactions, and strategies, goals for economic development, and the stakeholders and their perspectives and local senses of place. While these factors may be inferred from the logo or slogan, in-depth analysis is needed to explicitly access, explore, and understand these issues. Further, the analysis of logos and slogans provides no information on how place branding works as a process of local government; nor does it provide any indication of the success or failure of a place branding strategy. These latter points are important to understand, as there has been emphasis within academic literature criticizing both the democratic legitimacy of place branding (Eshuis and Edwards, 2012) and the necessity of spending public funds on place branding initiatives (Anholt, 2009). Additionally, there has been a criticism of place branding that too much emphasis is being placed on logos and slogans. Indeed, as demonstrated in Chapter 3, there is a widespread adoption of logos and slogans in Ontario's municipalities and communities, and the analysis in this chapter aims to share

light on why it is becoming an integral component of economic development efforts. Finally, in Chapter 4 the possibility of collaborations in place branding were discussed, but analysis of the logos and slogans alone is not able to provide information on political traction that may exist. For all of these issues, in-depth knowledge is required from groups that interact with the place brand during development, implementation, and consumption.

The use of interviews as an approach to researching both place branding and economic development is not new (see Kvale, 1996; Mazanec, 1994; Reese 1992; Rubin, 1988), but has become a more widely-used technique over the past decade (Andersson and Niedomsyl, 2009; Arku, 2013, 2014; Bramwell and Wolfe, 2008; Gordon, 2007, 2009; Hankinson, 2009; Lewis and Donald, 2010). The use of interviews, therefore, has two potential strengths: first, it allows the current study to remain consistent with contemporary research practices in the field of place branding and economic development; and second, the limited research and the state of knowledge and understanding of the topic present an opportunity to obtain a deeper understanding. In-depth interviews, therefore, allow the data collection and interpretation to align with the overall research goals of the thesis.

The use of semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions was considered appropriate for the study for three main reasons. First, the open-ended questions approach allows respondents to identify significant issues and ideas themselves and explain their importance (Miller *et al*, 1994). The semi-structured interview utilizes a series of open-ended questions based on the topic area, but also provides opportunities for additional themes to be identified and examined (Dunn, 2005). The main themes are generally

identified prior to the interview, but the open-ended framework allows themes that develop throughout the discussions to be explored (Harvey-Jordan and Long, 2001). The open-ended nature of the interviews allows the process of questioning to be flexible and responsive to what respondents have to say, maximizing the opportunities to obtain unique information, experiences, and ideas (Dunn, 2005; Hay, 2005, Winchester, 2005). In this study, the relative lack of knowledge about place branding in Ontario emphasized the need to have flexibility in the research methodology to identify and explore new themes as they emerged through interaction with the participants.

Secondly, a flexible structure was considered necessary in order to deal successfully with the different participants, as they were part of different organizations, acting within different political, economic, and operational environments and having varying place branding uses, goals, and understandings. This flexibility within the interview process allows for identification, evaluation, and appropriate treatment of such differences among the interviewees. This, therefore, ensures that the interview questions being asked are contextually appropriate, and remain relevant and in line with the research objectives. Finally, the topic of place branding and its surrounding issues are complex and include several interrelations between the various partial issues. The varying experiences of each respondent are therefore valuable in developing a more complete understanding of the research domain. In-depth interviews in general are appropriate to deal with such complex matters and allow room for clarifications and adequate descriptions of interrelations.

An issue surrounding the topic of place branding and economic development is the unbalanced distribution of influence, experience, and knowledge. In the context of

local economic development, participation in the place branding domain is limited. Clark (1998), Harvey (2010), and Richards (1996) classify this knowledge, held by a select group, as elite. To elaborate, Richards (1996, p. 199) describes elites as “a group of individuals who hold, or have held, a privileged position in society and, as such, as far as a political scientist is concerned, are likely to have had more influence on political outcomes than general members of the public.” Within the context of this research, elite refers to economic development practitioners, place brand consultants, and site selectors who, through the nature of their training and work experience hold extensive theoretical and practical knowledge. Additionally, members of this group occupy upper-level positions within public and private sectors and have considerable influence on the production and consumption of place brands. In this regard, all those interviewed were either directors, deputy directors, or senior-most persons within the economic development departments of selected municipalities or private companies.

5.3.2 Identifying the Interview Participants

As previously noted, participants were drawn from three groups: economic development practitioners ($n = 25$), place brand consultants ($n = 10$), and site selectors ($n = 10$). Each group was purposefully sampled to draw a wide range of perspective and richness within the information gathered (Baxter and Eyles, 1997). Indeed, a key consideration for choosing these groups of participants for this research was their positions, knowledge, and experiences. All participants were drawn from public sources, in particular municipal and corporate websites. A guiding factor that affected the sampling of consultants and site selectors was that they had to indicate that they

conducted business in Canada, and whenever possible in Ontario. This was to ensure that the knowledge was relevant to the research questions. The site selectors were predominantly located in the eastern United States, while the place brand consultants were based out of Ontario and Quebec.

Within the group of economic development practitioners, the participants in the interview process were purposively sampled to ensure a representation from municipalities of all types, sizes, and economic strengths and goals. One practitioner per municipality was targeted for the interviews; however, some practitioners were able to provide information and recent experiences from multiple municipalities. Selection of different ranges of municipalities was necessary to ensure maximum diversity in perceptions by local officials and in approaches to place branding. Indeed, the final list of municipalities selected for this study represents a diverse group from a geographic, political, and demographic context. The list included eight of the ten largest cities in Ontario, as well as some of the important medium- and small-sized municipalities in the province. In part, selection was guided by the classification scheme of Sands and Reese (2008). This research divided the sample municipalities into three categories based on population from the 2011 census data: large municipalities (larger than 350,000; e.g. Toronto), medium-size municipalities (350,000 to 75,000; e.g. Pickering), and small municipalities (of less than 75,000; e.g. Brockville). The sample further considered the type of municipality, and therefore, representatives from generic municipalities (e.g. Brighton), townships (e.g. Springwater), towns (e.g. Orangeville), and cities (e.g. Kingston) were selected. The municipalities included in the investigation were predominantly single- or lower-tier; however, one upper-tier municipality (The County of

Simcoe) was included to provide a regional, multi-municipality perspective on place branding. The characteristics of each municipality are summarized in Table 5.1.

The municipalities involved in this study were further selected to be diverse in terms of their economic base, such as manufacturing (e.g. Hamilton), high-tech (e.g. Kitchener, Oakville), and creative economies (e.g. Peterborough). Finally, a consideration was what the state of the municipality – and its economic development office – place brand was. Some municipalities were targeted that had no official brand strategy (e.g. Barrie), but were in the process of developing a new place brand (e.g. Brighton), or had recently deployed a new brand (e.g. Brampton), or used a long standing brand (e.g. Woodstock).

Table 5.1: Municipalities participating in this study

<u>Municipality</u>	<u>Tier</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Population (2011)</u>
Barrie	Single	City	135711
Brampton	Lower	City	523911
Brantford	Single	City	93650
Brighton	Lower	Municipality	10928
Brockville	Single	City	21870
Burlington	Lower	City	175779
Cambridge	Lower	City	126748
Hamilton	Lower	City	519949
Kingston	Single	City	123363
Kitchener	Lower	City	219153
London	Single	City	366151
Markham	Lower	City	301709
Mississauga	Lower	City	713443
Oakville	Lower	Town	182520
Orangeville	Lower	Town	27975
Orillia	Single	City	30586
Ottawa	Single	City	883391
Peterborough	Single	City	78698
Pickering	Lower	City	88721
Sarnia	Lower	City	72366
Simcoe	Upper	County	446063
Springwater	Lower	Township	18223
St. Thomas	Single	City	37905
Toronto	Single	City	2615060
Woodstock	Lower	City	37754

5.3.3 Conducting the Interviews

The qualitative research encompassed 45 in-depth interviews, conducted between May and February 2014. The participants belonged to one of three groups: local economic development practitioners (n = 25), place brand consultant (n = 10), and site selectors (n = 10). The preferred method of interview was face-to-face, with participants given the flexibility to choose the location. Elwood and Martin (2000) and Miller *et al* (1994) argue that conducting interviews in the place of the participant's choosing, such as

their office, helps to establish the elites' positions of authority, increases comfort level, and therefore helps the participant provide a setting that is conducive for conversation, and therefore allows the generation and communication of valuable knowledge.

Logistical constraints, however, limited the number of face-to-face interviews to 22 of 45 ($n = 21$ practitioners, and $n = 1$ consultant); the remaining interviews were conducted over the phone. The primary reasons for phone interviews were location and time constraints on the participants. Nonetheless, both in-person and phone interview formats allowed participants to contribute their knowledge of and experience with place branding.

For each group, a different set of guiding questions and prompts were developed (See Appendix A for complete list of questions). Scripts for practitioners and consultants were approximately ten guiding questions in length, while those for site selectors were about seven questions long. Probes were used to delve further into the issue and develop clarity and insight.

The interviews with economic development practitioners generally lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Due to scheduling constraints and limited availability, the interviews with consultants and site selectors were typically 30 minutes in length. The interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participants to ensure that the statements made during the data collection were accurately captured to allow for in depth analyses and interpretations. The recorded interviews were erased after the transcriptions were completed.

5.3.4 Coding and Analysis of Data

Coding is an approach to evaluating, organizing, and interpreting data (Cope, 2003; Jackson, 2001), that serves the purpose of reducing the data into important, manageable themes and, more substantively, allows data exploration, identification of patterns, analysis, and theory-building (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003; Cope, 2005). Indeed, coding has been described as “the central part of qualitative data analysis and involves extracting meaning from collected textual materials” (Hesse-Biber and Leavy, 2004, p. 410-411).

Coding and analyses were done based on the data gathered during the interviews with economic development practitioners, place brand consultants, and site selectors. All information gathered was coded according to the perceptions, of the participants, coupled with thematic analyses. In particular, four themes (derived from Cope, 2005; Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Thomas, 2003) were used to guide the coding: conditions (the social, political, and physical context and the circumstances in which the participant exists); interaction amongst actors, the relationships that the participants have with others (for instance, the relationship between economic practitioners and other key stakeholders in brand development); strategies and tactics, the intents, perceptions, and actions of the research subject and how they relate to the larger phenomena (in this case place branding); and finally, consequences, which contextualize the outcomes of interaction with a stimulus or phenomena (for instance, the interaction with a place brand, and the sense of place it creates in the consumer). Also, the meanings practitioners attached to place branding were examined within a context to further understand the changing landscape of economic development. The furthering of understanding occurred during

discussions with participants to identify emerging themes and patterns that were relevant for coding.

Within this larger context, themes were established through the identification of repeated words and phrases. Prior to coding key response categories were created, as Hay (2005) suggests this to be the most appropriate approach to the coding process. The transcripts were coded according to the emerging themes, and then reviewed against the key response categories multiple times to ensure that concepts pertaining to the same phenomena and place branding issues were placed into the correct categories (Arku, 2014). Larger theoretical concepts were developed during this analysis, through the amalgamation of key themes into increasingly abstract ideas, or nodes that were significantly closer to the objectives of this research. Next, theoretical narratives, which are essentially a summary of the constructed theoretical concepts, were generated, and these narratives significantly aligned the research objectives with the subjective views of the participants. The data were analyzed on a participant-by-participant basis, and more broadly on a field-by-field basis (practitioner, consultant, and site selector). The interpretation of the thematic analyses allowed access to an in-depth understanding of perceptions and knowledge held within each group of participants.

5.3.5 Ethical Concerns and Issues

Approval for this research was obtained from the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Western Ontario (UWO) in April, 2013 (see Appendix B). As a condition of ethics approval, the confidentiality of each participant in the research was protected. This confidentiality was expressed to all prospective participants during the recruitment

and data collection phases of the interview process. Each participant was given an ‘invitation to participate’ letter to read through and retain for their records. The invitation to participate described not only the contact details of the ethics office but also the rights of the participants to decline to answer any questions with which they were not comfortable. Additionally, participants were informed of their rights to opt out of the study at any point in time without any consequences.

Throughout the interviews, participants understood these rights, and there were no problems or objections to tape recordings for research purposes. Confidentiality was strictly adhered to, and no information that participants provided was subsequently disclosed. In keeping with confidentiality agreement, the participants are identified by pseudonyms (e.g. P1, P2....P25 for practitioners; C1, C2...C10 for consultants; and S1, S2...S10 for site selectors).

No compensation or reward was requested by the participants or offered to them. Recordings of the interviews were kept in a securely locked cabinet at the residence of the primary investigator and later transferred to the investigator’s office at the University when the field work was completed. The audio recordings could only be assessed by the primary investigator and his supervisor, and these files were completely destroyed after the research was completed.

5.4 Findings of the Qualitative Research

The major objective of the qualitative phase of research was to investigate and understand *why* and *how* place branding is used at the municipal level as a policy tool to promote economic development. The following sections present the results of this

qualitative analysis, organized according to the study objectives and the themes that emerged during the in-depth interviews with the participants. Beyond presenting the results specific to each group, the results are presented to identify similarities and differences in perspectives that emerged during the analysis.

The findings of the in-depth interviews are organized into four broad categories: (1) defining place branding, and identifying its primary components; (2) contextualizing place branding in local economic development, and exploring its role in contemporary processes of globalization and neoliberalism policymaking; (3) exploring the process of place brand development from conception to promotion, including the primary stakeholders involved; and (4) the effectiveness of place brand initiatives and how the effectiveness is measured. Each broad category contains sub-themes based on specific quotations to deepen understanding of the findings. Direct quotations from the interview transcripts illustrate the themes and provide the context for the participants' responses. Furthermore, they serve to demonstrate and explain participants' perspectives and to support the conclusions of this study. Finally, to contextualize the responses of those interviewed, each theme and subsequent sub-themes is presented with consideration of existing academic literature, to identify convergences and divergences between academic understanding and practical application at the municipal level.

5.4.1 What is Place Branding?

An emerging theme within the perspective of the practitioners was that place branding is the construction and promotion of an image and sense of place drawn from a local identity. Inherent in this understanding about place branding was the perspective

that it provides the opportunity to influence how the municipality is regarded and understood by its target audiences. As an example of this perspective, a practitioner explained:

“Place branding is the top of mind message that comes to people when they think of whatever is the case, whether it’s a city or an industry, its good, bad, indifference. Whether it is exciting or boring. But it is the immediate reaction that comes to people’s mind” (P24).

This sentiment was consistent with the views site selectors and place brand consultants, who emphasized that place branding is largely about perception: “It’s all perception” (S1), that “[place branding] is how you want external parties to perceive yourself” (S2).

Explaining how this recognition or perception is important, the place branding consultants interviewed for this study drew upon the broader field of psychology:

“Branding is sort of a psychology thing. It’s an intangible” (C1). As another consultant noted:

“Communities are using marketing and psychological theory about the use of visual representation to communicate a brand promise. And a brand promise is a whole series of perceptions and image and an entity that’s represented into that one logo” (C4).

The responses of the practitioners, and more explicitly place branding consultants, reaffirm the understanding of what place branding is understood to be within academic literature. As Anholt (2006), Eshuis and Edwards (2012), Johansson (2012), and Hansen (2010) indicate, brands are symbolic constructs meant to add value or meaning to something, used for managing perception, and influencing people’s ideas by forging particular emotional and psychological associations with a place. As discussed in previous chapters, the way for a brand to have resonance and be able to access emotional

and psychological perceptions is through the cultivation of a sense of place. Elaborating further, several practitioners described the role of place branding as follows: “it’s about creating a sense of place” (P2), “a different sense of feel about what that community has to offer” (P15), “creating that visual and feeling...a sense of difference” (P22), and “trying to invoke a feeling, or memories, or interest” (P7); all with the goal of shaping “how we want to be perceived by the audience” (P16). A common understanding among the practitioners was that the perception of the “sense of place” (P2, P3, P9, and P15) by the target audience is developed through the cultivation of a local identity and image. The understanding of place branding as a way to create a strong image or identity presenting the locality positively was a common theme in the responses of the practitioners. These responses align with Stock (2009) who describes the final sense that a target audience develops about a municipality as strongly influenced by the way local and regional economy is presented. This view of the brand being able to affect perception is emphasized by practitioner P10 who said:

“our brand really was what other people thought of us. And if we didn’t change the identity, the way the city worked, if we did not create something fundamentally new, there was no way we could get people to talk or think differently about us”.

Similar sentiment was expressed by practitioner P 22:

“Branding to me means establishing an identity. An identity that people outside your organization...start to identify you. By positive communication whether its web, email, or brochures people start to understand” (P22).

These perspectives of the practitioners were mirrored by the consultants in regards to the identity, image, and ultimately the sense of place that is created through a place brand with the goal “to give a customer a sense of what you represent” (C6). More specifically, place branding was described as functionally creating a feeling or sense of place:

“I think a brand really portrays the essence of a community...The brand really has to portray not quite the experience that are there but the feeling of the experiences that the community is offering” (C3),

and that:

“...brand is part of an identity. I think it’s not necessarily a visual representation. I think it has to do more with how you perceive yourself and how you want external parties to perceive yourself” (C2).

Based on the perceptions of the practitioners and consultants, a common theme that can be distilled is that “a place brand is many layers terms of story, of feeling, of emotion, and essence of what really a place is” (C5). While there was agreement on what place branding is in conceptual terms, there is also a functional element of what makes up the brand. In this area there was agreement between practitioners as a group, and between practitioners and consultants. The next sections describe the opinions of the practitioners and consultants on what elements go into making a place brand.

5.4.1.1 The Three Legs of a Place Brand: Promise, Identification, and Experience

From the responses of the consultants, practitioners, and site selectors, it is clear that place branding is multifaceted in its composition. Emerging from the responses were three common elements to a place brand: a form of identifying the brand; the promise or message being communicated; and the experience of the municipality; with all three components working in conjunction to help solidify the sense of place. As previously noted, places are experiential (Hansen, 2010); and that the experience can extend ahead of actual consumption (Allen, 2007; Anholt, 2005a). The promise, therefore can be characterized as the attempt to foster a pre-consumption experience of a municipality by creating an expectation of what a municipality has to offer in the mind of the potential tourist, migrant, business, or investor. As one practitioner explained, “it means your

offerings” (P5). In essence, the use of a place brand “is about painting an experience of place” (P18). Linking the components of the brand with the understanding of what it is, a consultant observed that “a brand promise is a whole series of perceptions and image and an entity that’s represented into that one logo” (C4). From a more practical perspective, a site selector argued that the promise needs to include the strengths that the municipality has to offer: “Yeah, I think branding is important...you market from your strengths. Well you brand yourself on the strengths that you have to offer” (S7).

Through the pre-consumption of a place the brand promise is important, the actual experience of place plays an important role in the development of a strong brand. All ten site selectors indicated that site visits play an important role in the recruitment process, as the local experiences and impressions that are accrued can influence decision-making (this is further discussed in Section 5.4.5.1). From the consultant perspective, the experience of the brand was also considered a vital component: “if you’re trying to position and brand a community and impress people, it’s all about the experience they have” (C1) and “I see branding as a way to provide a customer with an experience of who you are and what you do” (C6). A similar perspective was held by the practitioners, with one noting that “brand recognition that you gain over time is more based on experience rather than messaging” (P14). Another noted that the influence of the brand extends after the initial interaction or consumption, as “it’s an image and an experience that they are recalling” (P9). The important role brand play in recalling experience was also identified by consultants, as noted reflected in the following comment: “you have the positive experience first and then you see the logo...so the visual part of the brand, the logo, the

name, or the graphic only reminds you of the other positive things you experienced about the brand” (C7).

From the perspectives of the three groups of interviewees, the influence of the place brand extends from the initial contact pre-consumption (the promise), through consumption (the experience), and finally having influence post-consumption through the recalling of the experience. The strength of the place brand and the level of good experience felt is influenced by how closely the first two phases align. As one practitioner puts it: “if you say it [the promise], you have to walk that talk [the experience]” (P24). Similarly, a consultant observed “you need to view that place with an authentic story” (C5). In this sense, “your place branding is about reconciling the promise with the experience” (C7), meaning that the message that is presented about the municipality must reflect the realities of the locality. Balmer and Soenen (1999) describe this as the alignment of the communicated and actual identities of a municipality. The practitioners generally identified that there had to be agreement between the promise and the experience. A similar theme cuts across the responses of the practitioners: “It not only needs to reflect the realities of the community but it needs to deliver (P7), “What kind of image do you want to portray in that title. And do you have the credibility and authenticity to back it up? And do you have enough elements to make that statement with some honesty?” (P5), and “it's really a story and it's a narrative of a community and it has to be something genuine, it has to be true” (P3).

5.4.1.2 The Place Brand as an Iceberg: The Logo and Beyond

The previous section dealt primarily with the promise and the experiential elements of the place brand. Both the consultants and site selectors noted that the identification and communication of the brand was viewed as important. Anholt (2005b) has previously noted that a place brand includes a visual identity, but also extends to other issues such as stakeholders, functional assets, and emotional assets a community has. One consultant likened these two differing parts of the brand to an iceberg: “a brand is like an iceberg ...what people see...that may be the recognizable logo...that sends a strong signal of trust and confidence. That’s what the name does” (C7). If the logo is the tip of the iceberg, the rest remains unseen, but is actually the bulk of what underpins the brand. While the logo is just the tip of the brand, it is still important as it is meant to tangibly represent the rest of the values that are being projected. As several consultants noted, “branding its most often manifested in a logo” (C8) and “it [the logo] is the manifestation of all the work that has been done” (C4).

Although the practitioners agreed that a place brand was not simply a logo or slogan, there was disagreement about the exact role of the visual elements. Several practitioners identified the logo or slogan as a vital part of the brand, stating “you try to capture that feeling [of the brand] in a logo” (P6). As one practitioner described, “I think it means the use of a logo or slogan to invoke feelings, or memories, or interest to find out more” (P12), while another suggested that “the challenge for any community is to come up with a name and label that quickly sums up what they are about in one or two words” (P4). Finally, another practitioner suggested that a logo is a strong way of presenting a message, using the expression “it’s the idea that a picture’s worth 1000

words” (P7). In contrast, other practitioners viewed visual elements in a more negative light “The slogans are great but they are just window dressing.” (P8); or disregarded them altogether “We look at branding as kind of a ubiquitous concept – it’s not the logo, it’s not the slogan” (P24).

As alluded with the metaphor of the iceberg, there is another layer to the brand that is unseen because it is not manifested in a tangible image or phrase. One consultant noted that, “It’s not just a logo...branding is much more than a logo. It’s all of the elements and assets and stories and emotions that make up a place. So you’re going to view that place with a brand” (C8). Connecting with the idea of sense of place, one consultant explained that the underpinnings of a brand include both the tangible and intangible assets a community has to offer: “there are three types of attributes: a functional side...but a brand is more driven by its emotional and social attributes. The brand personality, how does it make people feel? What are the emotions, deep seeded emotions connected with the city?” (C4). Another common response of the consultants emphasized the narrative nature of place branding, describing a brand as a “Mythology about a place...Any brand involves a fair bit of myth building” (C6). Further, as one consultant described it, branding is “having a story to tell, telling it well, and telling it often” (C7).

The view of the practitioners was similar to that of the consultants, considering the brand to extend beyond the logo. In the words of some of the practitioners: “It’s not a logo if you will...the brand is more reputational than physical” (P6); and that “Good place branding is like un-branding...meaning it is not all in your face. It’s not about the logo and the tagline” (P18). Another expressed the idea of the narrative, describing the

brand extending beyond the logo to include a “compelling story” (P7). Connecting back to the metaphor of the place brand as the iceberg, one practitioner described:

“Place branding extends beyond the logo and slogan – while important as they are ways to crystalize or formalize the message you are trying to communicate - it’s the community resource and stakeholder groups...Branding is more than a logo and the tagline, it's really a story and it's a narrative of a community and it has to be something genuine, it has to be true...And it has to be something that energizes and excites people within the community as well, so they can get behind it, promote it, and be those built-in ambassadors.” (P2).

A common theme throughout was that while the place brand is not a logo or slogan, but a confluence of narratives, emotions, and assets that can be manifested in a tangible form. All the elements combine to express the promise and shape the experience with the intention of creating some form of investment among a target audience.

5.4.2 What is the Role of Place Branding?

While the previous section described the way place brands created a sense of place about a municipality, there were two specific functions that emerged from the three groups of interviewees: drawing attention to the municipality and differentiating the locality from its competitors. In each case, the place brand was viewed as having a critical role in advancing the ability of a municipality to attract attention to itself, and ultimately some form of investment.

5.4.2.1 Getting on the Radar

There was strong agreement amongst practitioners, consultants, and site selectors on the first function of place branding in local and regional economic development: to “draw attention to the community” (P15). A common sentiment within the group of

practitioners was that place branding helped get towns, cities and regions “on the radar screens” (P3, P7, P12, P4). As another practitioner noted, place branding provides a ‘foot in the door’ with a target audience as it “gets attention...it gives us a chance to explain why we think we’re a good location for them” (P23).

Similarly, site selectors agreed that place branding had an important role, as it is essential to remain relevant within a target audience. Along a common theme of awareness, several consultants noted: “It’s important to advertise to get your name out there” (S1); that “the marketing and branding, if it catches your eye can get you on the shortlist [of potential municipalities for relocation] very quickly” (S5); that a potential investor cannot invest in a place that they are not aware of, so “...getting over the issue of never being heard of does help. So branding does help” (S7); and lastly, that “branding can build an awareness and how you brand and the breadth that you brand with” (S9).

Brand consultants also shared similar sentiments. As an illustration, a consultant noted that place branding helps municipalities to make themselves known to companies and potential investors:

“The truth is you’d only appear on that company’s radar in the first place only if your branding was good. If you had the impression of a city where things happen, and were smart and digitally savvy, with the world, plugged in...that’s all part of the brand experience” (C6).

Based on these responses, it is clear that ‘getting on the radar’ of a target audience is important. Once that is done, however, it is necessary to demonstrate that the municipality is superior to its contemporaries. As a result, there is a second role of place branding that emerges from the issue of drawing attention.

5.4.2.2 Standing Out From the Rest

The second role, differentiation, is consistent with what Turok (2009) describes as the global trend of homogenization of urban spaces both in terms of attributes and offerings. As one practitioner noted:

“Everything from Windsor to Ottawa everything that’s along the 401, we’re all pretty much the same in a lot of ways, right? We’ve all got quality of life. We’ve all got the levels of services that people expect. We’ve all got industrial lands, we’ve all got labour. So it really comes down to how we are going to differentiate ourselves from the rest of the pack” (P25).

From an industry perspective, site selectors brought up a similar point about homogenization, arguing that the way municipalities have branded themselves has converged towards promoting similar promises and experiences:

“Back towards the year 2000, everybody on the planet was a biotech centre. So not only is it making yourself exclusive, it also you’re excluding yourself into an area with a million competitors. Let’s just be blunt here. Why don’t you say ‘we’re a city that breathes’ or something. You haven’t really differentiated yourself very much...so what’s your point? Why did you brand in the first place?” (S8)

A theme within the responses of the practitioners and consultants was that a well-developed place brand can cut through the homogenization and make a municipality stand out. As several practitioners noted, place branding “gets to the point of differentiation...because of the fact that we have so many commonalities” (P3), that “many communities can offer similar amenities. What makes our community unique? What is different?” (P15), and that “many of the communities in the province of Ontario offer similar levels of quality of life” (P23). In greater detail, two practitioners noted that:

“Communities are always trying to differentiate themselves from everybody else because you tend to have the same sort of assets, you know most places have roads, most places have infrastructure, most places have natural amenities...so it's finding what makes you unique and running with it” (P2).

and

“It’s really trying to find out what makes us a little different. And then making sure that it is part of the messaging and the value propositions we take out when we deal with the existing community and potential investors” (P6).

As noted, the perspectives of the consultants similarly presented a place brand as a strong way to differentiate from competitors: “branding is critical for providing a differentiator. Otherwise everyone is talking the same talk at the table, making the same sales pitches” (C6); and that a municipality should “Use brand as a differentiator that adds value to competitive position” (C6). These perspectives were further elaborated:

“It differentiates and it explains why you should go there or purchase or care. If you take that general sentiment, that’s what a place brand is. A place brand is going to differentiate you from the competition and it’s going to hopefully explain why you’re a better choice for tourism or economic development” (C5).

Based on the responses of the interviewees, standing out from competitors and drawing attention to a municipality were considered important uses for place branding. However, other underlying reasons for place branding were considered to be an important part of municipal economic development initiatives.

5.4.3 Place Branding in Ontario: Why is it being done?

Beyond the rationales that are specifically associated with branding, the interviews with the practitioners further revealed several underlying issues that have affected the usage and the goals of place branding initiatives at the municipal level. More specifically, the responses of the practitioners identified four main interrelated reasons for a growing role of place branding in economic development: globalization and increased competition; the effects of neoliberalism in Ontario; the changing economic realities of

the province; and the reimagining of places through the ‘municipality building’ process. The confluence of these issues has created an environment where place branding has an increased role in the development of communities.

5.4.3.1 The Influence of Globalization

As noted within the academic discourse on place branding, globalization has had a profound impact on how it is understood, and how it is utilized as a tool of economic development (Anholt, 2005a, 2006; Papadopolous, 2004; Pasquinelli, 2013). Indeed, place branding in many instances has been investigated and understood through a context of globalization, where the rise of the ‘new’ places into global market has affected the competition for labour and investment (Pasquinelli, 2013). The effects of globalization have been felt in Ontario, within the realm of competition, but also perception. It has previously been noted that place branding was viewed among the practitioners as an approach to shape the perception of an outside audience. This role holds true, as place branding was viewed as one way to shape global perceptions of competitors and of companies that may look to invest. A practitioner noted that the external image created through the brand has had positive influences on the global perception of their municipality:

“These companies are fundamentally changing how California thinks about us, the way New York thinks about us, the way Google thinks about us as a corporation, the way Blackberry thinks about us. Our identity...you know I am in dialogue with lots of companies... they are saying ‘what the heck is going on over there?’ There’s too much action, you can’t ignore it anymore, right?” (P10)

Further emerging from the responses of practitioners, it was clear that the effects of globalization have been felt by municipalities in two different ways. First, it has increased

the number of competitors on the global market for finite levels of labour and investment. Along with the emergence of these new locales for investment are corresponding place brands that are emerging to stake claim within the already saturated market. To illustrate, a practitioner noted:

“The rapid globalization is taking place within sectors and has led to the convergence of sectors. Communities are competing with each other. They’re creating brands so they can identify themselves in the international context” (P2),

and that:

“City to city business has become a very big piece of the global market. And that’s not only economic development terms of exports and investment attraction, but the cultural ties” (P9).

The latter response touches on the notion that municipalities are becoming the primary sites for consumption. As cities and urban regions further integrate into the global market, there will be an even greater number of competitors, each branding to draw attention.

The second effect of globalization is that municipalities in Ontario are now being forced to communicate on a global scale: “We are definitely communicating with a global audience. And the reason is that the companies that are forming here are aspiring to be global leaders” (P10).

Ontario municipalities were described as promoting their brand in a wide-range of places globally. As a practitioner responded when queried on *pressures that influence place branding*:

“The focus was on the U.S. and we have been saying we have too many eggs in one basket. Gotta [sic] diversify the portfolio...now we are focusing on India and China. We have some connections with Europe. We have a stronger focus on the South American market. And that’s because we see that as a growing economy” (P24).

The implication of these responses is that globalization has fundamentally changed the way in which a municipality conceives itself in a global context. From the responses of the practitioners, traditional reliance on the United States is declining and therefore new spaces within the market must be leveraged. The place brand provides a way to access these markets, and to draw initial attention to the municipality.

5.4.3.2 The Influence of Municipal Downloading of Responsibilities

Along with external forces, domestic forces such as the upper tier government's downloading of financial and administrative responsibilities to municipalities were identified as having an influence on the need for place branding. With persistent provincial government's downloaded of responsibilities to the municipalities, there have been increased financial stresses that limit the ability to provide local services. Therefore, any avenue that can expand the financial resources of the municipality are being explored. Within this context place branding is seen as a mechanism to attract residents and business, with the view to expand the resource base of communities. As representative of this view, a practitioner remarked: "It's a way to grow the pie [revenue]. You're all competitive with each other but there is a way to grow the pie" (P24).

Similarly another commented as follows:

What you're seeing is the result of communities whether large or small recognize the importance of expanding their assessment base. The bottom line for economic development is that if you can expand your assessment base it will drive revenues for community. (P2)

5.4.3.3 Provincial Legislative Controls

Despite municipalities' desire to expand their assessment base, the institutional environment within which communities operate in Ontario tend to limit their efforts. As noted in Chapter 1, municipalities are restricted in all important financial decisions relating to taxing, charging, borrowing, and spending (see Gertler, 1990; Tassonyi, 2005). Through this hierarchical control, municipalities are restricted in their ability to provide financial bonuses, tax breaks, or other bonuses to businesses. The practitioners interviewed for this study pointed out that the Ontario government's restrictions have compelled municipalities and communities to take new, creative approaches to draw attention to themselves and to make their locales appear attractive environment for investment. This is, in part, due to the pressures to deal with foreign competition, but also domestic. As one practitioner noted, "...because of the fact that the province does not allowed us to provide financial incentives we have to play to whatever strengths and advantages we have...we have to actively promote our strengths through place branding initiatives" (P3). As noted in earlier chapters, the place brand provides a way to promote the local advantages and differentiate between competitors. In an effort to improve strength and develop a niche, municipalities are making investment into areas which are traditionally outside their purview, as captured in the comment below:

"We invest heavily into our universities and colleges. We invested 2.5 million dollars in the creation for the centre for research in advanced manufacturing and design technologies. Should a city be investing in that? We think so, because investing in that helps build our future talent workforce, our human infrastructure which we believe is as important as enhancing our strength and making us competitive" (P2).

A further concern raised by the practitioner was that lax restrictions in the United States compared to those in Ontario were creating strong incentives for traditional large

manufacturing firms to migrate south. The general sentiment among the practitioner was that Ontario municipalities and communities cannot compete with their US counterparts on financial ground. To illustrate, one practitioner noted that “we can't really. We can't really offer financial reason to come to companies or something like that. You really can't get around it” (P1). Thus, in part, the practitioners attributed the persistent loss of traditional manufacturing from the province to their financial disadvantage position. As one recounted:

“...we've been dealing with a big company about a major expansion here, while we've been talking with them New York State came in and offered them strong incentives and now that one is in jeopardy. So we are seeing a lot of pressure from the U.S. as people come up and try to poach our companies... We lost... a major employer with 550 employees and they went to North Carolina who gave them \$134 million dollars in the package to move and consolidate. We can't touch that. The municipality can't do anything. The province was trying to keep them here, but there was only so much they can do as well.” (P8)

The issue of loss of industry to the United States was further contextualized as:

“There's little in the way of mobile manufacturing. And we're in a dog fight with the southern states for that... the states are throwing buckets of money at manufacturers. They're chasing old fashion jobs... we can't compete... it's not a game we can win” (P10).

5.4.3.4 Place Branding and Municipality Building

Place branding has also gained a role within the governance of urban jurisdictions and municipalities as a policy strategy for urban regeneration and redevelopment (Eshuis and Edwards, 2012; Johansson, 2012; Harvey and Young, 2013; van Dijk and Holstein, 2007). As an urban governance strategy, place branding is tasked with managing perceptions about places as sites of economic and spatial development. Eshuis and Edwards (2012) suggests a link between place branding and urban governance, following

the rationale that a place first decides what kind of brand it wants to become and then enhances developments to support that brand. Within the practitioner category, the idea of place branding to promote ‘municipality building’ was repeatedly mentioned. Several practitioners noted that there was a need for place brands in Ontario to help deal with loss of local identity and sense of place that resulted from municipal amalgamations in the 1980s and 1990s. A practitioner remarked that:

“even those municipalities have not gelled yet. So immediately there’s almost a requirement for them to set up a visual identity for their community when the community doesn’t even know what they are yet” (P22).

Another indicated that the initial emphasis on creating a strong local identity around a place brand “was something that was established during amalgamation” (P7) as “the brand becomes the unifier of all your initiatives” (P22).

The use of place brands in municipal building, however, was not limited to amalgamations. It also involved taking the municipality “in a new direction” (P4) and as a “rallying cry” (P2) to unify stakeholders and the public at large to attempt to ensure a smooth transition as the nature of the locale begins to change. One practitioner stated:

“when you are trying to build a community, you’re trying to bring all your resources together...the way to get people together is to unify them under something” (P22).

While another expressed:

“We had to do something to re-brand and get the community wrapped around that we are an industrial community when every other firm seems to be going after that creative economy and white collar workforce” (P23).

At an even larger scale, one practitioner linked the changing identity through place branding initiatives as a vital part of the municipal restructuring:

“we knew we had to change the way the city worked, that our brand really was what other people thought of us. And if we didn’t change the identity, the way the city worked, if we did not create something fundamentally new, there was no way we could get people to talk or think differently about us” (P10).

The perspectives of the practitioners are consistent with the broader concept of place management, where the goal is to improve the social and economic potential of the municipality (Pasquinelli, 2013). In this regard, it is evident that place branding is being used as a strategy of place management as municipalities in Ontario attempt to redefine and improve themselves in response to the changing economic, social, and political environment of the province.

While the responses of the practitioners show that there are several approaches in actually using the brand to guide development, it still needs to be an accurate reflection of the initiatives and resources within the municipality. A brand itself will not create a new place, but it can be used as a way to manifest the changes occurring and the newly uncovered or emerging identities that develop as the municipality undergoes its metamorphoses.

5.4.4 Place Branding in Ontario: What is being done?

Overall, the findings affirms the importance of place branding initiatives, as the practitioners unanimously acknowledged the approach as pivotal to local and regional economic development in Ontario. Of the 25 practitioners, 23 acknowledged existing or planned place branding initiatives in their municipality. Additionally, practitioners from the two municipalities with “no specific branding strategy” (P12) each indicated that informal, local brands were developed and leveraged. Additionally, from the experiences

of the consultants that were accessed, it became clear that place branding was being considered in a much broader range of municipalities across the province.

Emerging from the perspectives of practitioners and consultants, however, there is a notable amount of discord on what should be incorporated into place brands with opinions ranging from tangible, functional assets like roads and natural features to intangible elements such as innovation and creativity. There were several other disagreements about the best way to promote a place brand. The following sections examine the perceptions of these two groups and explore how place branding is being used in Ontario.

5.4.4.1 What is Being Branded?

The dimension of place branding that generated the greatest amount of divergence in the responses of practitioners was what was being included in the branding messages. Responses are summarized in Table 5.2, but can be divided into three general categories: natural environment assets, tangible assets, and intangibles. If the main goal is to create an understanding within the target audience of what assets, offerings, and value propositions a municipality has to offer, it is reasonable that strengths of the locality would be presented. While the natural environment and tangible assets are more easily promoted as there are real-world, physical elements to which they can be linked. Intangible assets – such as creativity, lifestyle, and innovation – provide a much harder proposition as they are more ambiguous. The strategy adopted in the place branding strategies of Ontario municipalities is to find ways to make the intangible tangible. As one practitioner observed:

“Some of these less tangible elements you have to find a tangible element. So for innovation, you have to say look, there are five universities – post secondary institutions in our municipality alone. And then there is even more when you expand a little bit.” (P3)

Interestingly, location was the most common asset that municipalities presented (Table 5.2). Twelve practitioners mentioned location as a key element in their brand messaging. A primary reason for this high rate is likely due to the proximity of the municipalities queried to the Greater Toronto Area and the network of major 400-series highways that are interspersed across southern Ontario. This provides a good example of shaping a message to connect with local assets.

Table 5.2: Common assets being included in place brands

Lifestyle in the community
Quality of life, innovative activities
Strong workforce base
Location, workforce, price cost, comparative cost of living
Affordable community to live and operate business
Educational institutions - Universities and Colleges
Nature of environment (e. g. small town charm)
Environmental features - trails along waterways
The convergence of technology and knowhow, sheer grit and hard work
Concentration of economic activities and talent

5.4.4.2 Spreading the Message: Print, People, and (Online) Presence

In the municipalities that took part in the interviews, there was considerable disagreement over the ways in which a local place brand should be disseminated. Several

practitioners (P3, P7, P8, P12, and P15) suggested that print media was still a viable method of promoting a brand. As one noted:

“It’s about getting to people in the way they consume information...we still have a segment of the audience that are reading magazines, are picking print magazines. So it’s an opportunity to amplify and reach what we are doing digitally through print” (P12).

A caveat, however, is that print media needs to extend beyond the use of advertisements.

As one practitioner explained in describing their print-media strategy:

“We’ve elicited the services of a Toronto based publicist and she’s going to get us earned media in several publications, key publications while this whole [branding] campaign is going on... We’re looking to get articles in 15 to 20 publications in the same time the campaign is going on. It is going to cost us less than \$10,000...rather than an ad that people will skip over... Earned media adds credibility. It’s more believable.” (P8).

A theme that emerged from the responses of the practitioners, alluded to in the previous quotes is that the method of delivery has to be meaningful and relevant to promote the municipality positively. In this regard, it was unanimously held among the practitioner that digital promotion of the brand was the most relevant avenue currently being employed. “Twitter is changing the minds of thousands of people about who we are” (P10) one practitioner noted. Another, when discussing the role of the internet described:

“It’s been a very, very powerful mechanism. We were the second Ontario community to have a community website. This was way back in the early 90s. It is the best way that we feel, and our independent audits have indicated that we have a very aggressive social media campaign now with all the elements that you see now such as Facebook and Twitter and all the other outreach initiatives. We have used Youtube. We do a lot of videos. So there is a lot of impact associated with those mechanisms. Less on the print now.” (P5).

An effect of this digital shift is that it allows the target audience to more actively interact with the municipality and its place brand. One practitioner noted that “whereas it used to be about people walking in and people phoning you asking for presentations,

people can self-serve now and get a lot of that information” (P11). This sentiment was supported by both consultants and site selectors. Discussing the value of the internet in brand promotion, one consultant argued that it was advantageous because “I think it is boundless in terms of your potential audience” and that “your audience can seek you out with a search. It’s the only medium that can do that” (C9). From the perspective of the target audience, site selectors had a similar perception of the utility. A caveat was that the use of digital communication is actually becoming a brand element itself, and can have an influence on the perceptions a potential investor has on the municipality:

“I find it useful. But I find most community economic development websites are lacking in what the customer really needs. And I don’t really understand it. There are plenty of examples of what we need, especially expressed through organizations like the International Economic Development Council, yet these websites continue to be inferior. I don’t get it. Very frustrating.” (S5).

Similar to the print media, it is important that municipalities consider who their target audience is, and how they will react to the channels in which the municipality and its brand are promoted. If they do not, there is potential for negative perceptions to be developed.

A potential solution to ensure the brand message is clear and appropriate for the target audience is to use municipality stakeholders to promote locality. As one practitioner noted on how they promote the municipality, “we use people in our ambassador program and use them to support us” (P5). The advantage of this approach was elaborated by another practitioner, which justified their use of municipality business members in brand dissemination as:

“When somebody with a city that comes on and says the city is a creative community, people will go ‘yeah, yeah, yeah. What else would you say?’ But for us it’s the b to b [business to business] conversations within the industry where they

are telling their colleagues...who's here, what does the supply chain look like, how reliable is it." (P24).

This links with the notion of the promise and the experience. In this instance, the brand should help narrow the gap between the promise and the experience, as the brand is being delivered in a method that is accurate and that "comes from a voice that they [the target audience] trust and respect" (P24), setting up realistic expectations about the municipality.

5.4.5 The Role of Place Branding in Local Economic Development

Connecting with the theme of place branding and economic development, a perspective of practitioners was that place branding was a way of "positioning the community that makes it seem business friendly" (P21). As municipal practitioner expressed, "manufacturing – it does represent our key wealth creation aspect...It generates a lot of wealth, it creates employment" (P5), and even more specifically referring to branding, "We want to be identified as an industrial community" (P23). Elaborating, one practitioner explained how the three parts of the place brand (the promise, the identification, and the experience) factor into economic development and business attraction:

"Branding becomes a very important part of that for three reasons. Number one, we want to tell the target market that we're here to do business. So a promise that there is employable labour...that land in the region can be developed confidently and you can develop it to your standards. The promise is very important. The second is the identification, so the graphic design and the slogan and so on. And the third is the experience that clients have, notably with the city in obtaining other approvals, as they do have to obtain approvals from us...But in the experience they have finding talent and getting goods to their facilities and services to the market. We're trying to capture all of that through our branding. So branding becomes a very important underpinning to promote our product." (P3)

The attraction of business improves the economic base of the municipality, and in effect strengthens the place brand as it increases the mass of assets that a municipality can promote. As the base increases in size, it makes the locale appear more attracting to external parties as it is being perceived in a positive way. As one practitioner described from experiences in their municipality:

“So we started dealing with [a large manufacturing firm] in February 2005. And I think the story was in the newspapers about two weeks later that they might be looking at our municipality. As soon as that happened our number of inquiries really took off. The way we count an inquiry is if it is something bona fide, if it is something we have to respond to and prepare some information...in a really good year we might get 70 to 80 bona fide inquiries. That year we had 210 or something like that...and the rationale was if the [large manufacturing firm] picked here, they are a big company, they really do their homework, and it's kind of like the seal of approval. So we've really benefitted from that” (P25).

The addition of the large manufacturing facility helped to draw attention to the municipality, as well as legitimize the place brand as a manufacturing-heavy municipality. As a result, the municipality was able to use the image that their target audience now had of them into greater interest, and ultimately greater investment.

Not all municipalities, however, have the same ability or desire to attract manufacturing or traditional industries. Due to the previously discussed issues of globalization, neoliberal policies, there have been structural changes to Ontario's economy, including the loss of businesses to the United States, and the perception of an increased need to recruit and retain talent and knowledge-based, advanced industries. Over half of the practitioners queried suggested that advanced manufacturing, talent and labour were the primary focus of their branding and an important factor in local economic development. As one practitioner explained, the structural changes in their municipality:

“When I first took this job it was probably 90% manufacturing oriented. And we know where manufacturing has gone in North America with the external pressures and influences that are impacting on manufacturing. So our most recent strategy in 2010 was approved by council looked at other aspects of how we diversify our strategy. Some broad initiatives include immigration, as we have a demographic imbalance... We are trying to balance the demographics and immigration provides a strategic way of doing that in as much as it brings young families and addresses some labour adjustment issues. Some of the young families coming are quite skilled... We have a software companies where half their employees are immigrants – all young, all with families, and all with skills in software. Youth retention is another area that we are working on” (P4)

The transition to creative and knowledge-intensive has further led to a focus on the recruitment of talent. As one practitioner explained “the creative economy is about labourers, the knowledge workers... we want to attract more of those and retain more of those” (P18). As a result of this re-focusing of target groups, an emerging theme of the responses of practitioners was that place branding had a strong role in economic development when talent recruitment was concerned: “I find the talent – the labour market, the people aspect – is easier to attract from our branding efforts.” (P9). More specifically, the role of the place brand was seen as a necessity:

“It’s because our city is not yet big enough for them [mobile talent], or not yet dynamic enough for them. So our job is to make sure our city is compelling, that we’ve got enough cultural vitality, that we have enough creative energy... to be able to capture the attention of a 23-year old” (P10).

As a result of the competition for talent, it appears likely that place branding will play an increasing role in local economic development as the economy of Ontario continues to restructure.

The perspectives of the practitioners have demonstrated that the three components of the place brand play a role in local economic development. Additionally, the recruitment of a large manufacturing firm was viewed as a way to gain further attention

from external audiences by the local practitioner. The final described role of place branding – differentiation – was explained in the context of economic development by a consultant, who noted,

“If you are not creating a really strong and differentiated place brand, you will definitely miss out on economic development opportunities because businesses, investment will go to other places that have a better story, that have better assets, that have better amenities, that have better opportunities. So if you aren’t telling your story properly, you really aren’t driving economic development growth” (C8).

Among practitioners and consultants place branding appears to be considered an important part of local economic development. A question that remains, however, is how much influence it actually has on the external target audiences. The following section will consider how the external audience – represented by site selectors perceived the role and value of place branding.

5.4.5.1 Site Selectors and the Role of Place Branding in Business Attraction

While a main discourse among the practitioners that were surveyed suggested that the main focus of attraction efforts through branding was talent, it was not a unanimous perspective. Indeed, there is still focus placed on manufacturing. The gap within the literature is how site selectors will respond to site selectors branding.

The goal of the site selection process is ensuring that the municipality that the company relocates to is the correct match to meet their needs to be successful and facilitate growth. To do this, “the key is that they are looking at all the variables and factors that are important to their business” (S1). Site selection itself was further described by the site selectors as a process of elimination, described as: “It’s a process of elimination to get down to a short list of communities and facilities” (S1). Considering

the scope of site selection and the large number of municipalities jockeying for investment, the site selection process was described as one of elimination rather than discovery:

“It’s always helpful to keep in mind that site selection is one of elimination. It’s not necessarily one of seeking. It’s to start with the globe in some cases literally, and to continue to whittle down the list, so any misstep a community makes, whether in the data or how they present themselves is an excellent excuse to get rid of them” (S2).

Interestingly, place branding was seen as a potential area for consideration among the site selectors. An emerging theme from the responses of the site selectors were the complex elements of brand (Anholt, 2005b) can play a role in the process; but a visual identity nears irrelevancy. Describing the process, one site selector discussed that “I’ve never included any community in my site search because they have a nice name...or a nice theme. That just doesn’t come into play” (S3).

Drawing from the corporate place branding literature, however, the alignment of municipal stakeholders and the brand message that they present is important in the successful recruitment of industry. Initial stages of a project may involve contact with economic development officials in the collection of information. Describing the perception of a place, the sense of place about how easy a municipality is to deal with, on site selector described: “if the economic development agency seems to have a blasé attitude, that would probably eliminate an area quite frankly” (S5). A similar view was expressed by another site-selector:

“I think it is really valuable...the first impression is very important. Every time I pick up the phone I know right away because I am on a tight timeframe and trying to get something started...it’s a simple as this return my phone call or respond to my email in a reasonable amount of time...there are some that never called me back. What’s with that? They certainly not going to make the list” (S1).

This interface with stakeholders continues through the selection process. In advanced stages between five (S1) and twelve (S9) municipalities will receive site visits. In this stage of the process, interviews are conducted on local companies and employers (S8) as well as economic development personnel (S3, S7). The sense of place – in an economic or business sphere – developed from these meeting was noted to have an influence on final decision-making:

“A lot of times we’ve had prospects, and we’ll go into two or three different towns and have a presentation, look at the sites, look at the buildings if they’re looking for buildings. And we’ll go back to the motel and start talking about their impressions, and they’ll say ‘well you know community A had everything that we need but I wasn’t comfortable with their leadership group. Community B had just about everything we need, we can probably make it work without many problems, but wasn’t that a great bunch of people that we met with. They convinced us that they will stand by us and help us be successful in that community at all costs. And that’s generally where that plant will locate” (S7).

Contextualizing this response, Goodchild and Callow (2001) suggested that the differentiation of a brand developed from the extent in which the functionality and emotionality can be accentuated in comparison to competitors. By creating a strong personal impression, the emotional dimensions are leveraged.

Further, place branding’s relationship with the site selector achieves another of its basic tenants: it gets communities on their ‘radar screens’. This can be important in the site selection process, as the selector can bring their knowledge and opinion to guide companies in their decision-making:

“It’s our job as site selectors to provide our clients with intelligence that might not be readily from the data itself. So if there’s a community out there that has 90% of the must haves but missing that last little bit. But I as the professional in the room can use my discretion to say something along the lines of I’ve been looking at this and I know of a community that fits on most of these but misses on one but I

recommend that we include it through the rest of the analysis and see how it does” (S2).

While place branding was acknowledged as a factor in the site selection process, a point made by the site selectors was that it has to be accurate and positive to provide any value.

As one selector noted:

“I will tell you if it’s specific and rings true to me, then it’s something that I will pay attention to. I will tell you that branding broadly speaking, that I pay much more attention to bad branding than I do good branding” (S2).

As previously discussed, the site selection process is one of elimination. Bad place branding, therefore, can provide an easy excuse for a municipality to be removed from consideration, because the external image of the municipality is perceived as one that either is not a good fit or is viewed as a poor place to do business.

A final consideration is that there are instances where the companies do not hire any outside support to facilitate their relocation. In these instances, the site selector suggest that place branding may place a role of drawing positive attention to a municipality. As one site selector described the perspective of companies that do not use external help:

“Yeah, it [the place brand] can be important. Not as important for a professional site selection consultant like us, because we are very quantitative. We find out what the client needs and we got to go to where the best location is. But we only represent 40% of the market. You have 60% of companies that do not use a consultant...for those people who do not have the experience, the access to databases, or follow quite as structured a process...the marketing and branding, if it catches your eye can get you on the shortlist very quickly” (S5).

This perspective was mirrored by another site select, whose role of the brand on role of recruiting industry was:

“I think from a reputational standpoint or a brand standpoint it is important for site selectors, but it is really more important for companies that don’t use site selectors.

There's probably three-quarters of the companies out there that don't use site selectors... And they don't really go through a rigorous process like we do...so there reputation and branding is everything because a lot of those decisions are made based on what they've heard from their peers or others or the media or whatever in terms of how well it is" (S6).

The perspective held by the site selector demonstrates that there is a role for place branding in the recruitment of industry, though its role may be less effective than its role in the attraction of talent. A lingering issue, however, is whether there is synergy in the contemporary place brands that municipalities in Ontario are promoting and what external audiences are looking for. The next section compares the perspectives of place branding of practitioners and site selectors to identify convergences and divergences in their perspectives.

5.4.5.2 Reconciling Site Selector and Practitioner Perspectives

Site selectors as a group identified six elements that continually emerge as important factors in the process of business relocation: cost; availability and quality of talent or labour; logistics and location; ease of relocation; available land and services; and quality of life and place. While it was noted that each relocation process brought its own challenges, there were elements that continually emerged. As one selector noted, "I have yet to find a site selection that does not involve workforce at some point down the line, that does not involve cost and efficiency trade-offs at some point along the line" (S2). A suitable labour force was again acknowledged: "So everything associated with talent is really important and we spend a lot of time doing that. I'd say the number two factor is freight/logistics costs" (S1). A trained workforce was considered important enough that one site selector described that "we may actually scan universities to find out what

programs they have to find out what would the best place to be near. Should I be in London? Elsewhere in Ontario? Boston? British Columbia?” (S8). The emerging theme of the responses of the site selectors was that talent was the main concern in the site selection process. Conceptually, this makes sense because the transition from large-scale, traditional manufacturing to more advanced forms, there is a need for a labour force that has specific training. Providing an example, one selector noted that “They [an advanced manufacturing firm] need micro-electronics engineers and they need a lot of them. So they need to find a market that they’re going to find a lot of those talents. That doesn’t exist everywhere” (S1). Interestingly, this need for talent fits in well with the approach that was identified by the practitioners as a primary focus of contemporary economic development in Ontario. In effect, a two-level branding process is being created where talent is being attracted to a municipality, and then becomes incorporated into the place brand that is meant to attract businesses.

Similarly, issues of location and ease of relocation are other issues where there is synergy between the perspectives of the practitioners and the site selectors. As previously noted, in the responses of the site selectors, location/logistics and transportation was the second most important issue. These factors are important in allowing a business “access to suppliers” and “access to the market” (S5). Again, these are issues that have been identified as important elements being incorporated into local place brands (Table 5.2).

Linking to the idea of experience, one of the issues that practitioners have suggested as an important part of place brands for business attraction is efficiency in local government. One practitioner noted that their emphasis on experience focused on

“obtaining other approvals, as they do have to obtain approvals from us” (P2).

Elaborating further:

“We’ve put in the tools to get business through the system faster. We’ve put in a one stop shop on the main floor of city hall if you have any questions. We have two business facilitators that shepherd you through the process and refer you to the correct people in the corporation” (P8).

This was held as important by the site selectors, describing that: “world class permitting is 90 days or less. That’s the benchmark. If you can’t do it in 90 days or less you are probably going to be eliminated” (S3). Further elaborating, the site selector noted that:

“We always try to benchmark locations to find the path of least resistance if you will. In some cases it’s not be a matter of rules and regulations, in some cases it may be a matter of the staffing of the agency to have sufficient resources to process your request. Or it might be the attitude of the organization” (S3).

The path of least resistance can have several ways of manifesting itself. First is seen in the permitting, with one selector describing:

“Now it has even gone so far as the site consultants look for certified sites, sites that have most or all the environmental and geotechnical work done to prove that the site is shovel ready. That you can start building on it right away” (S7).

This certification system is present in province through the Ontario’s Investment Ready: Certified Site Program. The other area where the path of least resistance is important is in having available land. A company looking to relocate needs to ensure there is space for them that can be readily available. As one selector described, one municipality they were dealing with

“...had a nice and big industrial park and they [the company looking to relocate] can start building next week. And I said mayor ‘that is much more important than cash money, because it’s going to save the client so much time that they are going to be able to get into that building ahead of schedule’. That’s more important to focus on...” (S1).

Therefore, it can be concluded that having available land that can be developed in an expedited manner is an area that both practitioners and site selectors emphasize. As an element to promote through a place brand, it therefore becomes an important component of business attraction.

An area of disagreement among the site selectors was the role of incentives in the attraction process. All acknowledged that it was a concern, but only one stated it was a make-or-break factor: “I went in [to a meeting on potential relocation] and the CFO said ‘I want incentives, because that is what the stockholders want. We’ve gotta show it on the bottom line’” (S4). Others took a less hardliner approach, arguing “just because you don’t have a pile of money or something...it doesn’t mean that you’re out of the game” (S2). In regards to municipalities, one selector argued “they may be expensive, but the companies have got to be there to find the talent” (S1). This differs from perspective of practitioners who as previously discussed felt that incentives and bonuses were an issue in business attraction when competing with municipalities the United States. Emerging from the responses, however, it is clear that if the correct elements are presented there is the potential to overcome the issue of incentives.

A final area of comparison is the promotion of quality of place or quality of life at a municipal level. As noted in Table 5.2, there are several elements that are included by practitioners as important in place brands to improve the perception of a place from a non-business perspective, instead focusing on lifestyle, recreation, and entertainment. Interestingly, site selectors also felt that quality of life and place are important in certain circumstances. As one noted:

“Absolutely it’s on the list and I didn’t quite get to it. But it’s clearly in the top ten and depending on the type of project...clearly if it is a big R and D facility, for

instance, where they have to wheel a lot of top talent in its probably near the top. It may be the top factor because they've got to get these people to move. And people are not going to move from one place to another unless it's a beautiful place and are going to like living there." (S1),

and

"Typically when you talk about quality of life, you identify 15 or 20 things that you would want to look at. One of which is education. Educational access or educational quality, and that's certainly one of the things we look at fairly early, because it has an impact on workforce ability and workforce qualifications...Other than educational institutions, quality of life is typically not looked at until we get down to what we call a short list. That would be maybe four, five, or six communities that have qualified, that have scored higher than all of the other locations...and we are down now to where we have to actually visit these locations and verify and validate what they have given us, and to drill down to the next level. That's where quality of life comes into play, because then you are looking at housing, you're looking at transportation, you're looking at arts, you're looking at culture, you're looking at access to universities or to performing arts." (S3),

and

"A community needs to exhibit good livability for the people who are going to be coming in to manage a plant. And if they are going to be sending in employees from elsewhere, they are going to looking deeply into housing availability and cost and school systems and rankings...A golf club is important to a lot of companies and whether they have memberships available. A lot of times you'll go into a community and the golf club is full and there is a waiting list of three, four, five years. Well that is a negative on the want side of the equation...all of those things are important to finding the right location." (S7)

Interestingly, quality of life and place comes back to people. Similar to attracting talent, to attract businesses there needs to be an emphasis on livability to attract prospective talent. Therefore, "quality of life is directly proportional in its influence on projects to the number of transferees" (S5). A conclusion from this can be that the experiential component of the place brand can play a role in influencing decision-making.

5.4.6 Developing a Place Brand: Finding a Group of Champions

Emerging from the responses of the practitioners, it is clear that there are a considerable number of internal stakeholders in the place branding process. From the responses, stakeholders identified were:

- The general public
- Local government – the mayor and municipal council
- Economic development personnel
- Chamber of Commerce
- Local Business Associations
- Individual businesses and business owners
- Local universities and colleges
- Hospitals
- Social groups
- Provincial Parks and other representative of other local attractions

Drawing from these wide range of stakeholders, the narratives and brand promises and images are extracted and distilled. From this large group of stakeholders, a “group of champions” (P2, P3) emerged to spearhead the branding process. One practitioner characterized the group as “14 people, volunteers from the community from various facets of life, architecture art history legal chambers of commerce media, who got together and drove the process” (P3), while a second practitioner explained it this way: “It started with bringing together about a dozen business leaders, about a couple of council champions and bringing all those people into a group and talking about the principles of the municipality” (P2). In both cases, the group of champions were used by the municipality as the link between the public and the local government, as the force that spearheaded the branding process and drove it forward. Eshuis and Edwards (2012) argue that the public needs to play a pivotal role in place brand development for it to be meaningful. The group of champions for the municipality, in conjunction with the research that the public is involved in help to ensure that the local government is not

making unilateral decisions, and that the perspectives of the citizens of the locality are being included.

5.4.6.1 The Outsider: The Role of the Consultant

A final important participant in the place branding process is the place brand consultant. From the responses of the practitioners, the consultant was viewed as an important component in place brand development. The practitioners also noted that the consultants were often brought in after the group of champions struck: “The group of champions will be involved in selecting who the successful candidate will be and continue to be liaison with them” (P3). This indicates that while the consultant plays an important role in the brand development, they are ultimately accountable to the municipality.

The rationale from the practitioners for the use of consultants was multifaceted: they were identified as providing “validation” and “credibility” to the place branding process. As one practitioner noted “the goal is to get the outsider perspective” (P21). Elaborating on that perspective,

“I think it’s always important to have an outside or objective third party running the show, because although marketing begins at home, people’s perceptions within the community are very different from those outside” (P16).

Underpinning these advantages, the rationale for a consultant was described as: “These branding consultants will be experts in their field and will be able to offer us suggestions” (P3). Further, another practitioner suggested

“I am a big fan of consultants. Doing branding exercises using external resources is the way to go. Number one, they tend to bring the depth of experience that you cannot find internal to your organization. Number two, they are going to be paid to get the job done, so they will be on time, on schedule, and be focused as opposed to

multitask unnecessarily...Number three, they are probably far more objective and dispassionate, not as prone to having conflicts of interest that an internal person would have” (P12).

Finally, it was suggested that the information provided in the discovery process and the multitude of stakeholders may be too complex for a municipal government to effectively manage and stay on a correct path (P3). The advantage of a consultant, therefore, was described as one of facilitation:

“And that is where a facilitator is very good....And the facilitation process should encompass some people who have good credibility and knowledge in branding, so they can lead it and direct it and maybe say that you are going down the wrong line because that’s passé and the target audience will prefer this aspect of it. And that’s why it’s important to have a knowledgeable facilitator that has some background” (P5).

Summarizing, the perceived advantages of the practitioners were that they provided expert opinion, credibility, efficiency, and an external perspective. The consultants that were interviewed provided similar thoughts on their utility:

“Do I see a need for consultant to enter the space? Absolutely. As much as I see a need for surgeon to be in the OR. I’d rather have a surgeon be there than a plumber. This is a job for experts. It is not a job for hobbyists. It is deadly serious, and branding, marketing, and communications professionals are serious people” (C6).

Especially as municipalities rely on place branding as an element of their economic development initiatives, the role of consultants becomes increasingly important. They have the specialized skills needed to ensure a successful brand development. .

5.4.6.2 The Process of Developing a Place Brand

Among the practitioners and consultants, there was considerable agreement on the process of place branding. The consensus was that the process of developing a place

brand needed to highlight the advantages of the locality to achieve the goal of differentiation. One practitioner noted that:

“It’s really trying to find out what makes us a little different. And then making sure that it is part of the messaging and the value propositions we take out when we deal with the existing community and potential investors” (P6).

Linking the process further to creating a positive image, and therefore, promise through the narrative of the place brand, one consultant explained the development process as:

“So what we do...the whole presentation is built as a story, people start imaging...‘you’re telling really good friend’s to come and visit the community. What are the three things you’d tell them first and foremost?’...and then the second question will be ‘you have three minutes to tell someone about you’re community, what are the highlights?’...‘what is a common misconception that people have about your community? Do you think it’s true? And if you think it’s not true, why do you think it exists?’ Because the misconception question is really important in making sure the brand or the logo or the key messaging does not include issues...you’re identifying with key issues” (C2).

From a more distilled form, the role of the brand development process is to identify “The strengths, the weaknesses, the opportunities, the threats” (P2). The need for the process is to ensure the correct brand elements and promises are identified before they are promoted: “There is a lot of defining of brand before the expressing of brands” (C6). The importance of the identification of potential issues is that the final place brand can be shaped to ensure its message is accurate and authentic, so it does not make a promise that cannot be achieved in the experiential phase. Regarding the identification of issues through consultations, one practitioner explained “They tell us. What are the issues and challenges they are dealing with and we will come back and figure out how we can figure out how best to address those one way or another” (P24). Ultimately, the addressing of potential issues allows a stronger place brand to be developed.

To achieve an understanding of what elements and messages should be emphasized in a municipal place brand, practitioners and consultant suggest a range of tools and approaches that are successfully employed. These included both qualitative and quantitative research, taking the form of in-depth interviews, focus groups, town meetings, and surveys. As one consultant noted “The research puts science behind the process...actual numbers and understanding” (C6). An emerging theme in the responses of the practitioners and consultants was that the development process had to extend beyond members of the municipality: “You need to go outside the internal stakeholders and talk to people outside” (C6). Describing their approach, one practitioner explained the external groups that they had engaged during the brand development process: “I tested not only the community...I tested media...I tested externally in surrounding areas” (P7). If an external image is considered then areas where incongruities between the desired place brand image and how the locality is perceived by target audiences can be addressed.

Connecting with the theme of economic development, one consultant suggested that both internal and external groups are important areas of investigation:

“And two important audiences to ask questions of are those who chose this particular economy already...what brought them here, what worked, what were the motivating factors. And those who rejected it. I think it is critical to know where your brand is failing, and why is it failing. Is it a branding issue? It could be. It could be the perceptions which are a branding issue” (C6).

5.4.7 Measuring Success: Outcomes and Utility of Place Branding

The basic understanding of the value of a place brand is its equity, which is the value premium that a municipality realizes from its brand compared to others with

generic or no formal brands. Place brand equity derives from the basic tenants of place branding: by making them memorable, easily recognizable and superior in quality and reliability, there is the potential for a target audience to pay greater attention and invest more heavily. From the perspective of consultants, the brand equity is the primary measure of a place brand, and that the goal of municipalities should be "...You try to push that brand equity score higher" (C8). As previously discussed, to an external audience the place brand is how they are perceived – the image that they hold of the locality. The measures of brand equity, therefore, need to capture the strength or weakness of this perception. As one consultant explained:

"Essentially a brand is a representation of a reputation. So we've got a number of measures that we've used quite successfully...the most often used term in terms of rating or understanding the worth of the brand or the brand equity is called the Net Promoter Score. The net promoter score is developed through questioning of your audience as to how willing they are to recommend a product for example. In economic development space the same is true. If you are talking to an audience of investors, then the Net Promoter Score, with some variation...we would add in dimensions of trust, dimensions of corporate reputation and social responsibility, and dimensions of public finances...all of those can be measured and developed into a brand index, and then what we'll look at is how much the brand index correlates to the key attributes that drive it." (C4).

This is captured mainly through surveys of potential investors (C2). More informally, a suggested approach to consider was the use of recommendations of internal stakeholders to external groups. As one consultant explained "when foreign investors are investigating in a specific location, often they will contact people who are already there. So recommendation is a good proxy for reputation and brand" (C5). This draws on the idea of corporate branding (Allen, 2007; Kavartzis, 2009) that suggest a primary conduit of communication is the internal stakeholders. If they feel that the promise and the

experience of the brand are closely aligned, they are likely to promote it positively which increases its equity.

Emerging from their responses, local economic development practitioners tend to draw on the more informal measurements of place branding effectiveness: “It’s a combination of the anecdotal, word of mouth, with more traditional tracking techniques” (P2). The primary concern appears to be identifying the tone of external groups to determine how a place branding campaign is progressing. As several practitioners explained: “I guess you look at the analytics on the website and your traffic, you employ more sophisticated methods for gathering impressions from the media” (P3); “...looking at traditional media or social media monitoring. Looking for things, listening and assessing the quality of the coverage, is it neutral, is it positive, if it’s negative, why is it negative?” (P12); and “in social media...whether the tone is positive. Are the conversations aligned with our brand position? When questions or discussions are raised, are people getting responses quickly or adequately?” (P13). Along similar lines, eight of the practitioners suggested that earned media was a primary consideration in measuring brand success: “Are we getting contacted by media on a regular basis to get our side of the story or get background?” (P13).

The suggested reason for this less formal approach has to do with the variability of economic development. Niedomysl (2008) and Ryu and Swinney (2011) have suggested that measurements of place branding effectiveness have been avoided because they are too difficult to isolate. One practitioner did note that “the ROI is very difficult in our profession” (P2). As a result, municipalities have focused on simpler methods of

measuring brand effectiveness, and do not appear to be indexing or comparing the brand results to changes in the economic realities of the locality.

5.4.7.1 Who is Being Influenced?

From the perspective of the practitioners, it was expressed unanimously that talent was more easily influenced through a place brand compared to larger companies. The general thought was that the experiential elements of the place brand were better suited to connect with an individual. As the number of decision-makers increases, it becomes more of a challenge to connect with all of them in a meaningful way. Another issue that was raised was that industry requires very specific messaging, while that for talent can be more general. As one practitioner explained,

“I find the talent – the labour market, the people aspect – is easier to attract from our branding efforts. And maybe that has to do with it being very much an experiential brand. It’s about quality of life, about being here whether you’re a visitor, worker, or business owner...industry I think then you get into some messaging because it gets into the sector they’re in...part of it is understanding the inside sense of those sectors and messaging. But then you get into multiple messaging. So that’s where I find the industry a little bit more difficult because it does have to speak to a very particular audience” (P9).

Additionally, the practitioners suggested that site selectors are less inclined to be effected by the emotional influences of the brand, arguing “site selectors...I don’t think they are coming from an emotional place...they want the data” (P4), and that

“They’re mostly interested in the quantitative data. So we tell them everything from tax rates to utilities provisions, to labour force, to proximity to airports, and a lot of stuff that they have a pro forma list going down...this is our labour force, this is our schools, this is our university with this many people studying this that and the other thing.” (P24).

While talent may be more easily accessible, there are many instances where the business can be influenced by the place brand. As previously noted, there are a large proportion of companies that do not employ a site selector for relocations. In these instances, quantitative data may become less important and therefore allow emotional elements and the sense of place to have greater influence. Even in situations where site selectors are used, there is potential for influence. Some generally consider the issue of relocation before employing a site selector. As one selector noted, “8 out of 10 times they have something in their mind” (S1) prior to hiring a firm to consult on the relocation. A place brand, therefore, can be used to get on the company’s radar prior to the site selector enters the process. This may help ensure that the area in which the site selection is conducted includes the municipality, potentially increasing the likelihood of ultimately attracting the business.

5.4.8 Place Branding Collaboration and Cooperation

In many regards, place branding in the province has paralleled that of local economic development. Economic development has been traditionally characterized by competition between municipalities in the province, with collaboration and cooperation only emerging recently (Arku, 2014). Place branding has taken a similar path, and as a result has been developed in a disjointed and uncoordinated manner between municipalities. However, there has been some movement towards inter-municipality cooperation in the development of more regional or multi-community place brands. The primary rationale for this was the development of a critical mass of resources that strengthened both the brand promise and experience. As one practitioner noted,

“There is tremendous value in collaboration, bringing partnerships and cooperating because you are able to achieve more with the pool of funding and expertise when you combine everything...to get a bigger bang” (P2).

More specifically, practitioners noted amenities and population as important and that collaboration can pool brand assets:

“When I am promoting to businesses...the benefits of doing business [here], I’m talking about resorts which are not in the municipality...I talk about the regional airport which is not in the municipality” (P17),

and

“It got us to a population threshold. And once it got us to that 100,000 population threshold then you got on the radar screen of site selectors, and industry, and investors. But it also created some confusion as well as we became a single point of contact for all inquiries coming in and companies don’t care about artificial boundaries on a map, they just want to come in and do business” (P3).

Another advantage of collaboration identified by the practitioners was the pooling of resources:

“We can leverage some funding. If I buy a full page in the Mississauga Business Times for a year it’s going to cost me. I might get six or eight placements for \$15,000. So either I can go to these other communities and say I have six or eight placements, do you want to pitch in so I don’t have to spend as much. Or I if I put my \$15,000 on top of their \$15,000 on top of theirs, we make that \$15,000 into \$45,000 of \$60,000. And we’re selling the same thing.” (P17)

As a result of these advantages, collaboration is becoming accepted as a potential avenue for place promotion. Beyond regional collaboration, branding and promotion is also emerging within industries. Practitioners identified food, manufacturing, high-tech, and automotive clusters as industry-based collaborative efforts that involve branding.

5.4.9 Issues of Place Branding

Though the perspectives of place branding from practitioners, consultants, and site selectors were generally positive, there are a few issues that were identified as problematic in maximizing the utility of place branding. First, the issue of homogenization of brand messages was raised by both consultants and practitioners. Though a place brand was noted by practitioners as a way of differentiating one municipality from its competitors, it appears that there are instances where this has not been successful. A root cause seems to be a lack of creativeness in the brand development:

“Broadly speaking...people aren’t cutting through the standard stuff. The typical stuff, the stereotypical stuff. And that’s really a shame because you really have to...I mean a core principle of place branding is coming up with something that is truly authentic, that you can own. If you are saying things that anyone else can say it’s just not going to work” (C8).

Using lifestyle as an example, the consultant described

“...one of the most popular words in economic development on the business side is the catch-phrase ‘live, work, play’...again a non-differentiating asset if an asset at all...they are just whistling in the wind. It’s pointless.” (C6)

A similar perspective was raised by another consultant who stressed that many municipalities tend to be uncreative in their thinking when considering what the brand message and promise should be:

“When I hold engagement sessions or workshop sessions...the one thing I like to tell people is all these claims that we have the best people here and we have tonnes of volunteers means [nothing at] all, so please don’t say it. Every community has the best quality of place, every community has the best people and the biggest number of volunteers. That means nothing because it’s the same for every community.” (C2)

The issue of homogenization of messages was also found to extend into visual identities with municipalities presenting similar symbologies. As a consultant noted about one

municipality, “it looked like the logo had been lifted from somebody else’s logo” (C6). A practitioner raised a similar issue: “the logo that this community that ended up with ended up very, very similar to the logo that they had given out beforehand” (P21). In both cases, blame was attributed to consultants who were producing similar logos, or simply refurbishing ones that had been used previously. It is, therefore, incumbent on the municipality to ensure that the final visual manifestation of the brand, and the brand itself, is unique to allow it to stand out.

Consultants did suggest that there was one issue with differentiation:

“One of the challenges that I face with the branding that goes on is that the branding focuses in on an industry. And when you do an industry brand you’ve basically branded yourself into a box. Unless it’s a creativity box or a kind of a generic exciting, edgy box, it’s sort of like ‘so, that’s your box?’. You may say that the IT capital of Canada is in the GTA and you’re outside of that so, you’re like ‘IT West’. Well now I know what your community is. And now I know what it isn’t.” (S8).

As a result, municipalities have to be specific in their branding initiatives to ensure that they differentiate themselves, but remain flexible enough in the image that they create so they are not viewed one-dimensionally.

A second general concern, raised by the consultants was that too much emphasis was being placed on the visual identity. This mirrors concerns raised by Anholt (2005b, 2008, 2009) and Kavaratzis (2009), who explicitly argue that a brand is not just a logo or slogan. As one consultant argued based on their experiences,

“Too much emphasis is placed on the logo. And because that’s usually the easiest thing to understand, a visually tangible thing. So the media and the local community will concentrate on it as it is the manifestation of all the work that has been done. And they equate this cost to a graphic.” (C5).

Elaborating on why this focus on the logo exists:

“It’s an inevitable issue in branding with people getting stuck with the visual representation because it is the only tangible part of the brand. And people tend to get hung up on visual representation or just the visual and they tend to forget the whole other side of it which is the value propositions, the key messages, driving responses, identifying the competitive advantages or attributes that make them special. A lot of emphasis is put on the visual side. It’s part of the inevitability of the process. But I do think that sometimes the effort and emphasis is put on unequally on the other side of the equation so to speak. If you were to look at as two sides of the same coin.” (C2).

The reason that some municipalities focus on the logo while others take a wider view of place branding is explained by one consultant:

“There is a huge variation in the level of sophistication that goes into that. And that’s directly driven by resources. So some of the best municipalities are the most sophisticated in terms of understanding who their targets are...” (C4).

This perspective is also presented by a practitioner who suggested that “budget that is adequate to the objectives you are trying to achieve is important...budget is the biggest challenge” (P13). Another practitioner suggested that funding may be a potential issue as their municipality proceeds with their place brand initiative, suggesting “money will be a good question” (P3).

With regards to the issue of resources, staffing levels and quality of staff were suggested as issues in Ontario municipalities. One practitioner noted that “you’ve got a lot of small municipalities that will not have an in-house communications person which makes it difficult to not only create the brand but communicate the brand” (P22). The perceived outcome of the lack of resources is that instead of one strong, unified brand being created, several different and conflicting brands would be created. One practitioner (P3) demonstrated how the development of brand creation can become untenable as their municipality had developed 47 separate brands, and as a result “there’s so much

confusion”. This issue was further elaborated by a practitioner who drew from their experiences to explain:

“I tend to see it in weaker municipalities. And I don’t mean weaker as in someone has a weakness, but don’t have a strong communications person, they tend to have 10, 15 different brands. No different when I came on here. Our recreation department was using its older look. No, right away no. Everything we do now has to have the brand” (P22).

Therefore, if branding is going to be done correctly, a municipality needs to ensure it has the financial and logistical support to fully complete the project.

A final issue is suggested by Ashworth (2011) who argues that a contemporary problem of place branding – including emphasis on logo development – is that governments do not contextualize it correctly, and instead consider it a catch-all panacea for any troubles the municipality they represent faces. This perspective was raised by a consultant, who cautioned that,

“They [municipal governments] think that the place brand is going to be the silver bullet that’s going to turn things around. And it is not. It is the conduit, and it’s literally the symbol of all the initiatives you are going to do, but if you don’t have the wherewithal to create the farmer’s market or bring in the festivals or do whatever, the logo is not going to do it for you” (C8).

Place branding is important, but cannot be the only initiative that is applied by a community to foster growth. It can be part of the larger place management initiative in which the place brand becomes the rallying cry and the external manifestation of what is occurring in the locality. If done by itself, it will be difficult to generate any positive growth.

5.5 Discussion on Place Branding in Ontario

The discussion in this section compares and contrast the responses of the three informant groups (practitioners, consultants, and site selectors) as they pertain to each qualitative research objective, as well provide contextualization within the academic research domain to provide insight into differing theoretical and practical perspectives, interpretations, functionalities, and utilities of municipal place branding.

5.5.1 How is Place Branding Understood?

The results in this chapter demonstrated that there is a strong understanding of place branding among the three groups that were queried. Existing studies suggest that a place brand is often understood by municipal practitioners solely a visual identity (see Anholt, 2005b, 2009; Hankison, 2007, 2010; Hanna and Rowley, 2013; Kavaratzis, 2004, 2009; Stock, 2009). The responses from the practitioners, consultants, and site selectors of this study, however, demonstrate that while a logo or slogan can be an important element in crystalizing a place brand, it is only a part of it. This suggests that policymakers and individuals within the industry have a much more nuanced understanding of place branding that has been reported in the existing scholarship. A similar divergence occurs in the utility of place branding. Ashworth (2011) and other scholars have suggested that decision-makers view place branding as a panacea for any social or economic issues facing a locality. Contrary to this argument, responses of this study demonstrated that place branding is one part of local development strategy, and in many ways an initiative that is integrated, or use in conjunction, with other broader development programs, and not used as an independent and isolated development.

Further contrast exists between the understanding of place branding's within academic domains and what is occurring at a functional level in Ontario's municipalities.

Anholt (2005, p. 116) argues that the

“Understanding of brand also recognises that in marketplaces where the functional or physical attributes of companies and their products become less and less relevant, their intangible or brand-related qualities – the ‘halo’ of value and associations, lifestyle, desirability of the marque, the strength of the maker’s reputation and the behaviour of the company’s representatives – become paramount.”

This draws parallels to the corporate place branding perspective that has grown in prominence over the last decade (see Allen, 2007; Balakrishnan and Kerr, 2013; Hankinson, 2007; Hulberg, 2006; Kavaratzis, 2004, 2009; Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005, 2008, 2013; Knox and Bickerton, 2003; Ryu and Swinney, 2013; Trueman and Cornelius, 2006; Trueman *et al*, 2007). As noted, this corporate approach shifts focus away from the integrity of the municipality’s brand to the organization and the people behind the brand (Kavaratzis, 2009; Knox and Bickerton, 2003). At the municipal-level, however, there is no apparent functional adoption of this approach. Partial elements of corporate branding – such as emphasizing the need for stakeholder alignment and brand communication vectors – are being incorporated into municipal place branding exercises. The stark contrast, however, lies in the respondents’ perceived need for functional assets to be incorporated into the place branding. The primary understanding of place branding by the practitioners, consultants, and site selectors emphasized the need to promote local assets such as tax and development charges, housing, education, talent, infrastructure amenities, quality of life and place, and entertainment possibilities in the place branding. This indicates that the understanding of place branding in the economic development domain is more pragmatic in its utility than has been reported in the literature.

A potential explanation for this gap may be the scope of the academic research that has been undertaken to date. As noted in Chapter 2, the research domain has been characterized by investigations that tend to focus on larger geographical contexts, studying place branding at regional, national, and supra-national scales. When municipal-level research is conducted, it has predominately considered place branding issues of large, and prominent cities (i.e. London, Glasgow, Paris, New York, Shanghai, Vancouver, and Montreal). Further, the research has focused on developing theoretical or conceptual models to explain place branding issues and processes. Finally, it has focused on independent, one-off case studies that prove difficult in allowing commonalities to be identified. This study, however, included smaller, and more frequently occurring municipalities. As noted by practitioners and consultants, larger municipalities may have the resources and the number of stakeholders to develop more of a corporate brand. Further, they may naturally have some inherent reputation or informal brand image based on their size and prominence within a global market. These factors may play a role in whether more corporate branding structures are used. For the majority of municipalities, however, there likely is neither the capacity nor the resources available for a corporate place branding initiative to be useful. Since this study considers a range of municipalities, it is clear that promoting tangible assets and urban qualities perceived to be unique to the locality are more often viewed as main elements of place brand and their development.

5.5.1.1 Perceptions on the Role of Place Branding On Economic Development

Although the practitioners, consultants, and site selectors demonstrated that place branding has played a role in economic development in the past, the interview findings suggest that it is being perceived as having increased utility in recruiting talent and labour, investment, and business.

Consistent with previous theoretical and conceptual research on place branding (e.g. Allen, 2007; Papadopolous, 2004; Pasquinelli, 2013), all groups of interviewees perceived intense and fierce competition of occurring at a global scale for mobile, and limited, economic assets. This study, however, significantly diverges from previous research as it incorporates expert perceptions and draws clear links in place branding's role in contemporary local economic development. From the responses of the economic development practitioners, it is evident that the contemporary use of place branding is embedded within the responses of local governments to the changing economic realities of the province. Previous research on place branding has suggested it as a potential avenue to promote economic growth, however, when practical applications have been explored, these have privileged tourism and tourist attraction as a domain of study (Anholt, 2005a; Hankinson, 2007, 2009; Papadopolous, 2004). Beyond providing vague suggestions of a potential role for place branding in economic development, little research has focused on manufacturing attraction, and there have been only occasional research on the effect of place brands on attraction of skilled residents (Hansen, 2010; Niedomysl, 2004, 2008; Zenker, 2009). A contribution of this research is that Ontario municipalities are targeting talent as an approach to enhancing the economic situation of their locale. From the perspective of municipal economic development practitioners it is evident that this use of place branding is viewed as a primary way to improve their local

development. Talents are being targeted to strengthen the assessment base of the municipality, and allow greater tax revenue to be generated from a growing population. Higher densities of talent also enhance the resources that are present in the community, allowing creativity and entrepreneurship to spring up from the ideas and information being collected and interchanged (Florida, 2012). Additionally, it also provides a valuable asset to promote the community as there are ever higher levels of talent to leverage as resource and start-up businesses to promote. As the new economy continues to unfold and industry in the province evolves into smaller and more flexible high-tech and advanced-production firms, talent will become increasingly important in ensuring that municipalities in Ontario are seen as a place to do business. The use of place branding at the municipal level appears to be a strong approach to using the local place brand to help facilitate improvement of the economic climate of municipalities.

From a more traditional manufacturing perspective, the place brand and the resulting sense of place provide a way of differentiating a municipality and providing tangible advantages to firms considering relocation. The promise and delivery of location, infrastructure, talent pool, and tax rates are not obvious elements to incorporate into a place brand. In an economic development context, however, these elements play an important role in the attraction of businesses. In this context, the place brand is the interface between the promise and the experience (the delivery of a municipality conducive for investment or relocation). The contingent nature of place branding and the emphasis on closing the gap between perceived and actual identities forces the convergence of the brand promise and the economic environment and potential of a municipality.

5.5.2 Political-Economic Influences on Place Branding

Existing studies suggest that economic development is a major item municipal governments policy agenda in Ontario (Arku 2013, 2014; Reese and Sands, 2007; Wolfson and Frikson, 2000). The responses of the participants have demonstrated that the process of place branding is closely aligned with broader economic development issues, and therefore is heavily influenced by contemporary economic development issues. The responses of the practitioners are consistent with the contemporary challenges for urban areas in Ontario, as identified by various scholars (e.g. Bourne *et al*, 2010; Bradford, 2010; Wolfe and Gertler, 2001; Wolfson and Frikson, 2000). The two main areas of challenges addressed in both previous economic development research and the current place branding study are the deindustrialization (the flight of traditional industries to the US and other low cost countries), and increased competition from other urban spaces, linked with globalization and senior (primarily provincial) government policies.

As Greenberg (2008), Pasquinelli (2013) and Wolfson and Frikson (2000) note, globalization poses paradoxical challenges for municipalities of all scales. This paradoxical climate was noted by the practitioners, who suggested that the recent trends of globalization have made municipalities vulnerable to fiscal and economic decline, but have also provided new opportunities and markets which can be used to foster positive development and growth. One area of divergence between the economic development literature and the approaches suggested by the interview respondents was the perceived utility of place branding in fostering economic development. In particular, the respondents indicated that place branding had a role in tourism, but also for promoting

developing in other sectors (i.e. manufacturing) generally overlooked in the literature. Friedmann and Wolff (1982) and Wolfson and Frickson (2000) suggest that technological and communication innovations have allowed spatial separation to occur between places of production and investment, allowed capital to take advantage of global variations in labor costs. Reese and Sands (2007, p. 80) suggest that “it is expected that economic development approaches in ...Canadian cities will have remained relatively stable, focusing most heavily on traditional economic development strategies, despite recent research calling for more entrepreneurial, amenity-focused, or culturally-based policies.” This confluence of factors would suggest that place branding in Ontario would be focused on traditional manufacturing. What appears to be occurring, however, based on the interview responses is place branding is being used to attract advanced manufacturing, knowledge, and creative industries, and talent. In many regards, the response on municipalities to the changing political-economic landscape in Ontario is to attempt to attract high quality talent.

From a governance perspective, there is agreement between the literature and the responses of the interviewees that Ontario municipalities adopted an active public sector role, as well as an entrepreneurial approach to policy development. This entrepreneurial attitude is manifested in the strategic approach to economic development and place branding, indicating a strong emphasis on profit generation and business-like mentality. The other element of entrepreneurial governance – place promotion – is evident in the approaches identified in Ontario municipalities. Reese and Sands (2007) indicate that marketing (brochures and other promotional materials) and promotional literature, and efforts to attract foreign businesses are strong component of economic development

policy making in Ontario. This is affirmed by the responses of the practitioners who overwhelmingly support the idea of place branding as a policy strategy to attract investment.

5.5.3 The Process of Place Branding

Within the research domain, most academic research has focused on the concept of place branding itself and forays into brand implementation have generally remained conceptual-based (Braun, 2012). The few studies on the process of place branding have been explored primarily through a theoretical framework of neoliberalism (Eshuis and Edwards, 2012). As mentioned in the previous section (see Section 2.3), place branding can be seen as part of the entrepreneurial governance and neoliberal policy-making.

Brenner and Theodore (2002) and Eshuis and Edwards (2012) argue that the entrepreneurial approach to place branding and, more generally, economic development tends to lack democratic legitimacy. The criticism is that the decision-making process moves away from democratically elected municipal governments, and instead is given to private organizations. In this study, the responses of the practitioners and consultants do demonstrate that much of the process is heavily influenced by private interests.

Consultants external to the local government were viewed as a necessity, as there simply is not the capacity in Ontario's municipal governments to properly develop and maintain place branding. As a result, local business leaders and high-profile local public servants were typically brought in during the process to be key decision-makers. Several practitioners and consultants suggested that the public at large was consulted through surveys and focus groups. It appears, however, that the majority of power in the place

branding decision-making is held by a relatively small group. This raises the question of the public's role in economic development policy construction and implementation. As Brenner and Theodore (2002) and Eshuis and Edwards (2012) argue, the final decisions need to be reflective of the public's perspectives and vision for the locality. In the case of economic development, however, the specialized knowledge that is required may necessitate greater influence from local experts.

The public's role in place branding and economic development is particularly important when the issue of talent and labour attraction is considered. For a place brand to be successful, it must be meaningful to its target audience. To understand why features a municipality has makes it an attractive migration destination, the perspectives and experiences of existing residents have to be investigated to identify the primary factors in their decision to locate there. Interestingly, this concept appears to be understood by consultants who do attempt to engage the public to identify the municipal's value propositions. Practitioners, however, tend to shy away from direct contact, and instead work through proxies represented by the community leaders included in the place brand committees that are struck.

5.5.4 Measuring Place Branding Utility and Effectiveness

A main area of divergence between the academic literature and the responses of the interview subjects was how place branding utility and effectiveness was measured. It is an important consideration as it is imperative to understand whether the brand is having an effect within the target audience. Among the practitioners and consultants the concept of place brand equity was understood: that a strong brand can bring positive economic

growth to a municipality. Particularly among the practitioners, the issue is that it is unclear how best to measure whether positive equity is being accrued. Practitioners primarily emphasized more anecdotal approaches to measuring the effectiveness of a place brand, including inquiries to the local economic development or through the municipal website, tone of conversation through word-of-mouth and on social media, and earned media. This differs from the consultants, who described measurements of place branding in a much more formal approach, particularly emphasizing the value of surveys.

These responses by participants contrasted with those of the academic literature, though consultants were the study group most closely aligned. To date, scholarship on measuring place branding effectiveness have included focus group study (Hankinson, 2001; Lodge, 2002; Morgan *et al*, 2002a); and quantitative measurement of place attributes with standardized questionnaires on different location factors (Merrilees *et al*, 2009; Zenker *et al*, 2009a, 2009b). Further analysis on effectiveness included regression analysis (Niedomysl, 2004; Ryu and Swinney 2011; Zenker *et al*, 2009a, 2009b). Finally, gap analysis suggested by Balmer and Soenen (1999) suggests that to maximize brand equity, the internal and external perceptions have to be aligned. This measurement was initially conducted through analysis of available government documents, however, can be modified to include quantitative data obtained through surveys.

This gap between the academic research and the methods used at the municipal level illuminates the lack of sophistication in the local government measurements of place branding utility. This is problematic because it suggests that municipalities do not have the capacity to accurately measure whether their place brand initiatives are having the desired effect. An explanation for this deficiency is that there are simply not the

resources or capacity to follow-up on a place brand initiative to determine who is being influenced. As a result, there is potential for inefficient or ineffective place brands to be developed continually without the recognition that they are not achieving the desired goals.

5.5.5 Policy Implications

Based on the responses of the practitioners, consultants, and site selectors place branding has a practical role to play in contemporary municipal economic development. In Ontario, the main focus of place branding appears to be on talent and business attraction. Based on the responses of the practitioners and site selectors, the strength of the place brand relies on the ability to strategically promote the local amenities that are desirable. For talent, this means designing brand promises and creating experiences that promote vibrancy, liveability, entertainment, and modernity. In particular, the brand needs to promote that the municipality has the assets to create a strong quality of life. Business attraction is similar, as there are specific assets that help improve the external image of the locale among target audiences. While efficient local government, available land and infrastructure, and affordability are important assets to promote to businesses, it cannot be solely limited to purely economic areas. Quality of life and place can become important tools in generating interest in a locale to management and the labour force that the business needs. The municipality, therefore, has to sell the uniqueness of the locality in rational, functional, and emotional ways.

A theme of the interview responses relating to promoting quality of life – or similarly lifestyle, innovation, and creativity – as a bland catch-all buzzword has been

criticized as not providing substance or differentiation. If done correctly through the development of a promise that provides unique value-propositions anchored with tangible assets within the municipality, and delivery on experiences that backs them up, the place brand can help differentiate a municipality from its competitors and ultimately help to attract talent.

For a place brand to be successful, appropriate resources need to be expended to have it done correctly. From the responses of the practitioners, consultants, and site selectors place branding is more than just a logo or slogan, and in fact, without strong underpinnings, prove to be essentially meaningless and of little value. Interestingly, the perspective of the consultants was that municipalities in Ontario placed too much emphasis on the logo and slogan; particularly municipalities with little ability to provide staffing or financial backing to a place brand initiative. The policy implication is that place branding should not be undertaken unless the municipality has the resources available. Further, unless the municipality has the capacity to employ a full-time branding position, expert opinion needs to be sought from external consultants. From a pragmatic perspective, place branding should not be undertaken unless the process is fully understood and there is expert experience available. Currently, the expert knowledge is held by the place brand consultants; therefore they have to be included in the development process.

A final policy implication that has developed from the qualitative research is the need for brand monitoring and measurement of effectiveness and utility. Since the municipality is investing public funds, it needs to ensure that the expenses are being appropriately spent. If a municipality is unable or unwilling to extensively follow up on

the place brand, it will be unable to tell whether it has been successful. The implications are twofold: first, the resonance and strength of the place brand within the target audience can be tested to ensure the correct messages are getting across and that it is being interpreted in the desired way, and slight modifications can be made to improve the accuracy of the brand message; and two, it provides an opportunity to identify when full rebranding effort needs to be initiated. With public funds being spent, it needs to be demonstrated that the expenses incurred were beneficial to the municipality; and this can only be done through formal brand evaluations.

Place branding has a contingent nature: it can act as a banner for local initiatives and help provide direction for future development. It has to be understood, however, that place branding alone will not bring about improved economic development. Therefore, place branding has to be integrated into larger economic development policies, consolidating their desired effects into a symbolic message, and acting as the spearhead into the global market. If place branding is not approached in this manner, any message about the locale will be negative as it will have no substance to reinforce it and back it up.

5.6. Conclusions

The purpose of the qualitative phase of this study was to develop an in-depth perspective and understanding around place branding initiatives in Ontario municipalities and communities. Overall, there is a consistent knowledge and understanding among practitioners, consultants, and site selectors with place branding being seen as a way to shape perception, draw attention, and differentiate a municipality. It is also clear that a changing economic landscape in Ontario, caused by influences of globalization and

neoliberalism has spurred the development of place branding as an economic development tool. Finally, from the perspectives of the interviewees, it is clear that place branding has utility in local economic development, particularly in the recruitment of talent.

The next, and final, chapter triangulates the results of the quantitative, spatial, and qualitative analysis to provide a fuller picture of place branding in Ontario. Concluding the thesis, it outlines the policy implications of this study and provides direction for future research.

CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

The main goal of this thesis was to determine: *the state of place branding as initiatives aim at enhancing economic development in Ontario municipalities.*

Specifically, the research sought to:

- 1) Ascertain the prevalence of place branding in Ontario's municipalities, identify the brand messages being communicated, and to investigate whether municipality characteristics affect the occurrence and message.
- 2) Contextualize place branding within the economic development issues of cooperation and competition, and to consider the potential for inter-regional place branding opportunities within the province.
- 3) Provide an extensive and in-depth exploration of place branding, and the process of place branding, from conception and rationalization, through development and implementation, and ultimately to consumption.

Each of these issues has been discussed within the three phases of analysis conducted for this thesis. In line with the above objectives, however, this final chapter seeks to compare and contrast the findings of each phase of the research to provide a broad and deep understanding of the state of place branding in Ontario and its role in contemporary local economic development. To accomplish this goal, this chapter discusses *what* place branding is occurring in Ontario, *why* and *how* place branding is occurring, and *why* place branding – and place branding research is important. Throughout this chapter, references are also made to instances where the findings of the present research contradict the theoretical, conceptual issues, and empirical findings reviewed in Chapter 2. The broad policy implications of the research findings are discussed, as are the academic contributions. Finally, direction for future research is considered.

6.2 Summarizing the Results of the Study

6.2.1. What is the Extent of Place Branding in Ontario?

The analysis contained in Chapter 3 demonstrated that place branding is a widespread phenomenon being pursued by municipalities of all sizes and types, and in all locations across Ontario. From the quantitative analysis, it is clear that an important part of place branding in Ontario is the logos and slogans, as over 90% of the municipalities employ some form of visual identity. The qualitative analysis further emphasized the high usage of place branding as all twenty-five practitioners indicated that formal or informal initiatives were currently being leveraged by the municipality to help foster economic growth.

The qualitative analysis uncovered an explanation of the high usage rate. From the perspectives of practitioners and consultants, having a tangible outcome of place branding is important in local governance. The place brand initiatives are funded from public sources, but, as discussed, are dominated by the narrative and experience associated with a locale. As a result, the visual identity becomes an important tangible feature of the process, a physical embodiment of the place brand. From a local government perspective, the logo and slogan become important ways to justify expenditure of public funds.

The quantitative research into the usage of place branding found that it diminishes as municipalities became smaller, less urban and more rural, and was less connected with the economic core of the province. The respondents queried during the qualitative phase of research suggested that the lack of resources and political capacity in the smaller and

outlying municipalities limit the ability of the localities to actively undertake place branding initiatives.

An area of divergence between the quantitative and qualitative research is the brand images that are being presented. All respondents in the study suggested that there was a need for authenticity, which as noted means the narrative has to align with the experience and the brand positioning. Despite this suggestion there appears to be contradictions between what is being presented in the images and the actual perception of the practitioners. For instance, although the quantitative analysis revealed tourism as the dominant sector of emphasis, the practitioners suggested that business and talent attraction are their primary focus of branding initiatives. This represents an incongruity, as it suggests that the brand positioning is not accurately reflecting the desired images that the municipalities are seeking to develop. As a result, there is potential for confusion on what the municipality has to offer and what its goals are. This confusion could lead to weaker or less positive reputation and limit the probability of an investment from the audience being targeted. This is particularly true as Ontario's economy becomes more reliant on talent and knowledge-based industries. From the responses of the site selectors, it seems unlikely that a logo or slogan will affect an investment decision. For individuals, however, the visual identity may have a strong role in capturing attention. The tourism brands in the province may have some utility in talent attraction; however, they are dominated by a narrow range of natural environment and outdoor recreational imagery. If talent attraction is a primary goal, then these images would have to diversify to present greater levels of urban entertainment and lifestyle opportunities.

6.2.2 The Pattern on Place Branding – Opportunities for Cooperation

Two themes throughout the discussions in each chapter were homogenization of place brands, and the need for municipalities to be fiscally responsible in their place branding efforts. The results of the quantitative research showed that there was homogenization of place brands, and that they tended to exist within narrowly defined categories. As a result, the spatial analysis demonstrated that there was potential for branding collaborations which could limit risk, expenses, and increase the assets to promote. Similarly, the practitioners who were interviewed suggested that this was a potential approach to brand development and promotion. In particular, the pooling of resources to increase population (i.e. talent) and asset (i.e. infrastructure) bases were seen as having important implications for a place brand. A further area of benefit was the ability to share financial burden. Interestingly, financial resources to spend on branding were considered in two ways: first, that less investment from each municipality could result in a budget that matched contemporary local spending; and second, that pooled resources could create a larger pool of money to spend which could influence the level of the brand sophistication and its reach.

6.2.3 Why is Place Branding Occurring?

It is clear from the existing scholarship that place branding is being used as a tool of economic development in many contexts globally. The literature, however, tends to privilege research on national scales, and generally only considers large, economically important urban centres when examining place branding in more local contexts. The implication, as a result, is that urban place branding is limited to only large municipalities

that are part of a region's urban core. The mixed method analyses of this study have demonstrated that this perspective is not reflective of the situation in Ontario. While large municipalities do tend to use place branding more frequently, this study found that, in fact, communities of all sizes, types, and locations use some form of place branding to attract attention and differentiate themselves.

As noted in previous chapters, both external and domestic forces appear to be driving the widespread adoption of place branding initiatives. Reese and Sands (2007) also suggest that structural changes within Ontario and Canada's political economies have forced municipalities to adopt an increasingly market-oriented and entrepreneurial approach that places each urban within the province in direct competition with each other for economic growth. Those interviewed for this study suggested that the place brand then plays an important role in ensuring that a locality is featured prominently within this global market and stands apart from competitors.

Finally, compared to other North American locales, Ontario's municipalities and communities have been noted as being more strategic in their development planning (see Reese and Sands, 2007). As a result, there is the impetus, the opportunity, and due to changing global and local economies, the necessity to allow place branding to become an important development strategy. In this sense, the changing economic realities of the province have influenced how place branding is approached. It was previously demonstrated that the changes to the economic landscape of Ontario have effected how place branding is used at the municipal level, as there is greater influence on the attraction of talent and advanced manufacturing rather than traditional large-scale manufacturing. This is not necessarily unique to Ontario, as Kavaratzis and Ashworth

(2008) argue that municipalities in advanced economies have refocused their branding away from ‘smokestack-chasing’ to service, creative, and knowledge-based economies. From the responses of the practitioners targets of the new economy are: biomedical (P6, P8, P14), software and computer-gaming (P5, P7, P12, P24), advanced aerospace manufacturing (P18), energy (P18, P19), and advanced electronics (P10). An element underpinning all these initiatives at the municipal level was the concept of the creative economy.

6.3 Synthesizing Results: Developing a Conceptual Model of Place Branding

Based on the interrogation of the literature in the research domain (see Chapter 2) place branding was identified to have several key elements:

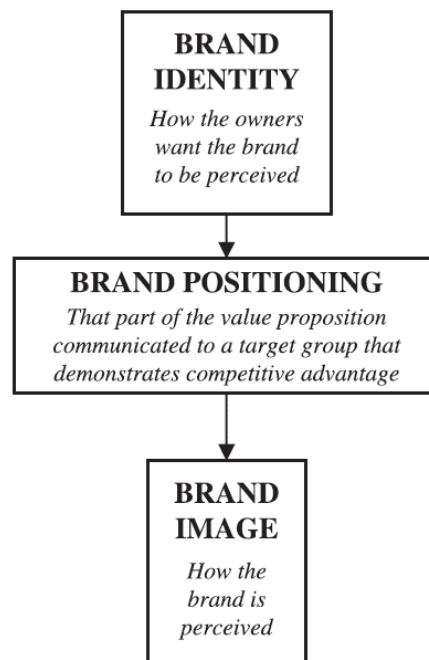
- *A process with the goal of developing a strong reputation through the brand. The place brand, therefore, needs to convey the strengths and virtues of the local to produce a positive image.*
- *Primarily concerned with differentiating one place from another, to facilitate consumption and achieve social-political-economic goals.*
- *Generally limited to a single place-entity*
- *Based on the concepts of image and identity, and the strategies designed to change or reinforce them.*
- *Based on strategies and techniques that have been drawn mainly from corporate and product branding. This approach requires additional theoretical development to account for the complex nature of most places.*
- *A tool of economic development, as all place brand issues revolve around facilitating some form of consumption. This ultimately implies an economic implication, be it direct (for instance recruitment of business) or indirect (increased civic pride, which allows the retention of labour, talent, and a tax-base).*

Based on the results in Chapter 5, it is clear that place branding is a complex process that touches on all of the above elements. Within Ontario’s municipalities, it is clear that place branding is viewed as the development of an image or reputation. This development is based on hard and soft factors, on the visual and behavioural expressions, embodied

through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design.

From the analysis conducted in the study, the role of place branding can be placed in a geographical context as an approach of creating a sense of place about a municipality. The implication is that the stronger and more positive the sense of place, the greater the influence the place brand will have in driving some form of investment. Based on the qualitative analysis in Chapter 5, the influence of the brand comes from two factors: the place image that is projected that provides some form of promise about the offerings of the community; and the tangible offerings that support the promise. In the existing literature (e.g. Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005; Stock, 2009), the brand positioning (how it is developed and what messages are used) acts as the interface between the identity of the municipality and the external image (Figure 6.1). This suggests a simple, linear progression, where the narrative presented in the brand positioning ultimately is the strongest influencer of perception and investment. The results of the analysis in Chapter 5, however, suggest that while the narrative (or promise) is important the experiential elements of a place play a role in the brand's strength and utility. Further, the quantitative analysis demonstrates that the visual identity (or brand positioning) plays an important role in the communication of a place brand narrative and the cultivation of the image to external groups. As a result, conceptually the place brand model becomes more complex and interconnected.

Figure 6.1: Standard conceptual model of place branding

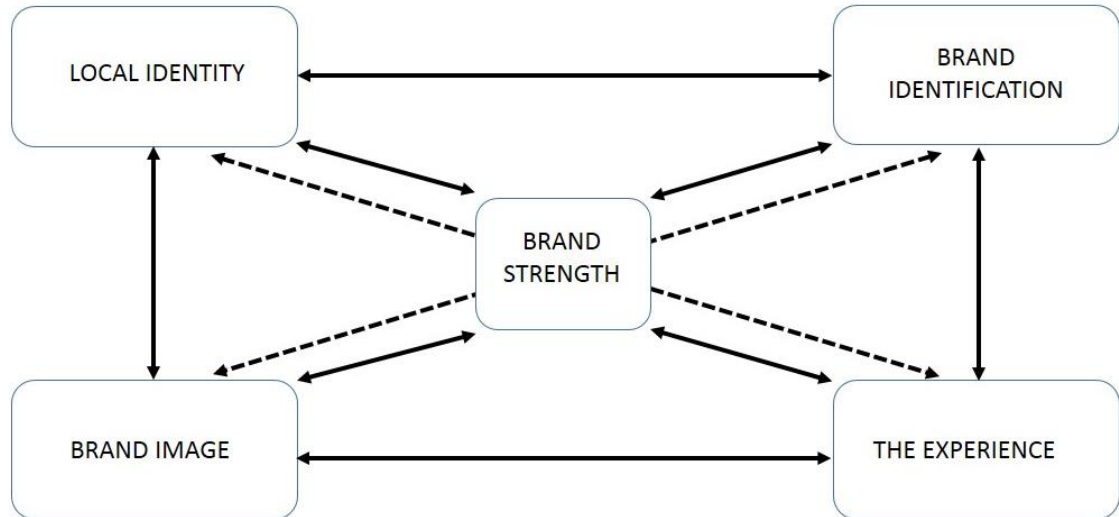


(Source: Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005, p. 508)

Based on the responses of the practitioners, consultants, and site selectors a model of the place branding relationship has begun to emerge (Figure 6.2). The place brand itself is comprised of four core elements: the *brand image* (analogous to the *promise*), which is the image that the municipality projects derived from; its *local identity*, which is the sum of the local political strategies and public perceptions; the *brand identification*, or how the place brand is promoted to the target audience and includes the logo and the slogan; and the *experience*, which encompasses what functional attributes the municipality has to offer to a target audience. These can be aligned with the existing literature, where the promise is the desired brand image and the brand identification is equivalent of brand positioning. The brand positioning is important, because the

development of a perception of a municipality can occur ahead of direct interaction (Allen, 2007).

Figure 6.2: Developed conceptual model of place branding



The confluence of the four components of the place brand is the brand strength (or as the informants described, the *sense of place*), which ultimately is the positive or negative perception a target audience will have of the municipality. Each leg of the place brand has to be aligned for the place brand to have the desired effect:

- The desired brand image is how the municipality wants itself to be perceived. To ensure that it presents the locale correctly, it has to be closely aligned with the actual local identity that develops from the political, economic, and social realities of the municipality.
- The desired brand image has to be aligned with the brand positioning. This is similar to Balmer and Soenen's (1999) desired and communicated identities.

The areas of growth the municipality hopes to promote need to be clearly articulated in the brand communication to ensure that the correct message is getting to the target audience.

- The desired brand image, finally, has to be aligned with the experience. The advantages that the municipality presents itself as having in the image it projects need to actually exist and be accessible to the target audience. Similarly, as the brand positioning helps promote the promise it has to be aligned with the experience as well.
- Due to the contingent potential of place branding, the brand positioning and experience have to be aligned with the local identity.

A common theme within the responses of the respondents is that whatever is being promoted has to be reflected in the realities of the municipality. Colloquially summarizing a view of the consultants and practitioners, *if you are going to talk the talk, you have to walk the walk*. As a result, it is vital that those in charge of brand development endeavor to ensure that the different elements that underpin the place brand have no gaps between them.

Alignment of these issues achieves many of the identified aspects of a place brand. A strong reputation can help drive consumption or investment, and make a locale stand out against its competitors. Altogether, these factors help influence the economic well-being of a municipality.

6.4 So What? Why is Place Branding Important?

An important consideration that underlies the research of this thesis is *why is place branding important* and, similarly, *why should municipalities undertake place branding*? Place branding can be an expensive venture, requiring municipalities to invest public funds. As municipalities and communities in Ontario have been forced to take on more local responsibilities, including providing social programs, a large investment in a place branding initiative can appear to be a misappropriation of funds. This is particularly true in municipalities like Innisfil and Port Hope that have interpreted re-branding to only consist of a “re-labelling” of the locality. This approach ultimately has little influence on the short and long term development trajectory of the municipality. As discussed, however, place branding is more complex than a mere re-labelling. It is the confluence of economic, social, infrastructural, and political policies designed to improve the standing of the municipality. In the end, the municipality’s chances of attracting investment rest upon its underlying assets and well co-ordinated strategies and programs.

Based on the interview responses, the importance of place branding lies in its ability to spur some form of attraction, be it migration, tourism, or the (re)locating of business. For the majority of the municipalities in Ontario, place branding is being embedded in their local economic development strategies. While economic development can be comprised of many different aspects, it includes the following (see Arku, 2013, 2014; Reese and Sands, 2007):

- Recruiting and retaining businesses;
- Recruiting and retaining talent and labour;
- Developing entrepreneurship and new business growth within the municipality;
- Creating jobs;
- Marketing the community by identifying key assets to promote the community to the rest of the world;

- Diversifying the economic base, to insure a diverse economy to support the community;
- Building social and human capital: strengthening schools, community groups and governments, and fostering a commitment to education, innovation and partnerships; and
- Improving the quality of life and quality of place for those in the municipality.

Each of the listed aspects of economic development requires some form of recruiting and the attempt to attract investment, be it relocation of business or labour, or local investment relying on the contingent nature of place branding and the need to improve local assets to make the locale more appealing to external audiences. The results of this research indicate that place brands can be leveraged to each of the listed areas of economic development. Therefore, place branding can play an important role in parts of economic development.

The importance of this ability of place branding to drive investment links back to the issue of the local assessment base. The services that municipalities provide are funded through public resources (i.e. taxes). As a result, greater external investments in the municipality by target audiences will increase the assessment base and increase the public funds available for reinvestment. Place branding, therefore, is important to a locale as it increases the potential for investment and ultimately benefits local residents through the provision of services.

6.5 Policy Implications and Recommendations

When considering the policy implications of this study, the core considerations are: *should municipalities be using place branding as a part of their economic development strategies; and if so, is what is currently being done the right approach?* In the global competition for limited mobile economic resources geographic entities of all

types (municipalities, regions, nations, super-regions) are using place branding as a way of drawing attention and presenting themselves as an ideal location for investment. Pragmatically, therefore, place branding should be pursued by municipalities in Ontario as an approach to improving local economic development. Hospers (2003) suggests that place promotion is vital in the development of a municipality. If the municipality desires investment of traditional or new-economy industries, to attract talent, or become known as a centre for innovation, entrepreneurship, or creativity it needs place branding to promote itself and enter the consciousness of the target audience. A municipality could have the necessary infrastructure and economic ingredients to be a leader in an economic sector; however, if it does not promote itself that way it will never achieve that external reputation. Place branding, therefore, is a cost of entry for participation in the global market. People can visit or live anywhere in the world. Businesses can relocate or invest in any market. Municipalities that do not promote themselves will not be considered and risk economic stagnation or decline.

Place branding, therefore, is a policy approach to economic development that municipalities should adopt. However, place branding needs to be done correctly in order to have the desired economic development effects. The branding has to be strategic so it is meaningful to the target audience to catch attention and potentially facilitate some form of investment. In this regard, municipalities in Ontario are doing an insufficient job of implementing place branding effectively. It should not be done simply because it is being done in other municipalities. Instead, place branding needs to be a strategic political and economic policy that carefully considers the assets that the municipality has and the contemporary and future directions for development.

In terms of economic development, municipalities in Ontario have done a poor job of promoting investment in primary sectors. Instead, tourism brands have become the dominant promotional activity. As a result, considerable effort is being spent to attract investment in a small part of the provincial economy, which severely limits the potential for economic growth. Municipalities, therefore, should develop place brands that emphasize talent or industry attraction. Additionally, it has been noted that the place brands that have been developed tend to be homogenous and similar in their designs. As a result, there is little ability for municipalities to differentiate themselves from their competitors. From a brand development perspective, municipalities need to explicitly consider how they can leverage their assets in a way that stands out.

In summary, place branding is an economic development tool that should be considered by municipalities; however, it needs to be carefully developed and coordinated to ensure that it is representative of the locale. Since it involves the investment of public funds, efforts also need to be made to track its effectiveness and influence on the local economy to demonstrate its utility. If no efforts are being made to measure effectiveness in a comprehensive and systematic way, then a place branding strategy should not be pursued as there is little way to tell whether it has been a good investment or whether it is having influence on the target audience.

6.6 Academic Contributions

Very little attention has been given to the role of place branding in local economic development in Ontario. Further, little consideration, if any, has been given to the perspectives of economic development practitioners, consultants, or site selectors – who

each play an important part of place branding and economic development. This study adds to the existing body of literature by filling the gap and situating the discourse on place branding within the realm of economic development. Several major gaps in the literature were identified prior to the start of the study:

- Existing studies are theoretical in nature and therefore fail to identify an explicit research objective or do not develop and put forward testable models or hypotheses;
- Focus on the production of brands, rather than their consumption or successes/failures;
- Are based on specific, isolated experiences or case studies of a handful of places rather than through the interactions within larger groups;
- Are predominantly qualitative in design with few subjects;
- Are based more on personal observation and less on empirical, rational grounding;
- In cases where quantitative research occur, rely too heavily on descriptive statistics;
- Lack an understanding or examination of the spatial issues surrounding the research field;
- Are dominated by research in one confined area (Europe), considering one type of geographic entity (cities);
- Rely heavily on secondary data – and are rarely based on large primary datasets – to address the point under discussion; and

This study helped fill the gaps in several ways. Relying on primary datasets and developing testable models and research objectives allowed for the influence of municipal characteristic on place brands to be considered. Additionally, the large number of municipalities queried allowed for both statistical and logical inferences to be made in the results. This allowed for a robust image of place branding in Ontario to begin to emerge – further contributing to the literature as it provides a non-European perspective on place branding. The use of statistical and spatial measures also provided unique domains of research.

Altogether, the unique elements of this study provided new insights into place branding in Ontario. Interestingly, the practical insights generated from this study suggest that several theoretical suppositions may be inaccurate or incomplete. Specifically, it is

clear that municipalities use logos and slogans readily in Ontario; however, at least in the larger municipalities it is clear that they are not considered the only (or primary) part of the place brand. Further, based on the responses of those interviewed it is notable that place branding is not viewed as a solution to all of a municipality's economic issues. Finally, the approaches to place branding were less corporate-based and more practical-based in Ontario. Together, these suggest that place branding is not a uniform process. The implication is that it is necessary to consider practical examples of place branding in the research, rather than relying on theoretical models, to understand how approaches to place branding differ or converge in different markets.

6.6.1 Comparing and Contrasting Findings with the Research Domain

Based on the results of this research, there is a divergence between the theoretical constructs of place branding that appear in some academic literature and the realities of municipal branding in Ontario. Eshuis and Edwards (2012) suggest that the marketing perspective of contemporary place branding centres on determining the needs of citizens and then creating brands that respond to those needs. In this sense, place branding's role is no longer as selling, but as satisfying citizens' needs (see Lees-Marshment, 2004; Kotler *et al*, 1999). The idea is that branding is more effective if it is targeted at what people want, and an important aim is, therefore, to understand the concerns and wishes of citizens and then design a brand that reflects this (Lees-Marshment, 2004). In this context, branding involves not only the transmission of messages, but also their reception, and it involves developing brands that respond to people's demands. This approach has some similarities to corporate place branding (see Allen, 2007; Kavaratzis,

2005, 2009) which concerns with the use of the place brand to align stakeholders, which then strengthens the brand itself.

Based on the results of this study, however, the role of place branding is one that is predominantly sales-oriented, where the brand's goal is to persuade external target audiences to commit to some form of investment or a place to visit, and ultimately live. In this sense, the municipality and its offerings are a product, and the branding focus is on communicating the quality and performance of products (i.e. talent, investment opportunities). These offerings are predominantly functional, to prove the municipality is better suited than its competitors. As Goodchild (2002) noted, however, place branding exists on two axis: the *functionality* and the *emotionality*. Place branding adds symbolic and emotional qualities to the place, to develop a positive sense of place. As was observed in the responses of the practitioners, consultants and site selectors, place branding becomes a top-down method of communication, as it is specifically applied to impose particular meanings and transmit messages to targeted audiences.

6.6.2 Limitations of the Study

Methodologically, the mixed-method approach provides an investigation that is both depth and breadth in scope. There are, however, a number of limitations to the study. In particular, the study falls victim to a selection bias due to the responses of potential participants. Many small communities in Ontario did not have an explicit economic development department, and therefore were not considered in the interviews. Additionally, when canvassed for participation, economic development practitioners from the smaller communities tended to decline. This resulted in only five of the twenty-five

participants in the practitioner group coming from these places. As a result, there may be under-representation of the issues prevalent in these communities in the final analysis. This was in part mitigated by the ability of participants to provide insights from multiple communities.

A second concern is the lack of emphasis on the role of political entities beyond the economic development office and consultants. Place branding can be integrated into the whole political structure of the community, and therefore influences and key stakeholders may have been overlooked. This is because local economic development officials tend to operate within a political environment; and therefore, many place branding approaches and initiatives may be determined by political decisions. Although a more thorough investigation of the political influences on place branding may have made the study richer and stronger, time and logistical constraints limited the ability to include political considerations in this research.

6.7 Concluding Remarks

The province of Ontario and its 414 communities provide an interesting case study into how place branding is being understood, functionalized, and implemented. From this investigation, it is clear that branding has an almost ubiquitous adoption, particularly through the development and communication of community brand images through logos. While an interesting start, it must be acknowledged that the use of logos and slogans provide only one step in promoting a community to its desired audience. Once the inroads have been made into the global market and the attention of the consumers has been drawn, the visual images the community presents fall away in importance to the

political, economic, and social structures in place within the community. The community's brand image, however, remains an important component of the initial stages of promotion. It needs to be authentic, as it needs to be reflective of the municipal offerings and values that exist. Therefore, before a local identity can be crystalized in a brand and represented through a visual identity, effort needs to be spent considering how any messages will be accepting and how they will shape the external image of the locale.

Though widely used, the brands in Ontario do not necessarily reflect the current reality of the province, suggesting a dichotomy between the internal economic and social conditions within communities and how they wish to be perceived externally. Furthermore, though research to date suggests that the development of a logo may ultimately be a waste of resources there appears to be a trend of communities still relying on the logo as the main brand tool. A logo or other form of visual identity can be an important piece of the brand communication and marketing of the community. Unless it done with correctly, however, there are many potential issues that can arise and ultimately produce a negative response that can hamper economic growth. Moving forward, the communities in Ontario need to place emphasis on the capacity building components of brand development, to ensure that the local identity aligns with the perception of the commuting, and that when the brand image is constructed and the logo designed it is representative of the motivations and ideals that underpin the brand and produces something meaningful. Ultimately, this will help create the sign-post that makes in-roads into the competitive and crowded global economic market.

6.8 Directions for Future Research

There are several areas for future research: first, comparative analysis needs to be undertaken to determine whether the patterns and perspectives identified in Ontario's municipalities are unique or reflective of place branding issues in other locales; second, as cooperation between municipalities becomes an increasingly approach to economic development further research needs to be conducted to identify the role place branding can play; and third, effectiveness of place branding needs to be further examined to determine its true utility and effectiveness in influencing the economic development of a municipality.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW SCRIPTS

Practitioner Interview Guide

Theme: Conceptualizing place branding

Question	Prompt/Follow-up
What does the term 'branding' mean to you?	<p>Branding is commonly associated with products and services. Do you think branding a community is different from branding a product or services?</p> <p>If so, how?</p>
In your opinion, what is the purpose of place branding?	<p>What role does place branding play in community economic development?</p> <p>Why do you think communities are increasingly adopting place branding in their economic development efforts?</p> <p>Do you think it is due to the increasing competitiveness of the global economy?</p> <p>Do you think communities are using place branding to differentiate themselves from competitors?</p>
In light of the recent economic downturn, what is the importance of place branding in a community's economic development in the current global economy?	
Is your community currently branding itself?	<p>Can you please tell me your community's brand name? What is your slogan? What is your logo? What does it mean?</p> <p>What specific message are you trying to communicate through this brand name and logo?</p> <p>So overall, what are the objectives of your community's branding effort?</p> <p>It has been suggested that place branding extends beyond logos and slogans to include community resources, infrastructure, and stakeholders. Can you speak to this idea, and is this a strategy held by your community?</p> <p>If no, what do you think other communities are trying to accomplish through branding?</p>

If possible, can you take me through some past efforts of place branding attempts in your community?	
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Theme: Processes involved in place branding

Question	Prompt/Follow-up
Kindly describe to me the general processes involved in place branding.	What helps and hinders this process?
With regards to your community, what specific processes were involved in developing your brand?	<p>How do you decide what to emphasize through branding?</p> <p>Who is your target audience?</p> <p>Who are the main stakeholders involved in your most recent branding effort?</p> <p>It has been suggested that the public should play a role in the branding process. Do you agree with this statement?</p> <p>What is the main role of the practitioners or policymakers in the branding process?</p> <p>It appears that some communities have hired brand consultants. Is this something that your community has done as well?</p> <p>What is the role of consultants in the branding process?</p> <p>Did your community use branding experiences in other places to guide your decision-making?</p> <p>It has been argued that branding is not just 'selling places' in competition with other places or regions, but also a matter of 'selling itself to itself'. Do you agree with this statement?</p> <p>If yes, how is your community 'selling itself to itself'?</p>
Are there any issues that you can think of that affect the branding process?	<p>For example, does your community have adequate financial resources to develop, maintain, and market its brand?</p> <p>Is there sufficient political infrastructure to support the branding process?</p>

	Are there competing interests between stakeholder groups? If so, what affect do they have? And how are they resolved?
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Theme: Elements of community being branded

Question	Prompt/Follow-up
What elements in your community are being branded?	<p>For example, physical environment, culture, natural environment, recreation, quality of life?</p> <p>How do you incorporate less-tangible elements – such as quality of life – into a community’s brand?</p> <p>Do you feel the elements being branded accurately reflect your community’s identity?</p> <p>If there is a gap, how can it be closed or addressed?</p>
How do you think these elements place brand can be used to attract and retain talent, business, and industry?	<p>What features of your community are used to appeal to potential companies considering relocation?</p> <p>Between the three groups – talent, business, and industry – is there one that branding is most successful at accessing?</p>

Theme: Branding outcomes

Question	Prompt/Follow-up
How do you assess the effectiveness of branding?	<p>Are there specific variables or criteria that your community collects to measure the effectiveness of branding?</p> <p>What are these measures?</p> <p>How often does your community review its brand and branding efforts?</p>
Based on what you have alluded to, how would describe the success or otherwise of your community’s branding effort?	
From your community’s experiences, what methods are most effective in communicating a brand?	What methods are least effective in communicating a brand?
What are the next steps that your community needs to take in its branding effort?	

Theme: Social media

Question	Prompt/Follow-up
How does your community use social media in its branding?	<p>How does your community decide what information to communicate through social media? How often is it updated?</p> <p>How has it impacted your community's branding?</p> <p>What effects have the use of social media had on community awareness, interest and participation (both internally and externally)?</p> <p>What areas of economic development are most influenced by branding using social media?</p> <p>Are there particular audiences that social media is better at connecting with?</p> <p>Who are these audiences?</p> <p>Why do you feel certain areas of economic development are better suited for use with social media?</p>

Consultant Interview Guide

Theme: Conceptualizing place branding

Question	Prompt/Follow-up
What does the term 'branding' mean to you?	<p>Branding is commonly associated with products and services. Do you think branding a community is different from branding a product or services?</p> <p>If so, how so?</p>
In your opinion, what is the purpose of place branding?	<p>Based on your experiences, why should communities use branding?</p> <p>What do you think various communities are trying to accomplish through place branding?</p>
In your opinion, what is the importance of branding for a community's economic development?	<p>If none, why is this?</p> <p>Literature suggests that globalization is creating larger markets, with more communities competing for resources. How can a community use branding to differentiate itself from competitors?</p>

What branding techniques do you feel are most useful to a community (Prompt: logos, slogans)	<p>How can the message you want be communicate through these branding techniques?</p> <p>It has been suggested that branding extends beyond logos and slogans to include community resources, infrastructure, and stakeholders. Can you speak to this idea, and is this a strategy that should be held by a community?</p>
How is an idea conceptualized and formalized as a brand?	<p>Are there elements more conducive to being branded?</p> <p>How can an idea be distilled down to one or two specific ‘talking points’?</p>

Theme: Processes involved in place branding

Question	Prompt/Follow-up
Describe the process of branding in general, not just with any specific communities.	<p>What are the key steps?</p> <p>What helps and hinders this process?</p>
What are the processes involved in developing a community’s brand.	<p>How is it different from developing a brand for a service or product?</p> <p>Is it a collaboration with the community? Or do you have autonomy in your work?</p> <p>Who decides what to accentuate through branding?</p> <p>Who decides what the target audience is?</p> <p>How were you brought into the process?</p> <p>What is your role as a consultant in the process?</p> <p>What is the main role of the local government in the branding process?</p> <p>Other than your group, who else is involved in the branding process?</p> <p>Describe your relationship with these other stakeholders</p>

	<p>Who do you feel the primary stakeholders should be? Are there anyone who are excluded?</p> <p>How do you turn a community's ideas into a brand?</p> <p>Did you use branding experiences in other places to guide decision-making?</p>
Are there any issues that you can think of that affect the branding process?	<p>Do you feel you have the correct amount of influence on the process?</p> <p>Is there sufficient political support to allow branding to occur?</p> <p>Are there competing interests between stakeholder groups? If so, what affect do they have? And how are they resolved?</p> <p>Recent literature suggests that the public should play a role in the branding process. Do you agree with this statement?</p> <p>If yes, how is/how should the public be involved in branding?</p> <p>If no, why should the public be excluded from the branding process?</p>

Theme: Elements of community being branded

Question	Prompt/Follow-up
Based on your observations, what is being branded by communities in Ontario?	<p>From your past experiences with branding, what elements do you think a community should accentuate through branding?</p> <p>What message should be communicating through this branding?</p> <p>Do you feel the elements being branded by most communities in Ontario reflect the true community identity?</p> <p>If there is a gap, how can it be closed?</p>
How do you think branding can be used to attract and retain talent, business, and industry?	<p>What features of a community can be used to appeal to potential companies considering relocation?</p> <p>Should the branding process to communicate to a very specific audience, or a wide one?</p>

Theme: Branding outcomes

Question	Prompt/Follow-up
How successful do you think community branding can be? OR How successful has branding in your community been? (if acknowledged association with a community)	How do you assess how the effectiveness of branding? Are there specific variables or criteria that communities should collect to measure the effectiveness of branding? What are these measures?
From your experiences, what methods are most effective in communicating a brand?	What methods are least effective in communicating a brand?
From your perspective, what are the next steps that communities need to take in their branding?	Are there areas where communities are ineffective in their branding? What do you think the future of community branding is going to look like and focus on?

Theme: Social media

Question	Prompt/Follow-up
How should communities use social media in its branding?	How do you think it has impacted community branding? What effects can the use of social media have on community awareness, interest and participation (both internally and externally)? What areas of economic development are most influenced by branding using social media? Are there particular audiences that social media is better at connecting with? Who are these audiences? Why do you feel certain areas of economic development are better suited for use with social media?

Interview Guide for Site Scout and Selectors

Question	Prompt/Follow-up
As a site selector, how do you view community branding?	Based on your experience, how are community's branding themselves?

	<p>Based on your experience, what messages are being communicated by communities through their branding?</p> <p>Do you feel that community branding initiatives affect the general knowledge you have about a community – or is the reason that you know a community exists?</p> <p>Are there particular methods that communities use to attract your attention?</p> <p>Where are common places that communities can advertise themselves to most effectively attract your attention?</p> <p>Are there any particular features in a community that companies look for?</p> <p>What information can a community provide to get your attention?</p> <p>From your experience, to what extent is a company's knowledge of a community influenced by its branding?</p>
From your perspective as a site selector, what do you consider to be place branding?	<p>What is the role of place branding in the site selection process?</p> <p>What does a community's brand tell you about that community?</p> <p>How do you feel place branding affects the outcome of the site selection process?</p> <p>Does branding of communities influence your recommendations that you give to companies?</p> <p>It is increasingly being argued that place branding is a strategy that communities need to adopt to attract and retain business and industry. Do you agree with this sentiment?</p> <p>If not, why do you feel communities are investing resources in branding initiatives?</p>
Can you describe how the site selection process typically works?	<p>What do companies typically look for when they relocate?</p> <p>How do you determine what characteristics a company is looking for in a community?</p>

	<p>Are there specific infrastructure, social, and political elements that are important to companies?</p> <p>How much does quality of life influence a company's decision to relocate to a particular community?</p> <p>To what extent are these elements superseded by the economic situation/incentives?</p>
Could you describe the interaction between you and the community	<p>Who are your primary contacts in the community through the site selection process?</p> <p>What is the nature of the interaction with the primary contacts?</p> <p>Are certain communities more efficient in their political structure/process?</p> <p>Can you describe this structure?</p> <p>Why do you think this structure provides a more efficient process?</p> <p>To what extent does your relationship with representatives from the community during the site selection process influence the desirability of a community</p> <p>Do you consider these factors to be part of the community's brand?</p>
How does the internet and social media affect company decision making?	<p>Do companies consider the internet and social media presence of communities when considering relocation?</p> <p>Are there particular companies that are more likely to consider social media/internet presence in their decision-making process?</p>

APPENDIX B: ETHICS APPROVAL



Research Ethics

Use of Human Participants - Ethics Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Godwin Arku
File Number: 103515
Review Level: Full Board
Approved Local Adult Participants: 3
Approved Local Minor Participants: 0
Protocol Title: Branding and the City: Branding As A Tool of Economic Development in Ontario Cities
Department & Institution: Social Science/Geography, Western University
Sponsor:
Ethics Approval Date: March 01, 2013 Expiry Date: April 30, 2014

Documents Reviewed & Approved & Documents Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
	Interview Guide	
Western University Protocol		2013/02/06
Recruitment Items	Email message to the participants.	2013/02/26
Revised Letter of Information & Consent	Space for participants to print their name has been added to the consent form (see last page).	2013/02/26
Revised Letter of Information & Consent	Space for participants to print their name has been added to the consent form (see last page).	2013/02/26
Revised Letter of Information & Consent	Space for participants to print their name has been added to the consent form (see last page).	2013/02/26


This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

The Chair of the NMREB is Dr. Riley Hinson. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

 Grace Kelly	Janice Sutherland
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This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

CURRICULUM VITAE

QUALIFICATIONS

Education

- 2012 to 2014 **M.A.** (Geography), The University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario
- 2010 to 2013 **M.GIS** (Geographic Information Science), The University of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta
- 2005 to 2009 **B.A. (Honours)** (Geography/GIS), Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario

PUBLICATIONS

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

Cleave, E. and Arku, G. (2014). Community branding and brand images in Ontario, Canada: A Case Study. *Place Branding and Public Diplomacy*, DOI: 10.1057/pb/2014.5.

Cleave, E. and Arku, G. (2014). Competitiveness through Cooperation: Analysis of Spatial Patterns and Inter-Jurisdictional Collaboration in the Place Branding of Ontario Communities, Canada. *Local Economy*, in press.

Cleave, E. and Arku, G. (2014). Place branding and economic development at the local level in Ontario, Canada. *GeoJournal*, DOI: 10.1007/s10708-014-9555-9.

Book Chapters

Cleave, E. and Arku, G. (forthcoming). Reaching a 'Critical Mass': Analysis of Inter-Regional Place Branding amongst Communities in Ontario, Canada. In: *Branding Fehmernbelt-Region*. Zenker, S and Jacobson, B. (eds.). New York: Springer (in press).

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

Primary Presenter

Cleave, E., and Arku, G. (2014). What are we selling? And are they buying it? Perspectives of local economic development practitioners and site selectors on the role of place branding in business attraction. Paper presented at the 2014 Canadian Association of Geographers Conference on May 26-30 in St. Catherine's, Ontario.

Cleave, E., and Arku, G. (2014). The Role of Place Branding in Place Management and Local Economic Development: An examination of the knowledge and understanding amongst Economic Development Practitioners in Ontario, Canada. Paper presented at the 2014 Association of American Geographers Conference on April 8-12 in Tampa, Florida

Cleave, E., and Arku, G. (2014). Place Branding as a Tool of Economic Development: Examining the Perceptions of Municipal Practitioners in Ontario, Canada. Paper presented at the 2014 Urban Affairs Association Conference on March 19-22 in San Antonio, Texas.

Cleave, E., and Arku, G. (2014). Reaching a 'Critical Mass': Analysis of Inter-Regional Cooperation amongst Communities in Ontario, Canada. Paper presented at the 2014 Conference on Interregional Place Branding on March 3 in Lubeck, Germany.

Cleave, E., and Arku, G. (2013). Promoting Economic Development: Examining place branding strategies and messages amongst communities in Ontario. Paper presented at the 2013 East Lakes Division of the Association of American Geographers and Canadian Association of Geographers – Ontario Division joint conference on October 25-26 in Toledo, Ohio.

Cleave, E. and Arku, G. (2013). Selling Difference: A comprehensive examination of place branding in Ontario communities. Paper presented at the 2013 Canadian Association of Geographers Conference on August 11-15 in St. John's, Newfoundland.

TEACHING

Teaching Assistant – University of Western Ontario

2014 – Winter	GEOG2162	Introduction to Urban and Regional Planning
2013 – Fall	GEOG3462	Land Use Planning
2012 – Winter	GEOG2162	Introduction to Urban and Regional Planning
2012 – Fall	GEOG2143	Foundations of the Geography of World Business

AWARDS

Scholarships and Bursaries

2012-2014	Western Graduate Research Scholarship
2006	Ontario Parks Bursary

Other Awards and Distinctions

2009	Dean's Honour List (Queen's University)
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APPOINTMENTS

Professional Positions

2002 to 2014	Gate Attendant/Head Gate Attendant/Assistant Park Clerk Presqu'ile Provincial Park (Brighton, ON) and Ferris Provincial Park (Campbellford, ON)
2012 to 2014	Teaching Assistant, University of Western Ontario (London, ON)

Scholarly Activities

2014	Conference Assistant, 2014 Association of American Geographers Conference
2014	Special Session Organizer, 2014 Canadian Association of Geographers Conference
2013 to 2014	Student Representative, Canadian Association of Geographers Ontario Division

OTHER INFORMATION

Affiliations

Association of American Geographers
Canadian Association of Geographers
Urban Affairs Association