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The Narrative /Storytelling Approach in branding a place: An Analytical study of Oldham

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in partial fulfilment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

The Business School
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Dedicated to

Pauline Janet Kadembo and Ernest Mutandiwa Kadembo, my late parents, the union which shaped me and taught me what is right and what is wrong. Though I treasure the enormity of the value of their efforts in showing me the path to the virtues of life I cannot share my joy of self-actualisation with them. I believe, in eternity they note with pride what their own has achieved. I thank God for their lives and the treasure bestowed upon me by being their son.

Ropafadzo Mutyandasvika, my wife's late twin sister whose loss shook my family. I believe her wish to be with her sister is partially fulfilled in that I have wrought her into my work which is core to sustaining my family's hopes, inspiration and aspirations.

Pastor Amon Dubie Madawo whose devotion to the Kingdom of God renewed me into a vessel for the Kingdom agenda and redefined my purpose for life. In your prophetic word I was made new and a worthy vessel for the glory of God on earth. I am aiming for the title you already challenged me for. By faith I am realising the fullness of favour and spiritual growth by the prophetic word you spoke on me while I walked in darkness. God bless you and magnify you for great works in the Kingdom.

Abstract

The aim of the study was to determine the extent to which the narrative or storytelling approach shapes a brand with a focus on Oldham. The objectives of the study were to ascertain the nature of stories; understand the way stories are told; identify ways places shape their identity; determine the extent to which stories are mirrored in the unfolding re-branding or re-storying of Oldham; compare Oldham's experience to Bradford; profile perceptions of the Oldham stakeholders; develop an identity matrix for Oldham; formulate a framework for conceptualising the Oldham brand; make recommendations on the way forward; and suggest an approach to story based branding (story-branding). The conceptual framework states that, *This study is a research of the storytelling approach or the narrative in the development of a place brand focusing on Oldham.* The four core elements of the theoretical framework of the study include branding, place branding, the case study approach, Oldham and the storytelling or narrative approach.

The researcher's epistemological perspective is that of a phenomenological interpretivist engaged ethnographically in the study, i.e., grounded in the dynamics of Oldham as a social constructioninst. The methodology employed storytelling, using the narrative by thirty people familiar with Oldham, the Oldham historian's perspective, eighty questionnaires and a focus group discussion rendering the methodology to a mixed method (triangulation). The literature review showed that the storytelling approach is central to human understanding.

The Oldham brand is diverse given its heritage and its multiple stakeholders. The Oldham story projects hard work leading to global industrial excellence "king cotton", peaking in 1866 and then deteriorating into dilapidation in the 1970's and chaos, culminating in the race riots of 2001. Rebranding Oldham is complex as various elements are considered. The researcher recommends consolidation of the story and the utilisation of the great sub-stories of Oldham. The study proposes the *Adaptive Story branding Conceptual Framework* where the main story is adapted for different stakeholder groups.

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Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

1.1 **The Researcher's Rationale**

A notable aspect of this research is the author's interest in leadership, psychology and philosophy. As a result of the author's desire for knowledge, in reading a book by Denning (2006) on the *Narrative approach to Leadership* the idea to pursue a study at PhD level was born. Stephen Denning is a former director of information at the World Bank. The book provided inspiration, and the author became increasingly interested in the notion of storytelling. Subsequently, reflecting on this phenomenon the author linked the storytelling approach to branding and that is when the idea for this research topic was conceived. The researcher read broadly and found more interest in the aspects of storytelling and branding. While conducting the initial literature review the process became captivating to the researcher's thinking and gave way to this study. Putting together the respective proposal was quite informative and presented the researcher with interesting questions that gave scope for investigation. The researcher blended the desire to build a strong understanding of the phenomenon of storytelling and branding with a number of articles related to the area. The process of researching into storytelling and branding provided the researcher with a wider perspective on the application of storytelling that has changed his perspective of story instrumentation.

Reflecting on the abysmal marketing efforts of Oldham town and the wider borough the researcher felt there was scope for research into the storytelling dynamics of Oldham. The town and the borough spend £100 000 on a logo. Some people refer to the logo as a toilet seat as they feel it is meaningless. The logo does not resonate well with the heritage of Oldham at large. The researcher saw storytelling as a tool to capture the Oldham heritage.

1.2 **Introduction**

Stories are part of the fabric of humanity cutting across human functionalities (Lewis, 2011); "people in organisations lead storied lives" (Brown, et al. 2009: p. 323). In the same context the marketing of places such as villages, towns, cities, boroughs, counties, regions and countries has become a topical issue on a global scale (Gibson, 2005). One could argue that places for tourism, business, sport and other various functionalities have attracted huge marketing efforts. Wheatley (2007) writes that organisations are spiritual and need more storytellers to give them life through inspirational narrations for increased productivity. The overarching importance of storytelling and branding is growing in its usage in a diverse range of organisations (Rasmussen, 2005; Boje, 2008; Gibson, 2005; Macrae, 1991). In emphasising the importance of storytelling in branding Rasmussen (2005: p. 229) writes that:

> Well-told stories remain with us through time. They help us to make sense of what has been, what is and what might be. Stories have been used, of course, for thousands of years. However, as a deliberate tool for strategy formation and development of socio-technical systems, storytelling is quite recent, but growing very rapidly.

Boje (2008: p. 4) argues that: "Every workplace, school, government office or local or religious group is a storytelling organisation." This perspective would mean that Oldham is a storytelling organisation. Gibson (2005) wrote that civic promoters have been searching for ways to raise profiles of cities on the world stage. As far as brands are concerned Macrae (1991: p. 13) points out that: "The power of the brand is to mix image with reality." Therefore, as places increase their branding activities they need to manage their image and the reality of their situation which is their story.

The marketing and branding of a place is acknowledged as important and stories have a critical role to play in the process of branding. Hemisphere Design and Management Consultancy (HDMC) (2008), the marketing consultancy that researched the branding of Oldham pointed out that Oldham is a place in transition. HDMC (2008) further asserts that

the change taking place in Oldham is driven by the regeneration programme and is geared towards economic prosperity, a positive appeal as a destination for dwelling, business investment and tourism. By narrating the case for Oldham, storytelling helps one understand the past, the present and be able to project the strategy for the future (Rasmussen, 2005). Oldham as one may see it today sprang from the ashes of the riots of 2001 following a long period of economic meltdown and deterioration in most of the things that had brought pride to the once vibrant world's leading centre for cotton spinning (Ritchie, 2001). The assertion by Boje (2008) that every entity is a storytelling organisation; would mean that the Oldham brand; is a combination of stories that define the place and its respective image (Silver and Hill, 2002). The story of the Oldham brand; is about the individuals being connected throughout the brand universe (Breda et al., 2008). The history of Oldham has many valuable developments that make Oldham an important place as a centre for industrial revolution, a cosmopolitan borough, a rich cultural place and a centre for entertainment (Ritchie, 2001; Cantle, 2001).

Storytelling as a planning and analytical tool is a recent development, but is growing in use (Rasmussen, 2005; Baker and Boyle, 2009). In the past Oldham was looked upon largely as a cotton spinning and cotton machine manufacturing place (Hayes, 1997; Burton, 1994). Despite the cotton era in Oldham coming to an end in the 1980's, machines manufactured in Oldham still exist in many parts of the world today (Hayes, 1997). Ritchie (2001: p. 14) writes the challenge for Oldham in an independent report on the riots in Oldham saying:

> Oldham lacks a strategic direction, and a vision for the way it should develop in the future. It has been good at bidding to the Government for special initiatives, without thinking through how these will contribute to an overall strategy. It has not tapped effectively into the business community, key professional people, other statutory strategy agencies and the voluntary sector.

In view of the assertions by Ritchie (2001) it would appear Oldham needs to develop a clear, robust plan to charter the town and the borough to a position of prosperity. Choudhury (2001)

suggests that to build a brand one needs to have a clear idea, determine the building blocks and engage the process and this takes place within a context of marketing driven by choice of value, provision of value and communication of that value.

This study seeks to explore the extent to which the history and the related stories about Oldham have influenced its image which in turn shapes its brand image. Barker and Boyle (2009: p. 80) argue that: "A brand story, however, delivers an all-too-rare and refreshingly consistent message. ...people love... to hear a great story and pass it onto others." The question is whether or not the Oldham story is one that people want to tell others. Green (2005: p. 280) in an article on the branding of West London alludes to the far reaching application of branding in a range of situations in arguing that: "The principles of branding are also being applied in relation to countries, cities and regions." This argument further supports the view that places are brands (Chernatony and McDonald, 2003). Green (2005) asserts that there are two key issues involved in place branding, which are firstly the branding process and the professional activity of enhancing the good or service offered and secondly the economic development activities which are focused on improving the quality of life and living.

The question in this study is not whether Oldham has a story but is about how the stories inherent in its founding and all related historical developments have shaped the Oldham brand. A cohesive story (storytelling which is the narrative) or story selling helps in promoting a positive image of an entity and is a powerful communication tool (Boje and Smith, 2010; Denning, 2006). Wilson (2008: p. 133) argued that: "We are moved by stories more powerfully than we are moved by instructions." This would mean that the stories about Oldham stand out more than the grand plans the Oldham Council may communicate in trying

to create an image of the town and the borough at large. Kupers (2005: p. 119) provides an in-depth insight into the effects of storytelling in pointing out that:

> Accordingly stories are basically interactive; they are actualized and adapted in the context of telling and listening. During ''sharing'' of narrative a story might invite the listener to re-tell it, and listening to a story might prompt the listener to tell a story of his/her own, either as an embellishment of the original story, or as a result of being prompted by an aspect of the original story acting as a trigger to the new story; in this way, ''new'' knowledge might be created, as well as being transferred.

One could argue for the need to carefully consider the respective stories about any given phenomenon and more specifically, Oldham in this study and the emotions the respective story attracts. The connotations created by the story and the impressions created underpin the identity or image of the phenomenon which in turn shape the brand or promise associate with the phenomenon. Daiute and Lightfoot (2004) observed that the narrative approach cuts across various disciplines and that storytelling a life locates oneself in time and fits within an era or paradigm. In this study Oldham refers to the seven townships and the surrounding areas within the Oldham borough (see appendix 7 for the physical location of Oldham on the map) within Greater Manchester. The accumulation of that history is evaluated to ascertain the extent to which that history has impacted on the branding of the town and the borough at large.

The town centre receives special mention as the epicentre of the borough and its surrounding townships. Oldham is a place that once was the focus of the world as "king cotton" as stated in The Chronicles of Alda (2008) in the Oldham Chronicle in December 2008 that:

> In 1913 we had over 17 million spindles in 320 mills — our nearest rival, Bolton, had a mere seven million spindles. To put it into a global context, we had one eighth of the world's spindleage.

Despite this dominance of the market in that era, over time Oldham became a hopeless place (Ritchie, 2001). The residents of Oldham became frustrated with the deterioration of standards of life culminating in racial disturbances, which damaged its standing locally, nationally and internationally as reported on the BBC online reporting, (2001a, 2001b, 2001c;

Ritchie, 2001; Cantle, 2001 and 2006). Other renowned media also reported the story and Oldham became the big story which had a huge adverse effect on the image of the place. Kundnani (2001) writing on the website of the Institute of Race Relations refers to the segregation of the Asians and the unfair treatment of the youth by the police as the reason for frustration that saw the riots spread across the northern mill towns which started in Oldham and spread to Bradford. Chu (2011) wrote in the Independent newspaper about his concern for Oldham, which he saw as continuing to be divided. After the negative developments which captured global news headlines; the place needed a strategy to rebuild its image (Ritchie, 2001). Bednarski (2001) argues that the branding story is the basis from which an organisational identity and philosophy emanates.

The Oldham story suggests a place which lost a lot of its good heritage through economic decline and social disturbances (Ritchie, 2001). Cantle (2006: p. 7) in a report commissioned by the Oldham Council as a follow-up to the earlier reports writes that:

> Oldham today has to a significant extent been defined by the disturbances of 2001. Many young people told us that when they went to other towns or cities and said that they were from Oldham, the immediate response was 'that's where the riots were!' To be fair, the Council and the Oldham Partnership have done a great deal to repair the damage, but must now promote itself more pro-actively as a place that is moving on, facing the future with confidence, backed up by a vision and strategy to deliver real and lasting change.

The main concern to the country and the local authorities in the midst of the undesirable climate in Oldham was the aspiration for a way to trigger a positive turn for the future; or a new story (Wheatley, 2007). The new story was expected to help reposition Oldham and recapture its attractiveness in the heydays of cotton. The Cantle report (2006) was commissioned by the Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (OMBC) to investigate and recommend a way forward in the face of the aftermath of the riots of 2001. The main issue in the reports by Ritchie (2001) and Cantle (2006) is the negative effect of the disturbances of 2001 which saw Oldham in chaos.

This situation meant that Oldham attracted a negative appeal to society due to the disturbances of 2001. Oldham's identity mirrors a number of facets; there are three parameters in shaping identity which embrace people, culture and structure (Thompson, 2011). Cantle (2006) made key recommendations for the forging of a cohesive society. Emphasis was placed on the unity of stakeholders in the borough in an effort to renew the image of Oldham. The Oldham brand lost its appeal to various stakeholders following the economic decline and the social disturbances. Oldham is a place preoccupied with its past and is one of the most insular places (HDMC, 2008). One could argue, this meant that the Oldham brand had sank to the lowest levels by any ranking table that could be imagined.

The community lived under a veil of suspicion and there was no cooperation socially and economically as a result of racial divisions (Cantle, 2006). That situation presented a range of complications in creating a positive image for Oldham. The challenges and aspirations of Oldham are put forward by OMBC (2002: p. 8) for the future are epitomised in the statement:

> Oldham has began the new century much as it did the last – with vigour, expectation, enthusiasm and hope. A town that once had the reputation of 'cotton spinning centre of the world' today concentrates its efforts on a massive programme of economic, social and environmental renewal.

A number of developments took place in response to the crisis with a view to recreating a new place with a new appeal (Cantle, 2006). By introducing a new logo to re-brand Oldham as part of the renewal the aim was to move forward and reposition the place and bring to an end the phase of retrogression (HDMC, 2008). The process of regeneration was driven by the Oldham regeneration programme championed by the Oldham Partnership. The respective developments have impacted on social integration, physical infrastructure renewal, raising community aspirations and providing access to opportunities for skills development and training. While these efforts have helped towards the realisation of new aspirations for the place there remains a lot to be done (HDMC, 2008). The main issue is that Oldham has a new

story line of development, instead of confrontation and chaos (Cantle, 2006). In a document titled *Changing faces: regeneration through education*, on its website, the Oldham Partnership (2013) point out that:

> Oldham is a town in transition. With a clear vision, courage and a faith in its people, Oldham Partnership has set in motion the forces of commerce and education – the impact of which has already altered the image of the town and created new exciting opportunities for employment and improved standards of living.

There is an acknowledgement in the assertion by the Oldham Partnership that Oldham has changed its image over time. The changes mentioned make reference to the Spindles Shopping Centre, Oldham Sixth Form College, University Campus Oldham, Gallery Oldham and the new Lifelong Learning Centre. Many other changes took place resulting in the redefining of the physical and social landscape of Oldham and its appearance. These changes are expected to usher in new opportunities, which will further redefine Oldham in future. Writing in the journal, *History Today,* Burton (1994: p. 62) makes a revealing statement about the Oldham story in stating:

> The story of this city is the story of the Lancashire cotton industry and of alternating booms and slumps and eventual industrial decline. … Its story is the story of the Lancashire cotton industry, of feverish construction and speculation, of alternating booms and slumps, prosperity and poverty, and of eventual industrial decline and a search for a new role and new sources of employment.

 This is the story that Oldham should seek to re-story for a better future as part of the re-branding process. In the first quarter of 2008 the Oldham Council launched a new logo that presents its main theme for Oldham as a "united diverse community" and the researcher was invited to one of the focus group discussions on the research by the consultant. The borough spent £100 000 (approximately US $150 000) on a consultancy project conducted by HDMC, a management consultancy to develop the new brand (Kadembo, 2010). The recommendations by HDMC were adopted in February 2008 and the recommended logo became the official identity that features on council correspondence and relevant outdoor signage. There are different views expressed by different stakeholders about the logo. The

ultimate test of the new branding lies in the effect the logo would have in the long term in respect of supporting marketing and the projecting the image of Oldham.

The initial indications portray a mixed picture especially to those outside the council workforce. However, it is assumed that over time the residents and businesses at large will start identifying with the new logo. Breda et al. (2008) argue that storytelling is a vehicle to put across values in a bid to develop an emotional connection with the various stakeholders to a given organisation. Turner (2011) reporting on the progress of Oldham twenty years since the riots of 2001 said that the efforts in building community cohesion were under threat from government spending cuts.

This study will consider a number of pertinent questions about the reasons for regeneration and the kind of history or events that necessitated, firstly the regeneration programme, and secondly the rebranding or repositioning of the borough and the town. The study is largely an effort to advance the horizons of knowledge in trying to determine the extent to which stories shape the brand of a place, in this case Oldham, and the wider borough. The research also explores how creative thinking in brand development can best utilise the narrative for a given phenomenon, in the case of Oldham. While the study is largely focused on the branding of Oldham, the research will also consider place marketing. In the main Oldham is a service offering to tourists, business and residents, other respective stakeholders, and therefore needs to be marketed appropriately as a place and part of that process includes branding.

The study acknowledges the strategic role of OMBC in developing the town and the borough. The important role played by the council does not render unimportant the views and perceptions of the clientele to the borough as epitomised in the diverse community of

stakeholders. This view forms a big part of the argument about the importance of stakeholder perspectives in branding a place (Silver and Hill, 2002). Therefore, in the main, whatever the assertions and investment, true branding lies in the impact the result has on the stakeholder groups to the place, i.e., the residents, tourists and business (Ries and Ries, 2003; Chernatony and McDonald, 2003). To this end, Kapferer (2008: p. 3) vehemently asserts that: "Management came to realise that the principal asset of a company is its brand names." Oldham as a place presents a challenge that is not common, as places are not traditionally considered brands in respect of the literature. Kadembo et al. (2009b) observed that the combination of factors such as attributes, personality and brand values would help develop Oldham's identity. The riots of 2001 was the final straw in a situation that had started deteriorating, which presented an image crisis for Oldham. Therefore, the challenge in brand rebuilding was a mammoth task. The task should be considered on the understanding that consumers buy the brand and not the generic item only (Ries and Ries, 2006). Kavaratzis (2005: p. 330) makes clear the recent development of place branding as a growing discipline in arguing that: "A more focused, integrated and strategic oriented implementation of place marketing was evident largely in the last three decades."

It is inconceivable that the notion of place marketing and subsequently branding is a relatively young phenomenon and the conceptual framework to explain it more comprehensively is developing (Rasmussen, 2005). There is a growing body of literature on the phenomenon of place marketing and related branding to which this study seeks to make a contribution to the horizons of knowledge related to the phenomenon. Melawar and Karaosmnoglu (2006) argue that organisations have recognised the importance of a strong identity in order to beneficially align with the marketplace, encourage investment, and galvanize the commitment of the employees. The argument further asserts that the brand

identity is a differentiator for entities (Chernatony and McDonald, 2003; Ries and Ries, 2003; Gibson, 2005).

In considering the storytelling approach in the branding of Oldham it is important to note what Denning (2006: p. 44) says: "… the role of brand managers becomes one of creating, extending and continually reinventing the brand narrative while making sure the narrative actually reflects what the company is delivering." Hayes (1971: p. 7) subscribes to the notion of brave Oldham sitting on a hill, with the Oldham story anchored in its heritage, hence the assertion that: "The traveller of old skirted the town causing Union Street to be created rather than face the hill to the town centre."

To the extent that Oldham town is sited on a hill, that presents challenges that come with that scenario in respect of access and planning structures of the town and the borough. Therefore it would follow that the efforts to develop Oldham would require more resources to be expended on developing it compared to places that are not on a hill. As a result, the starting point of image identity for Oldham is the landscape which presents the town as sitting on a hill (Wanarby, 2008). Reflecting on the recommendations of the consultant on the rebranding of Oldham, Kadembo et al. (2010: p. 319) argue that: "Oldham's stories shape its image and there are many diverse stories projecting the town's standing in the face of the various stakeholders." In a study on *Tourism in Northern Ireland*, Lennon and Tetterington (1996) observed that there is a correlation between the tourist performance and the frequency of bombings. In 1973 the bombings were at the highest and tourism was at its lowest. This serves to show the impact of negative stories about a place which is equally applicable to the stories on Oldham. Having given an insight into the nature of the study the researcher provides a background to the study.

1.3 Background to the Study

With reference to the promotional brochure on Oldham, Kadembo et al. (2010) argue that claims made by the OMBC are meant to portray Oldham as a place of preference. Oldham town and the wider borough have evolved over time. The transformation of Oldham continues to take place and demands new approaches in the light of the strategic position of the town and the new challenges for the future of the borough and its surrounding townships. The borough is 55 square miles, and the 2001 census gave the borough a total population of 219, 000 (Law, 1999). Oldham town is seven miles to the north of the sprawling City of Manchester (Bateson, 1985), and became a municipal authority in 1849; the six districts of Chadderton, Failsworth, Crompton, Lees, Royton and Saddleworth joined in to establish the Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council in 1974 (Law, 1999). According to Law (1999: p.7) Oldham's nature and history can be described as:

> Oldham is a town built on a hill. The modern borough lies on the flanks of the Central Pennines; from high moorland to the north-east, rising to over 1500 feet, the ground of the district falls, irregularly, around a series and spurs divided by depressions and valleys before it reaches the flat Lancashire plain to the south-west. Oldham Edge, a bold spur around the town of Oldham initially developed, rises over 825 feet. Coppice and Glodwick Lows, Greenacres Moor and Cosper Hill, were other outlying hills rising to 700-750 feet... From these heights the ground falls sharply towards 300 feet..... On the east side ... lies the broad but steep-sided Tame valley...

The landscape of Oldham presents a complex terrain with high and low laying areas co-existing, making it difficult to plan for the use of the land. The complex history of the area and subsequent degradation of the economy and society present image challenges for the place (Ritchie, 2001; Cantle, 2001 and 2006). A number of efforts being made in Oldham are meant to shape a better future for the town and community at large. The development of the town and its re-branding were part of the strategic plan for the borough. The plan included the establishment of the University Campus Oldham and the expansion in housing construction to form part of the strategic blueprint for the future of the town and the borough as documented in *'Oldham Beyond'* (OMBC, 2004). This study gives consideration to the

different developments which complement the branding of Oldham. Law (1999: p. 7) quotes

the (then leader of the Oldham Council), John Battye as pointing out that:

> … Oldham has moved on at a rapid pace. Its principal industries declined to be replaced by new ones. The composition of its population has changed with families migrating from all parts of the world. Many of the social problems and legacies of the industrial revolution have been eliminated, making the borough a much more pleasant and healthy place to live in. Its retail base has altered beyond recognition with further exciting developments under construction.

OMBC (2008) suggest on its website that the pillars in developing the Oldham brand as:

The process of improving the image of Oldham consists of a number of key stages:
- ascertaining existing perceptions of Oldham
- identifying the image of Oldham we want to portray - its brand
- creating a means of communicating the new Oldham brand in written and visual form
- devising a marketing and communications strategy to convey Oldham's new image to its target audiences

It is clear from the assertions by the council that there is a story behind Oldham which needs

to be transformed into a symbol that re-stories Oldham for a prosperous future. The

recommendation by HDMC (2008) for the new brand is centred on oneness of the expansive

borough embracing seven townships with diverse orientations.

The recommended branding for Oldham is epitomised in the statement on the OMBC

website, www.oldham.gov.uk, accessed, 17.02.2010) with the following key aspects:-

One Oldham

—based on the idea of unity: 'the whole is greater than the sum of the parts'
—creating a sense of 'we're all in it together'
—encouraging a sense of pride in the place by being positive and upbeat
—uses a circle device, the circle being a symbol of unity
—the 3D element of the circle device reflects the idea of landscape
—a reference to Oldham's countryside and green space
—uses a language that embraces the wide variety of Oldham's attributes
—emphasises the diversity of Oldham's people and places
—down to earth and real but with an aspirational slant
—traditional feel but modern interpretation

The concept of the new logo for Oldham encapsulates oneness represented by the ring as

presented in *Figure 1.1*. Today there are many faces of the same logo depending on the user

of the logo and that creates a mixed picture about what the symbolism represents. The

question ultimately is, What does the logo represent*?* The portrayal is about the place, the

council and partner organisations. If the focus was just on Oldham this could be clearer to the stakeholders. However, the images presented tend to include references to Oldham the place, the council and associate the same image with the partners who service some of the programmes and utilities for the council.

Figure 1.1 The Oldham logo

Source: Oldham Council (2008)

This study seeks to investigate the nature of the story behind Oldham. Consideration will be given to how that story has changed over time and the attributes of the story. The researcher is appreciative of the dynamics associated with a story. The research seeks to understand the story that is told at any juncture while keeping in perspective the transition of the borough where the town centre is the hub.

The research would reflect the stories that make a difference; either motivational or retrogressive stories associated with Oldham. At the same time the researcher would be prompted to ask questions about how stories are employed in shaping future stories. It is the researcher's view that most tourism amounts to living a story as that involves experiencing a borough, city or town's culture and practices through its past and its present (Hansen, 2010). The OMBC (2004: p. 4) already started writing the story in a bid to project the future by stating that:

> A confident place at ease with itself in its diverse communities and landscapes -from the tight-knit terraced communities to the wild moors and valley villages to the east. A borough that is proud of its industrial past but which has reinvented its economy by making the most of the creativity and drive of its young people. The world will see the borough as a transformed place and people will

be attracted to live and work in the borough by the quality of life that it offers and by its reputation for tolerance and diversity.

There are stories based on what has happened and there are inspirational stories created to galvanize a commitment towards a desired position for a place which could be used to develop a brand (Boje, 2008). The history of Oldham has elements that the council would prefer to drum up in creating a positive image of the borough and those that the council would prefer to be forgotten as they attract negative connotations to the borough. Writing on the regeneration, repositioning and re-branding of Oldham; Kadembo (2009: p. 57) asserts that:

> Indeed ...a place such as a town, city or borough like Oldham is both a social hub and an economic hub whose continued prosperity depends on the positioning and sustained renewal in the face of the environmental dynamics.

Therefore, it is imperative that Oldham takes a strategic and realistic view of its standing in order to harness resources and champion the development of its communities, economy and business climate. Carriger (2010) argues that organisational leaders should use the narrative to inspire and galvanize action in its strategic approach instead of the passive PowerPoint presentation. The promotional manual for Oldham, *Think you know Oldham? Think again..!* encapsulates what the corporate message is emphasizing in using phrases such as *Great People, Great Place, Great Prospects* (Urbed, 2004). Cantle (2006) in a commissioned report on Oldham presents the main challenge for Oldham as the need to promote itself. This process would involve moving forward after the damage of the riots of 2001. This move needs confident advancement sustained by a vision and a strategy which would deliver a new paradigm. It is the contention of this study that a sustained effort in renewing Oldham can lead to developments that can ensure the realisation of a more prosperous place with great prospects as desired in the promotional document. The repositioning process to re-brand is tantamount to re-storying Oldham. Carter (1974) the then director of Libraries and Art Galleries and Museums quoted in Bateson (1985: p. iii) narrates Oldham town as:

> The town owes its size, wealth and importance entirely to the new industries which developed and multiplied during the nineteenth century, which sucked in the population of the surrounding countryside. Since then every wind of change has blown through Oldham.

It would appear the description by Carter in Bateson puts Oldham at the centre of developments in the UK. One would find it difficult to reconcile the present state of Oldham to what used to be a major centre of influence during the industrial revolution. Bateson (1985) acknowledges that Oldham was a little village scarcely known. This transformation from obscurity to prominence and the subsequent degradation presents multiple story lines over a relatively short period of time.

1.3.1 Operational Definition

In this study the key terms are the narrative or storytelling, place and branding. The terms narrative and storytelling are used interchangeably. All these terms are clearly explained below in order to provide a better understanding of the phenomenon. Marshall and Adamic (2010) explain that the narrative is a story that binds everyone together in an organisation and impacts employees' conduct and values. Boje (2008: p. 4) a well-known author on storytelling explains that:

> Narratives shape or present past events into experiences using coherence to achieve believability. Stories are more about dispersion of events in the present or anticipated to be achievable in the future. These narrative-coherence and story-dispersion processes interact so that meaning changes among people, as their events, identities, strategies get re-sorted in each meeting, publication and drama.

Boje (2008) makes reference to corporate giants such as Coca-Cola, Nike, Disney, McDonalds among others as storytelling organisations. Therefore, following on from the same argument, Oldham is a storytelling organisation, which manifests both narrative-coherence and story-dispersion (Boje, 2008). Denning (2007: p. 44) makes a strong case for the thought process being story-based in stating:

> … all forms of communication directed toward action – not just stories themselves, but questions, metaphors, images, challenges, conversations, whatever- are effective to the extent that they generate a new story in the mind of a listener.

Denning (2007) further argues that if this holds then leaders should use the narrative in their thought process to generate persuasive activities. Hawkins and Saleem (2012) pointed out that stories are employed in investigating and understanding organisational change and apply it in the construction and deconstruction of reality. This view would be an important consideration for Oldham's efforts to rebrand and reposition the town and the borough.

The study takes into perspective the views echoed by Denning (2007) and by Boje (2008) on stories; who argue that at the heart of every phenomenon is a story that shapes its standing in the eyes of the observer or for marketing purposes. Consideration in telling the story of a town or borough is given to the different stakeholders to Oldham; such as the residents to the town or borough, its outlying townships and the workforce (Silver and Hill, 2002); investors and tourists to the town or borough (Hansen, 2010). Boje (2008: p. 4) makes a strong argument on the case for the storytelling approach in pointing out that: "Every workplace, school, government office or local or religious group is a storytelling organisation". It is inconceivable that Oldham presents a story in respect of its history and related events.

The different historic developments in Oldham have shaped the image of the town and the borough to this day. The image of the place shifts as the future unfolds and this in turn results in a change of the Oldham story. Thompson et al. (2006) highlight the application of emotional branding by telling inspiring stories, a practice that is on the rise in organisations, places and within the academic fraternity. Thompson et al. (2006) further assert that the emotional branding approach could suffer from estranged customers and the media could pass on a message(s) that could malign, be worrying or opprobrious. Therefore, the respective stories about Oldham reposition the town and the wider borough accordingly. In that respect the Oldham brand changes its appeal. As a result the brand may become more appealing or

less attractive, and that depends on the impact the subsequent change or story would have on the stakeholders. Chernatony and McDonald (2003: p. 25) say that:

> A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which match their needs most closely. Furthermore, its success results from being able to sustain these added values in the face of competition.

From the observation by Chernatony and McDonald (2003), it follows that branding is relative to competition. A brand is meant to be a unique, offering something different or perceived as different. Elliot and Perry (2007) observed that brands (made up of the functional and symbolic domains) are powerful in influencing the thought process of the consumer and change the way they look at a given product. In that regard a town, city, borough, region or country has a lot of factors that are taken into consideration in trying to create a unique position. Complementing Chernatomy and McDonald's argument Knox (2004: p. 106) suggests that:

> ... in simple terms, a brand is an entity that offers customers (and other relevant parties) added value based on factors over and above its functional performance. These added values, or brand values, differentiate the offer and provide the basis for customer preference and loyalty.

Knox (2004)'s argument provides key facets in understanding branding which are the added value offered beyond the functional performance and differential effects of branding. The effect of branding is differentiation which influences customer loyalty and preference. Therefore, Oldham as a place should endeavor to be different from other places so that it can stand out with a unique identity which becomes its unique selling proposition (USP). Hankinson (2004) highlights the impact of the branding of towns as critical to their effective contribution to economic development as well as establish conceptual argument on the ethos of the place. That view further complements the assertions by Chernatomy and McDonald (2003) in that if the differentiation is effective it would lead to the economic development of places. Hankinson (2004: p.7) further argues that:

> In an increasingly competitive market therefore, destination marketers must seek a fuller understanding of the nature of images held by both individuals and organisations in order to build

more favourable brand images and thereby enhance a destination's attractiveness and economic development.

These arguments are at the core of the branding effort since it is an investment into the mind of the targeted market; be it, a leisure tourist or a business investor in a place. Hankinson (2005) refers to eight clusters of brand image attributes: physical environment, economic activity, business tourism facilities, accessibility, social facilities, strengths of the reputation, people characteristics and destination size as influencing the branding of a town or a destination. These elements need to be given serious consideration in brand development for a place and the case of Oldham is not an exception. Hankinson (2005: p. 25) puts forward three key points on the unique characteristics of place marketing as follows:

> First, places exist both as holistic entities or nuclear products and as collections of contributory elements or individual services and facilities. The job of the destination marketer is to select a portfolio from these individual elements to form the basis of a destination product. Second, the place product can be assembled uniquely by each visitor from their experiences of a chosen set of individual contributory elements as referenced from Ashworth and Voogt (1990). Third, places are multi-functional. The same place can offer historical buildings, shopping facilities, sports facilities and entertainment venues.

The issues raised by Hankinson (2005) are consistent with the factors that need to be considered to better conceptualise the branding of Oldham as a destination. Subsequent analysis of the findings by the researcher would weigh these views in the light of their implications to effective place or town branding. Kapferer (2008) points out that branding is increasingly being employed in fields where traditionally there is no head-to-head competition. These areas include high tech, low tech, commodities, non-governmental organisations and non-profit organisations besides the highly competitive production and distribution sectors, amongst others. In this regard Kapferer (2008) further makes reference to cities and towns as brands and attracting brand management tools and views branding as strategic, a view shared by Chernatony and McDonald (2003).

The need for branding for places is in line with the increasing competitiveness in accessing resources for development (Gibson, 2005). Investors require assurances for a return to their investment and ordinary people looking at a place to live in have considerations to make which revolve around the branding of the town, city or borough. The leadership of the town, city or borough can be retained or removed for their commissions and omissions depending on the impact they make on the place brand. The town is the epicentre of the borough and therefore, a key element of the Oldham brand is the town. In a PhD thesis on segregation in the UK, Halsal (2010) alludes to the branding of Oldham through its history which has given the place an identity.

1.4 The research Statement

This study is focused on the storytelling approach or the narrative in the development of the Oldham brand.

The researcher would see the key concepts that underpin the study as: *The storytelling /narrative approach; Branding; Place brand; the Oldham brand and case study.*

1.4.1 Research Aim

The aim of the study is to determine the extent to which the narrative or storytelling approach impacts on the development of a place brand with a focus on the Oldham brand.

The study seeks to discuss the notion that at the centre of every branding process is (or are) stories that shape the perceptions of the stakeholders. In this study the argument goes to the core of the identity of the Oldham brand which is the personality of the place. Arguably Oldham's past and its related stories mirror its brand just as with any phenomenon (Boje, 2008). Ultimately, the study identifies narrations and events (the stories) about what has

made this place with a diverse background of outlying areas, industry, tourist attractions and ethnic groups into the brand that it is today. The researcher seeks to advance knowledge by explaining and developing an appropriate model that captures the challenge to place branding in general and Oldham in particular. Further investigations would give consideration to place branding based on stories so that the respective stories raise aspirations for residents, encourage tourism and above all attract investment to the area thereby creating an aid to development.

Oldham has experienced many changes in its outlook and race relations (Cantle, 2006). The infrastructural development and other related developments show that Oldham is a place poised for growth and development and presents a range of challenges that will give the researcher a challenge to examine. Towns and cities which sit at the heart of counties or boroughs have identities and tend to have strong brands and develop tourist attractions largely because of the stories surrounding their history and scenery (Bell and Jayne, 2003; Hankinson, 2006; Gibson, 2007). The development of a brand for a town, city, borough, county, region or country presents a number of questions that challenge the reasoning behind the shaping of brands with respect to both the process and concept, given that places are not traditionally looked upon as brands.

As branding is something that is common with goods and services; it is tempting to assume that marketing investment is the reason for developing a brand personality. In taking this perspective it would appear marketing investment has a significant contribution to the shaping of the relevant story in the development of a brand. The multi-stakeholder nature of places makes the multiple story approach appropriate, but also complex to conceptualise and that is what is at the heart of this study.

It is the view of the researcher that the marketing discipline is enmeshed in human behaviour since it is a social science. Therefore, if the notion of persuasion and general understanding is story-based (Lewis, 2011; Rasmussen, 2005); it would mean that ultimately the marketing discipline is epitomised in facets of stories that present a variety of pictures, images, identities or brands centred on customer/consumer satisfaction (Thompson et al., 2006). If this view holds it would mean that advertisements are largely a factual story or hyperbole presented in a variety of ways meant to persuade or provoke action from consumers. Therefore, in this regard this study would necessitate the examination of a variety of cues and stories that shape the brand. The study takes into cognisance the fact that in the re-branding and repositioning of Oldham it is important to consider related studies. Bell and Jayne (2003: p. 126) make an important observation in arguing that,

> … in the UK, cities such as Manchester, Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds, Nottingham, Cardiff, Bristol and Bradford, and towns such as Huddersfield, have adopted regeneration strategies that include strategies to promote creative industries. Within these initiatives it is common for city centres to become the symbolic and economic focus of rejuvenating city-regions. In major cities and towns, this also includes the agglomeration of creative and cultural industries and particularly the development of 'quarters'.

In the light of the assertions by Bell and Jane (2003) the Oldham town centre is the hub of the Oldham borough which embraces seven townships. As Oldham town is the nucleus of the borough, housing council offices and major attractions of both commercial and social activities across the borough are located in the town and its image tends to drive the borough. The town centre provides the metaphorical town gateway as it brings together all the townships by providing a road network, access routes as well as a common meeting place. Many activities that are borough-wide tend to be hosted within the Oldham town and they include the Oldham Pride event and the Asian Business Association awards. Most of the regeneration money channelled into Oldham for development in reversing the deterioration in the infrastructure and the social fabric focused on the town centre and hence pulls the whole

borough together towards a common purpose and helps with community cohesion (Cantle, 2006).

1.4.2 The Research Objectives

In view of the stated aim of the study the following are the specific objectives that the study would seek to meet:

a) To illustrate the nature of stories in the dynamics of the phenomenon for understanding the Oldham brand:

b) To determine the way stories are told to have any impact in shaping a brand:

c) To determine the extent to which places shape their identity through the specific stories that make-up their history:

d) To examine the degree to which the stories that make Oldham's history are reflected in the unfolding re-branding:

e) To illustrate Oldham's branding experience compared to Bradford's experience:

f) To determine the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the re-branding and repositioning of the Oldham brand:

g) To examine stakeholder expectations regarding the image of Oldham and the factors that create the respective views:

h) To create an identity matrix for Oldham in the light of its diversity based on the conceptual framework:

i) To develop a model or framework to better conceptualize the re-branding and repositioning of Oldham with a view to aiding conceptualisation and practice in place branding, and

J) To illustrate the way forward for the Oldham brand in the light of future challenges and the prevailing circumstances:

1.5 Towards a Conceptual Framework of the Study

Chernatony and McDonald (2003: p. 25) suggest that:

> A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which match their needs most closely. Furthermore, its success results from being able to sustain these added values in the face of competition.

Chernatony and McDonald (2003) lay the ground for understanding a brand, particularly in showing that the brand affects the user's choice or perception of the product. It is important to re-emphasize the ability of the item, place or service to meet expectations of the customer or consumer. Consideration of consumer/customer perceptions is a critical aspect in brand building as the stakeholders buy into the appeal of the image of the offering (Ries and Ries, 2003). Oldham has a character shaped by the people who live in the place, the infrastructure, social cohesion, shopping facilities, appearance of commercial and residential buildings, the tourist attractions in the area and the leadership of the borough's messages about where the borough is going (Ritchie, 2001; HDMC, 2008).

The key to understanding the Oldham brand would be the answer to the question, *What does Oldham stand for*? Solomon et al. (2008) argue that brands provide the recognition factor for marketing success in regional, national and international markets. The history of Oldham over the years has gone through a number of phases, among them; a global cotton spinning centre "*King cotton*", dilapidation, riots and ultimately recovery with a promise for a bright future (Ritchie, 2001; Cantle et al, 2001 and 2006).

The researcher sees brands as mental perspectives of goods, people, places, services, ideas, culture, traditions, climate or a combination of the same which give a personality to the entity. One could argue the significance of consumer/customer experience in branding which makes an imprint of the product characteristics in the consumer's mind. The marketer's

desire is to create a favourable attitude towards the targeted audience of that entity (Chernatony and McDonald, 2003). One could argue that most of the tools employed in the marketing practices and branding utilise proven social and scientific tools. However, storytelling which would mostly be considered folklore or matters of superstition and other aspects of socialisation is gaining ground in the recent past (Denning, 2006; Boyle and Baker, 2009; Lewis, 2011). Bradley (2003) asserts that a brand would be as strong as the organisation behind it, related investment and the ability to keep the promise made which is difficult to uphold. Bradley (2003) further asserts that the effective positioning of a brand will largely depend on a synthesis of customer analysis and competitor analysis. Therefore, Oldham needs to be strong in its posture regarding any element of its brand identity. The emphasis is on a robust unique selling proposition (USP) which anchors the brand identity for the town and the borough at large.

A brand has an obligation to the market; it serves, hence, Elliot and Perry (2007) argue that the brand aims to keep the assurance that it meets expectations or promises. Customers, clients, residents or stakeholders have an expectation and the organisation makes a promise to meet the expectations. The relationship between a client and a service provider is epitomised in the expectation and the promise. All business transactions are centred on the expectation to meet a want or a need (Kotler, 1999) and the promise by the brand to meet the expectations. Berry (2000) presents a model, *Figure 1.2* which helps conceptualise the development of a brand in the case of service provisioning. Councils provide services and the model provides scope for a better understanding of the phenomenon.

The challenge in the whole branding process is about developing an image which appeals and supports the marketing efforts (Chernatony and McDonald, 2003). In the case of Berry's model it would appear there is no feedback loop.

Figure 1.2 **Service branding model**
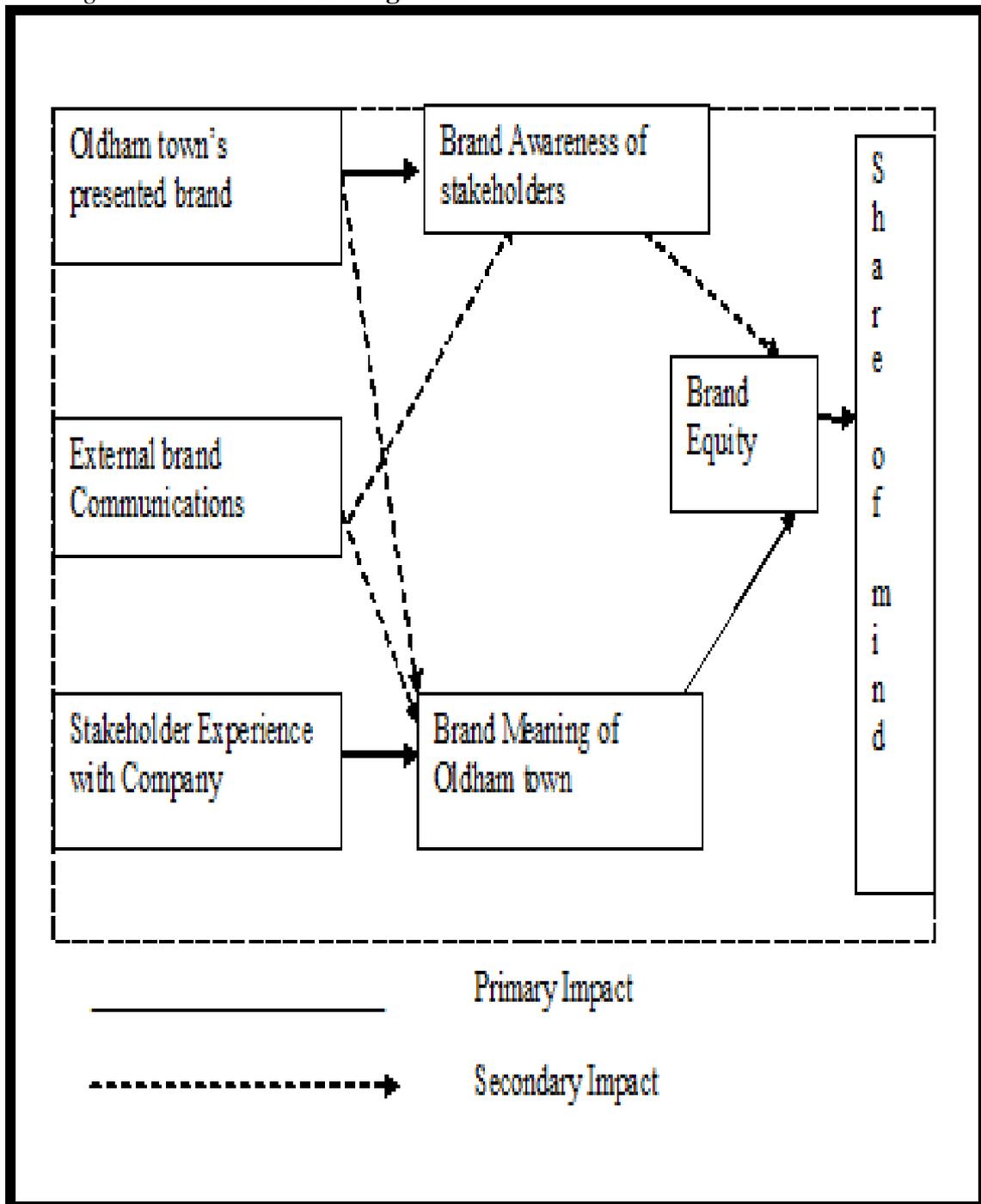
Source: Adapted from Berry (2000: p. 130)

In arguing the ubiquitous nature of brands and logos Moors (2007: p. 1) states that:

> Brands and logos are all around us from clothes we wear and the objects we put in our homes, to the hoardings that line our streets and the adverts that cover buses, taxis and trains. Branding is also increasingly being used as a marketing strategy for non-commercial organisations like political parties and charities, and a means of enhancing the profitability, productivity and efficiency of a range of actors, including sports organisations, celebrities and cities.

Moors (2007) presents brands as a common factor in all spheres of life. The challenge that Oldham faces in its efforts to build a new image, new aspirations, and look forward to a prosperous future for the town and the borough at large is its ability to embrace change. This in turn would impact the image of the place in the eyes of its various stakeholders (Kadembo, 2009b). It is inconceivable that the whole challenge necessitates that the different stakeholders contribute to the process of rebuilding the Oldham brand. The contribution of stakeholders could lead to winning the minds of the clientele; among them, residents, business investors and tourists of Oldham. Giving consideration to a wide range of literature on brand identity, Coupland and Brown (2004) observed that organisational identity encapsulates the inside and outside perspectives of an organisation. In the light of this study the researcher argues that the development of the Oldham brand is created through the use of storytelling or the narrative approach capturing the past, present and future within and without.

The thrust of that process would necessitate capturing the different facets of the place's heritage, plans, major events, prominent personalities, and various other tools integrating them into a cohesive story narrated in a consistent manner for a consistent image and brand (Silver and Hill, 2002; Hansen, 2010). Having considered the background of the study, the researcher would consider the intricacies of branding and storytelling to cement an understanding of the related concepts in developing the conceptual framework of the study.

1.5.1 Branding and Storytelling

Stories are central to our learning and communication and are effective in storing, retrieving and conveying information (Rasmussen, 2005; Lewis, 2011; Boyle and Baker, 2009; Cargiulo, 2006). Cargiulo (2006) further asserts that as the narration of a story needs active participation by the listener and that makes stories the most authentic instrument for human interaction and communication. It could be argued that if stories form part of the human thought process the Oldham story would affect the consumer's mind which impinges on the perception of the Oldham brand. Wilson (2008: p. 133) emphatically argues that:

> We remember stories better than we remember instructions. We engage stories. We participate in them. We are story-driven, story-generating, story-craving, story-telling units. Stories better than anything else fit us. Stories are what our brains use to come to grips with reality.

The argument by Wilson (2008) puts the story at the centre of life, be it in a social, business, technical context, and other scenarios. Situations like learning at school, advertising the business and its products and the management of culture in an organisation can employ stories. Often heroes' stories are used to inspire the employees or in any other context. One could argue that the story is at the centre of brand development for an organisation as it is a mental process of perceiving an entity's image and identity; which could be in the form of a place, a good, a service, a religion, an idea or a person. Complementing this argument Boje and Smith (2006: p. 308) focusing on the iconic stories of Bill Gates and Richard Branson, it was observed that: "To re-narrate is to tether in differences in living the story plurality, into branded elements of identity". This perspective fits in with the task facing the Oldham brand in that the re-branding process necessitates revisiting the stories of the place. Denning (2007) suggests that in the branding process there is a temptation to shed the truth which could be costly to the organisation; as consumers would ultimately experience the reality which may not conform to the story resulting in cognitive dissonance. One could refer to the efforts of Oldham to portray the good and disregard the reality. Therefore, organisations require a clear product differentiation strategy and a continuous improvement process that perpetuates the

positive elements of the entity while addressing the negatives. Denning (2007: p. 121-123) further highlights that there are three stories that can be told about branding that can help authentically communicate the distinctiveness of the organisation's brand which are: "... the story of the firm itself…the story of the products and services themselves…to tell the story of the client" From the submission by Denning (2007) the story of the firm itself would encompass the origin of where the firm came from, its growth, and the values developed over time, and the vision for the future.

The story of the firm becomes the story of the town and the borough of Oldham. The small village of Oldham sitting on a hill represents bravery which underpins the origin of the town (Law, 1999). The story of the products and services themselves in the case of Oldham would point at the heritage of the cotton industry and the engineering industries' offerings; the local government services and the accommodation for households and businesses and other factors (Bateson, 1985). One could argue that the private sector, educational establishments, the national government and local government services would form part of the Oldham story. Denning (2007) argues that organisations such as Google and Starbuck are successful largely because customers tell a story about them more than spending heavily on advertising. Denning (2007: p. 123) states that: "Customers are likely to become brand evangelist only if they are consistently delighted by what the company does." Considering the case for a place the different stakeholders would become mouthpieces of the place for their experience. Where the story of the client is told, this would relate to an individual's story about the place which would be outstanding and would make the place brand an icon (Papadatos, 2006). Success for a brand would largely depend on the supply of good stories (Denning, 2007). Therefore, the story of the Oldham brand will address issues associated with the landscape, the relative position in England and its implications, the landscape, society, security, standard

of living and the attractions of the town and the borough at large. The brand captures factors associated with the offerings that flow from the borough in the form of the landscape, cost effectiveness, quality standards in service provision, and better prospects for the future and the ordinary people who have an experience of Oldham and their perceptions of the future (Hansen, 2010). Boje (2008) argues that every workplace, school, government office or local religious group if not any organisational setup is a storytelling organisation and that wherever people are involved they are known by their story. That in essence is the thrust of the story about where Oldham has been and will be headed: '*The Oldham story in shaping the brand*'. Tsai (2006: p. 655) states that:

> Conceptually, a life story is an internalized narrative integration of past, present, and anticipated future, providing a sense of unity and purpose. Identity construction is a dialogical development process, in which people tell each other stories and listen to stories, in all cultures at all times. As one tells and retells one's life story, one's identity is steadily revised. …Thus, in one period an individual identifies with certain images and narratives, but at another time may switch the identification to other images and narratives.

Therefore, in the case of a town, city, borough or a region, the more stories that are told the more they shape opinions and perceptions of that place. The common story about Oldham's heydays as the world capital for cotton '*king cotton*', the decline in fortunes, subsequent dilapidation, the ugly race upheavals of 2001 and the eventual turnaround reverberate across the borough (Ritchie, 2001). It is in this context that the experiences of Oldham are looked at in the light of the pivotal turning points in its history. In all those stories there are dominant characters who champion the momentum of the time like Ferrantis, Platt Brothers, the Hat Maker, among others (Ritchie, 2001). The key persons provide the rallying point towards a particular position or agenda which in turn consolidates the story of the moment and subsequently make an imprint in the identity of a place; in this case a town and a borough with a great heritage (Hansen, 2010). Aspirations for the future as expressed in policy pronouncements and slogans create a story that shapes programmes and shifts perceptions and expectations for a town (Gibson, 2005; Gotham, 2013). In the case of Oldham the need

for community cohesion, the respective programmes and investments into community facilities have helped raise aspirations and change perceptions (Cantle, 2006). Tsai (2006: pp. 657-658) further points out that:

> Brand managers are also advised to bear in mind that identity is metaphorically comparable to a life story, which is composed of internalized narrative integration of the past, the present, and the anticipated future. …so brand strategists should attend closely to the metamorphoses involved.

These sentiments by Tsai (2006) tie in with the views expressed by Boje (2008) in the arguments that organisations could be described as storytelling. The same argument would hold for people in that individuals live their story wherever they are involved. The concept of branding is diverse in nature and embraces a number of facets. Kavaratzis (2005) presents three dimensions of place branding which are; geographical nomenclature, product-place co-branding and branding as place management. In the case of Oldham the geographical nomenclature epitomises the town on a hill at the heart of a diverse borough of seven townships; product place co-branding captures the king cotton tag of the heydays of Oldham in the 1930's and 1940's (Law, 1999).

It would appear that branding and place management relates to the efforts of OMBC and the Oldham Partnership in rebranding and repositioning Oldham. The whole notion of branding essentially captures these facets in the organisation so that ultimately the integration of the facets (various stories) presents an image that encapsulates the Oldham brand. In order to capture the core of the branding of Oldham the researcher is guided by the conceptual framework presented in section 1.4.2. Schau and Muniz (2006) pointed out that stories are an instrument for transmitting meaning about experiences; hence the Oldham brand is an amalgam of stories underpinning the image of the place.

1.5.2 The Four Frameworks of Research

Quinlan (2011) provides the four frameworks approach for research which guides students in building the different blocks of the research process. Quinlan (2011) identifies the conceptual frame (centred on the well thought research question) which in turn directs the other three frameworks. Quinlan (2011: p. 5) further explains that: "The first framework, the conceptual framework, directs the development of the other three frameworks, the theoretical, the methodological framework and the analytical framework." In this study the four frameworks is employed as a guide to developing the thought process and carrying out the study. The different frameworks are the building blocks for the study. One could argue that the frameworks present the researcher with a reference for the effective execution of a study of this magnitude.

Figure 1.3 The Four Framework Approach of the Study
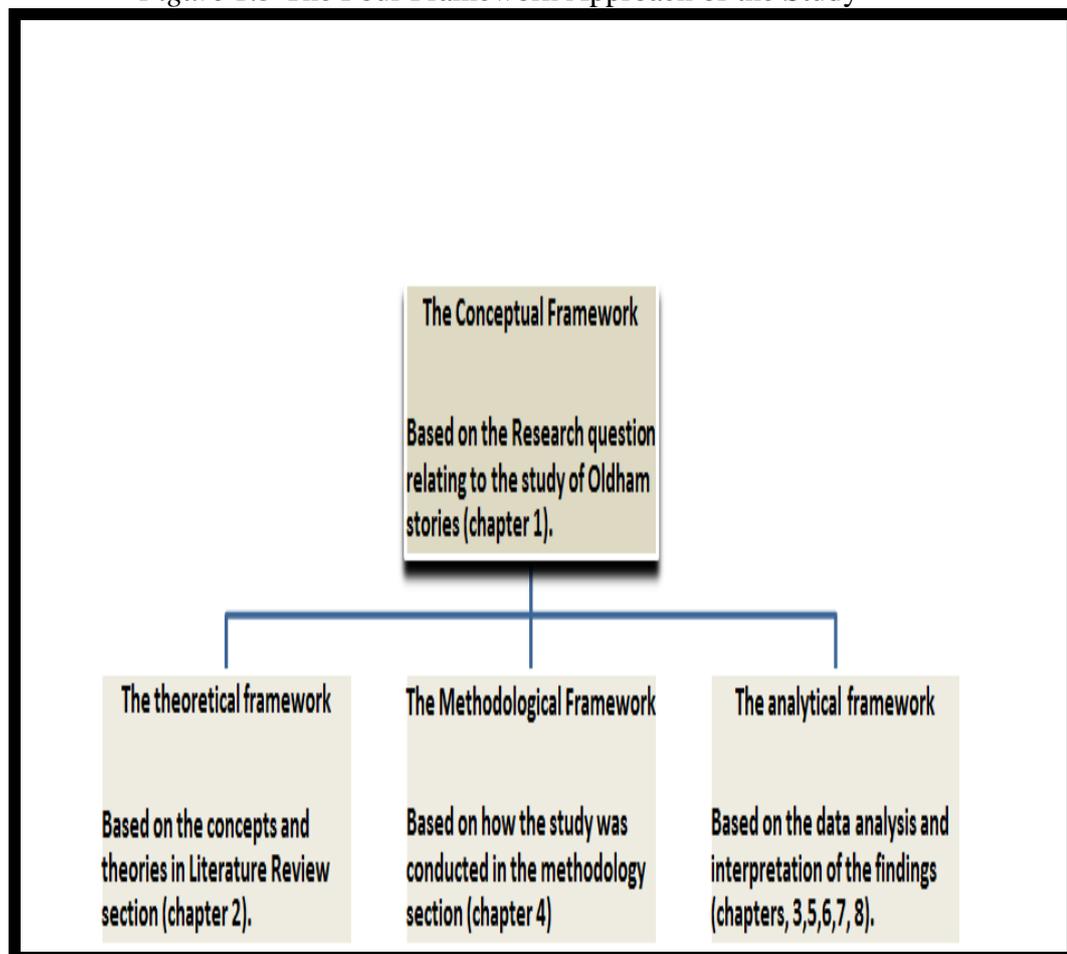
Source: Adapted from Quinlan (2011: p.7)

From the initial review of the relevant literature in respect of the phenomenon on the essence of the storytelling/narrative based brand development approach; a conceptual framework has been conceived as a basis for conducting the study and enhancing the researcher's understanding of the intricacies of the process. The author derived the model from a broad reflection of the issues from the literature review, experience in research, publishing, teaching and consultancy. The elaborate discussion on the ramifications of the different elements of the model is undertaken in the literature review section of the thesis. Denning (2006: p. 43) identifies one of the patterns of storytelling as: "Communicating who the firm is – branding". This adds an authoritative voice from an expert writer and practitioner with an in-depth knowledge of storytelling at the World Bank. In the case of Oldham, relevant issues are suggested by Denning (2006: p. 43) who writes that: "…Sparking action (springboard stories)… Leading people into the future" patterns of storytelling. These approaches are necessitated by the need for action to address the poor standing of the Oldham brand (Hemisphere, 2008; Ritchie, 2001; Cantle, 2001 and 2006) and securing a progressive future for the town and the borough.

In order to give a solid foundation to the study a conceptual framework is provided following a review of related concepts. The conceptual framework is meant to help focus the thought process and enable the researcher to relate to the different factors underpinning the essence of the narrative in developing a place brand. Hansen (2010) acknowledges the complex nature of branding a place by alluding to the different target groups which make it difficult to unify the brand strategy. The conceptual framework presented subscribes to this view in suggesting four pillars of the storytelling approach to place branding. Writing on the dynamics of branding a small Danish island called Bornholm, Hansen (2010: p. 269) further asserts that: "Hence identifying the essence of a nation or a place and communicating it in a coherent

manner is crucial for successful place branding." Hudson (2011: p. 1538) adds an important dimension to the storytelling approach in arguing that:

> Brand heritage is an emerging concept within the marketing discipline, which suggests that the historical status of older companies is often explicitly linked to their brand identity and consumer appeal.

While Hudson (2011) makes reference to the heritage and history of companies, the same would apply to the conceptualisation of a place like Oldham.

Furthermore, discussions of the conceptual framework in respect of the formulation of the study and other related frameworks are provided in the literature review, the methodology and the analysis of findings sections of the study. Concepts are considered in the light of the theoretical framework to inform the study by employing the literature review to guide the study. Quinlan (2011) argues that the epistemological ethos of research is rooted in a conceptual framework, which in turn yields new perspectives that contribute to the body of knowledge for the respective discipline.

For the purpose of this study, a conceptual framework has been developed from the research statement provided. The focus of the statement is the idea of using the storytelling approach in the development of the Oldham brand. While the statement makes specific reference to the Oldham brand, this does not preclude applications of the storytelling or narrative approach to any entity. The related concepts of the study include the narrative or storytelling approach which seek to highlight how this tool is often ignored in traditional thinking and applications of management and marketing; the concept of branding is mainly about the image and the extent to which the respective image provides a unique identity; the case study refers to the approach to the study; Oldham as a place has a story which is an amalgam of a number of sub-stories; place branding is a complex process that gives consideration to a number of tools and stakeholders.

The conceptual framework presents the main issue under investigation which is the use of the storytelling approach in the development of the Oldham brand. The elements identified help in understanding the dynamics of the study and its related elements; and these encompass Oldham as a place, branding, the case study approach, the narrative/storytelling approach and place marketing.

Figure 1.4 The Conceptual Framework

Branding

Case Study

Oldham

Research Statement

This study is focused on the storytelling approach or the narrative in the development of the Oldham brand.

The storytelling / narrative approach

Town brand
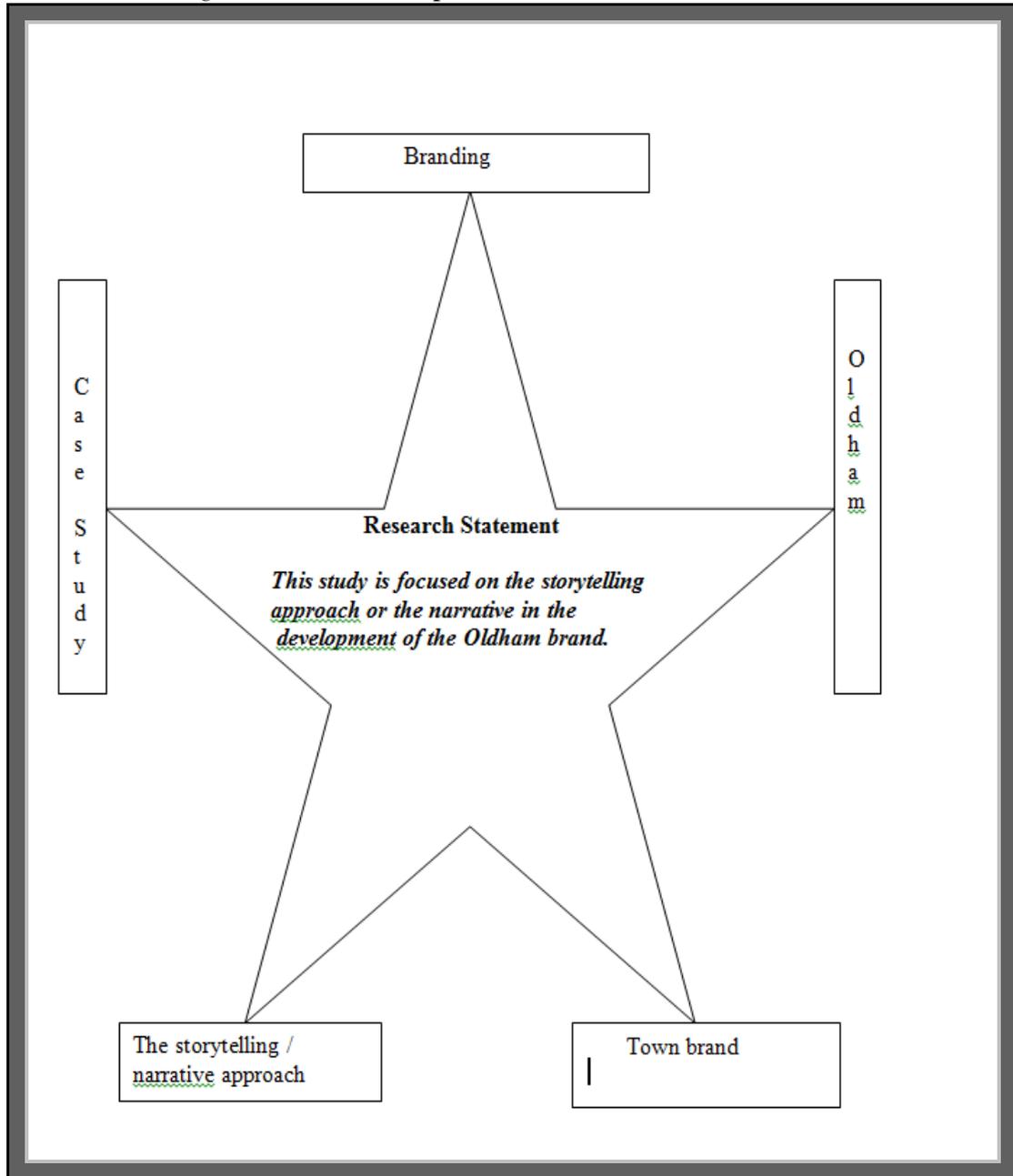
1.6 **Chapter Summaries and Structure of the Thesis**

Chapter 1 sets out the study by providing the background, the study aim, objectives and the conceptual frame of the study. The nature and current state of the Oldham brand, its historic developments are highlighted and help put into perspective the extent of the challenges to be dealt with in trying to rebrand Oldham. Besides the conceptual framework, other related research frameworks are presented which include the theoretical framework, the methodological framework, and the analytical framework.

Chapter 2 presents the literature review, which captures the theoretical arguments, models and the contrasts and agreements in the relevant concepts underpinning the study.

Chapter 3 profiles Oldham's dynamics over the time of its existence and the transformation the borough has gone through as its stories unfolded based on documented evidence about the borough.

Chapter 4 presents the methodology employed in the study and captures the concept of research, the research philosophy, ethical issues and the design of the current study.

Chapter 5 and 6 provide a summary of the findings from the narrations by storytellers, from the questionnaire and from the focus group discussion responses providing a range of perspectives extracted through different methods.

Chapter 7 is the discussion of the findings which provides an interpretation of findings in the light of the relevant theories investigated.

Chapter 8 completes the study with conclusions and recommendations. The chapter also provides insights into the contributions of the study to the body of knowledge on the ethos of storytelling in developing a town brand

Figure 1.5 Outline of objectives and respective chapters

Objective a: To illustrate the nature of stories in the dynamics of the phenomenon for understanding the Oldham brand	→	Chapter 1, 2
Objective b: To determine the way stories are told to have any impact in shaping a brand	→	Chapters 2, 3, 4, 5
Objective c: To determine the extent to which places shape their identity through the specific stories that make-up their history	→	Chapter 1, 2, 3, 5
Objective d: To examine the degree to which the stories that make Oldham's history are reflected in the unfolding re-branding	→	Chapter 2, 3, 5, 6
Objective e: To illustrate Oldham's branding experience compared to Bradford's experience	→	Chapter 3 and 5
Objective f: To determine the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the re-branding and repositioning of the Oldham brand	→	Chapter 2, 5, 6, 7
Objective g: To examine stakeholder expectations regarding the image of Oldham and the factors that create the respective views	→	Chapter 2, 6, 7
Objective h: To create an identity matrix for Oldham in the light of its diversity based on the conceptual framework	→	Chapter 7
Objective i: To develop a model or framework to better conceptualize the re-branding and repositioning of Oldham with a view to aiding conceptualisation and practice in place branding	→	Chapter 7, 8
Objective j: To illustrate the way forward for the Oldham brand in the light of future challenges and the prevailing circumstances	→	Chapters 6,7,8

Chapter Two

Literature Review on the dynamics of Storytelling and the Branding of Places

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

There are many debates and discussions on the notion of storytelling or the narrative used in marketing, management, leadership and various other aspects of human functionalities (Denning, 2006; Lewis, 2011; Kadembo, 2012). Storytelling is gaining acceptance as an important tool in management and leadership studies and practice (Denning, 2006; Boje, 2008; Wilson, 2008; Barker and Boyle, 2009; Lewis, 2011). A number of authors put forward arguments underpinning the criticality of stories and storytelling and below are a few perspectives emphasizing the role of stories:

> Story is central to human understanding- it makes life liveable, because without a story, there is no identity, no self, no other. ...Consequently, humans are drawn to a story through our residence in the narrative. (Lewis, 2011: p. 505)
>
> …storytelling, …wins a decisive foothold in the discussion on how brands could/ be shaped in the future. Thus, the story of a brand has the power to strengthen a brand both externally and internally. (Breda et al., 2008: p. 82)
>
> Branding, in its more generic sense, is almost as old as recorded time. …We normally associate branding with products and processes, but in reality, branding extends to everything. (Anver, 2009: p.12)

This chapter critically examines the theoretical underpinnings of the study. Consideration is given to relevant theories, principles, concepts and frameworks that guide the conceptualisation of storytelling. There are various practices and processes which underpin key issues in conducting the literature review (Easterby-Smith, et al., 2009).

There are essential aspects of the application of storytelling or the narrative approach in branding. Silverman (2000: p. 227) in Easterby-Smith, et. al. (2009: p. 31) presents the important questions that provide the guidance for the content of the literature review in arguing that:

What do you want to know about the topic? What do you have to say critically about what is already known? Has anyone else ever done anything exactly the same as what is proposed? Has anyone else done anything that is related? Where does your work fit in with what has gone before? Why is your research worth doing in the light of what has already been done?

The questions raised by Silverman (2000) provide the basis for critical analysis of the body of literature on the research topic. Arksey and O'Malley (2005) differentiate the focused systematic review from scoping literature review; where they provide the five stages in scoping as; firstly the identification of the research question; secondly, identifying relevant studies; thirdly, selecting the study; fourthly, gathering the data and fifth, organising, condensing and reporting. In this study both the systematic review and scoping were employed to give an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. In a research on storytelling and branding Silverman (2007: p. 38) provides five stages one goes through in story branding which are:

… how to find stories, how to dig into them to uncover hidden patterns and themes, how to select those stories that need to be reinforced, how to craft memorable stories and how to embody stories positively with attitudes, thoughts and behaviours.

In the current study, close attention is given to the use of the story as a branding tool for Oldham. Holloway and Freshwater (2007) present storytelling as a tool for understanding vulnerable people. In this study particular consideration is given to the application of storytelling in place marketing and branding. In trying to enrich the literature review of the study, the researcher adds specific questions that would help better conceptualise the application of stories in branding such as; Do stories create brands? Are there any specific ways by which stories could be told so that they have an impact on the targeted clientele? Would the storytelling or narrative based branding apply to places and goods? Does the storytelling approach to branding offer a better approach to branding than the conventional branding approaches employed by marketers? In raising the respective questions, one seeks to explore the different arguments relating to the authenticity of storytelling in developing a brand. Through the review of the available literature the study provides an in-depth

understanding of the various applications of the storytelling approach and how it is applied to the development of a brand.

Writing on the adoption of the marketing mix, Yudelson (1999: p. 64) points out that: "Branding, as a value-adding part of the product, performs by reducing search time or by guaranteeing expectations." Branding differentiates a product (in the form of a good, a service, an idea, a person or a place or a combination of the same) so that the product identity and selling could be enhanced (Chernatony and McDonald, 2003; Ries and Ries, 2003). The review of literature takes into account the increasing deposits of literature relating to the notion of storytelling or narrative in developing a brand with a focus on Oldham. The different submissions on the phenomenon of branding are critically evaluated to provide a better understanding. Melawar and Karaosmanoglu (2006: p. 848) present seven dimensions of brand identity as: "… corporate communication, corporate design, corporate culture, behaviour, corporate structure, industry identity and corporate strategy." One would be prompted to think of a place as an organisation and would need to employ the dimensions of brand identity in enhancing its brand as Melawar and Karaosmanoglu (2006) argue. Oldham as a place differs from a good or a service, but the underlying principle is the need for an attractive brand that appeals to the stakeholders in cases that necessitate exchanges of value (Chernatony and McDonald, 2003; Ries and Ries, 2003). Mick (1986) sees the consumer world as a web of signs, symbols and meaning within a cultural context (space and time) and refers to it as semiotics. This view would mean that stakeholders of Oldham have diverse mental pictures of the place depending on their background.

Different perspectives are considered on branding, regarding definitions, models and instruments for shaping the branding process. Specific studies that link storytelling and place

branding are limited, but there are huge deposits of literature on storytelling and on storytelling and branding. The literature review feeds into the broader theoretical framework for understanding the concepts and the operationalisation of branding as a key tenet of marketing. In the broader understanding of branding and storytelling, Gargiulo (2005: p. 23) observed that: "Stories are fundamental to the way we communicate, learn, and think". Branding is central to business, so the story is critical to branding as it helps the process of human understanding across every facet of life (Denning, 2006; McLellan, 2006; Boje, 2008; Lewis, 2011; Hansen, 2011). As for the branding of a place which is the focus of this study Silver and Hill (2002: p.10) point out that: "… the concept of branding works easily for a specific place and purpose." In this instance the stories are considered in the light of their impact or influence in developing a brand and the degree to which they can be trans-generational, which is the notion that they cut across generations (Breda et al, 2008).

One could argue that human interface with any phenomenon; physical or intangible is developed around identity; be it generic, specific or branded. There are four sub-constructs of corporate identity which are the communication and visual identity, behaviour, corporate culture and market conditions which are as strategic as any other valuable resource and also a competitive tool (Melawar and Jenkins, 2002). Cotton and Griffiths (2007) argue that the world can be understood through telling stories; brands can therefore be better understood when their story is told.

One could point out that when people meet the first thing they want to do is to identify each other; when they eat in a restaurant they would like to know the type of menu; if they are buying materials they would want to identify the manufacturer or brand of the item and if they visit a place they would want to give the place an identity; a name or some characteristic

that distinguishes it from other places. Wedding cards sometimes clearly state the shop outlet from where to purchase gifts the wedding couple would prefer; for example outlets like Selfridges, Debenhams, Marks and Spencer would be mentioned as preferred. Everything or anything that is a noun can be branded (Ries and Ries, 2003; Versi, 2009).

Rij (1996) makes a strong argument on the core of messages people are exposed to; as represented in visible things and mental images. Rij (1996) further points out those stories come through our senses, as well as other senses and customers take them into their minds intuitively. A brand image is like a DNA code that is embedded in people (Rij, 1996). Subsequently, this is how the goals or vision and skills are communicated to customers in a rather indirect manner or intuitively through nonverbal symbols (Rij, 1996). The effects of storytelling are similar to parables in the bible in that they transmit values that project the image that the organisation seeks to portray (Denning, 2006 and Wilson, 2008). One could argue that the Christian bible and the Quaran for muslims are stories that people passionately pursue as the core of their being and those doctrines define how the respective followers project themselves. Subsequently, the two religions give their followers images and identities which are tantamount to branding the followers according to their religious story.

A number of authors observed that the role of brand managers has shifted from finding adjectives for positioning to developing the brand narrative through storytelling; which increasingly has become central to understanding the phenomenon of story-based branding (Ries and Ries, 2003; Srivasan, 2005; Denning, 2006; Boje, 2008; Versi, 2009). In this study it could be argued that the Oldham Council would need to rethink and re-story Oldham in the light of the paradigm shift epitomised in the change in the industrial structure; diversity in the ethnicity of the population; social stratification and the infrastructure of Oldham (Cantle,

2006). In a study of the Danish island of Bornholm, the researcher, Hansen (2010: p. 269) observes major challenges that would be true to Oldham, that: "Bornholm struggles with transition from a production society to a knowledge society." The annals of history have recorded that Oldham was once "king cotton" (Ritchie, 2001; Cantle, 2006) but to this day the once vibrant place has lost its attractiveness. The dearth of the cotton industry and the flight of manufacturing concerns bankrupted the economic hub of the Oldham borough which is the Oldham town.

The application of the narrative or storytelling approach in branding is meant to aid in creativity and also provide the sequencing in developing a phenomenon (Josephsson et al, 2006). Boje (2008) points out that every place or entity is a storytelling organisation and that individuals live a story wherever they are involved, and they are known by their story. However, it is not always the story that people want told that they live; hence the need to change or re-story the story (Boje, 2008; Boje and Smith, 2010). This is the challenge that Oldham faces in its efforts to renew its image and consequently its brand given the various twists and turns that the town and the wider borough endured and continues to endure. Breda et al. (2008) argue that the story creates a bond over the organisation and its stakeholders and has the power to enhance within and externally to the organisation. Wheatley (2007) suggests that organisations are spiritual and that the story needs to give consideration to the human element which requires a story that recognises that organisations are living. Cotton and Griffiths (2007: p. 548) state that: "… and the search for personal 'truths' through story can empower individuals."

This study seeks to understand destination marketing, and more specifically the branding of places. It would be incomplete to try to understand the phenomenon of story-based branding

without a thorough and comprehensive examination of the notion of both the stories that shape branding and how effective branding is realised in a commercial sense (Denning, 2006; Boje, 2008). Kay (2006) emphasizes the importance of branding in arguing that branding is warranted in view of the fact that it acts as a bridge to most marketing decisions (Kay: 2006). One could argue that a strong brand gives a competitive edge in marketing by making it easier for developing distribution networks, brand extensions and making it easier for customers to accept new products and also make it easier for pricing flexibility.

This chapter explores the arguments and related concepts on how stories underpin the understanding of theories as well as how the notion of narration/storytelling shapes the brand in any given phenomenon. The review of the literature helps to develop a theoretical framework for the study. The theoretical framework is employed in the analysis of the findings. The key issues that are captured in the study encompass place marketing, exploiting the narrative or storytelling in brand development and the criteria or models for effective branding.

The literature review also encompasses the strategic importance of branding in place marketing and the broad concept of planning and architecture. Kay (2006: p.743) states that:

> As associative representations, brands are used to explain why products and services have meaning for consumers. The function of a brand is to create meaning, and there are myriad ways of making meaning 'happen'.

Therefore, the literature review explores the different ways by which the branding of a place could be enhanced in the light of the body of literature available and shed light on the meaning of a place and its related intricacies, which in this case is Oldham.

2.2 Understanding Branding and its implications

The word brand derives from the Norse word 'to burn' and has traditionally been associated with identifying farm animals in the 1950's; also applied to symbolising shame for gallery slaves, fugitives, gypsies, vagabonds, religious zealots, decorations for tribal affiliations, origins of products, and other related entities (Bernstein, 2003; Davies, 2005; Christensen, 2009). In the 1990's branding gained ground as an institutional practice attributed to the rise of right wing policies in USA and UK (Moors, 2007). Therefore, branding has a historic significance which permeates modern day marketing and is at the heart of marketing communications (Ries and Ries, 2003; Dominiak, 2004). Kotler et al. (2005: p. 549) define a brand as: "…a name, term, sign symbol or design, or a combination of these, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group and to differentiate them from those of competitors." The core of branding is the unique identification of the entity in question (Bernstein, 2003). Pendleton, et al. (2010) identify two aspects of a brand; that is the general brand impressions (GBI) which are about the company-wide association and the brand specific associations (BSA) which relate to specific items. These aspects make it difficult to deal with a brand as these elements are relative to the user of the product. One could suggest that branding makes it easier to differentiate, especially given market clutter in the complex world of business. There is variety in goods, services and places, hence branding makes identification easier for marketing purposes. One is prompted to imagine how products in a supermarket could be identified if they were not branded, and in the same vein the same question could be raised about identifying places. In advancing the same argument Choudhury (2001: p. 1) says that a brand is:

> … a way of creating an identity for a product, somewhat like identifying a specific person within a large crowd. …A brand is essentially the sum total of the particular satisfaction that it delivers to the consumer who buys that specific brand. This sum total relates in its entirety to its name, ingredients, price, packaging, distribution, reputation, and ultimately to its performance.

One could suggest that effective branding results in a clear differentiation of the offering (service, good, idea, person, place, etc.) in the marketplace. Dominiak (2004) refers to the matching of the value promise of the organisation and the customer's expectation as the focus of branding. Arguing the case for branding and sense-making in respect of identity, Sillince and Brown (2009: p. 1832) argue that:

> … socially and symbolically constructed to achieve identity transformation and management … which are phenomenological, socially constructed, rhetorical constructs…occur in conversations between insiders and outsiders and may be communicated in various ways.

Green (2005) encourages caution by pointing out that branding is not just about a logo or mere identity but about recognisable tangible and intangible qualities of the phenomenon. Writing on the experience of Starbucks CCO (Corey duBrowa), Bruell (2011) emphatically argues that the purpose of logos as storytelling. The branding of goods and services provides a personality which determines whether or not the goods and services appeal to the targeted market (Mirza, 2012). Branding has become so powerful that virtually everything that has value is branded in marketing and those brands are powerful assets that need careful management and exist in the minds of customers (Ries and Ries, 2003; Armstrong et al., 2009).

Through branding, products develop characteristics and attract connotations that resonate with the personality of the product when mentioned in certain situations (Mirza, 2012); an "outward manifestation of corporate identity" (Bernstein, 2003: p. 1135). Those qualities become the basis for shaping the image of the goods and services or place in question which form the core of the brand equity. Those associations of the brand provide the basis for loyalty and consumption of the related goods and services (Ries and Ries, 2003). In this regard one would examine the nature of the Oldham brand and its brand equity in order to make sense of it. Rij (1996: p.20) says that:

A brand image is conveyed in messages embedded in a communication style, a configuration of symbols, and content. Customers use the differences between brand images to make their choices among products that are essentially alike in a material sense.

To that end one would reflect on the markings from the past that Oldham has which have left imprints on its standing such as, the tag of 'king cotton', riots town, a Lancashire town on a hill, etc. (Cantle, 2006). Hankinson (2004) highlights the increasing importance of marketing and branding of towns and cities with the objective of making them attractive. There are mainly two types of tourists in the form of business and leisure, which Oldham town would desire to attract. Christensen (2009) further highlights that there are four core elements to branding which are:

a. Strategic branding – which address the broad corporate direction of the borough

b. Marketing branding – which differentiates the town and borough from other places

c. Employee branding – which provides employees with an identity to project themselves. Employees can be equated to residents when dealing with a place.

d. Stakeholder branding – which enables social dialogue about what the organisation stands for.

Strategic branding is underpinned by a number of factors as illustrated by Christensen (2009); but one could argue that the list of elements is not comprehensive. The researcher would include the consumer values and perceptions; and also include the positioning of the brand (Choudhury, 2001; Ries and Ries, 2003; Kadembo, 2009a, 2009b). The model for strategic branding provided by Christensen (2009) illustrates that effective branding is not serendipity or mere coincidence but a systematic formulation of an image that can sell. The recent efforts to reposition and rebrand Oldham mirror this approach in that *Oldham Beyond*, the strategic blue print for the development of the town and the wider borough is central to the shaping of the new image of Oldham. The borough's vision was centred on the town and was articulated together with the mission and values; core competences and the value proposition. Ultimately Ghodesawar (2008: p. 4) states that: ".... sources and levels of

knowledge such as awareness, attributes, benefits, images, thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and experiences get linked to a brand and its understanding by the consumer."

The marketing and branding process necessitate the understanding of the fundamental values of the place that differentiate it from other places (Hansen, 2010; Lichtou et al, 2010). In the case of Oldham there is the heritage, the terrain of the area, the race mixture, the infrastructure, architecture and the historic developments that project an image of the organisation (Urbed, 2004). The Oldham brand could benefit from developing branding community, a non-geographic network of people who prefer a brand commonly bound by shared consciousness, common rituals and traditions and a sense of moral responsibility for the group (Fuller, et al., 2008). Employee branding centres on the corporate value system in shaping the dynamics of the organisation and the culture which captures the organisational ethos (Christensen, 2009). As far as Oldham Council's practices are concerned the logo has the inscription "Oldham Council" almost implying that the identity is for the council rather than for the place. The symbolic logo and the ethos of "oneness" have been emphasized as critical to the culture of the council employees (HDMC, 2008). The employees are making every effort to operate according to the values encapsulated in the new logo.

Stakeholder branding seeks to align the brand with the different interested parties to the organisation. The diverse nature of Oldham town and the wider borough embrace a significant number of stakeholders making it difficult to get an agreed position. Schmitt and Geus (2006) highlight the elements that determine the consumer's purchase of a brand as brand knowledge variables which influence perceptions and value brands, brand association variables which mirror the extent to which a consumer identifies with a given brand, and brand outcome variables which relate to present and future consumer behaviour.

In the light of the submission by Schmitt and Geus (2006) it would necessitate understanding stakeholders' knowledge of Oldham, their association with the place and the outcomes of the interfaces with it. This study would assume that stakeholders have limited knowledge; and are not likely to be rational and would therefore be subjective in approach (Rhodes and Brown, 2005). Macrae (1991) identified six intertwined elements that underpin value communicators as the symbol, rituals, aloof snob, belonging, legend status and heritage of the goods. One could perceive these elements as positive associations of a brand which create an appeal to a customer. The fundamentals of branding show that branding is strategic to the organization. Spry et al. (2011) make reference to brand credibility and the effects of sub-brands on the main brand; a submission that mirrors the stakeholder groups and townships which define the Oldham brand. Balmer and Gray (2003) highlight the strategic importance of corporate branding and various schools project brands as marks which show ownership; image development; symbolize key values; tools for building individual identities and a tool for great experiencing in usage.

2.2.1 The Strategic importance of branding

Branding is synonymous with value for exchange (Macrae, 1989; Ries and Ries, 2003). Askegaard and Bengtsson (2005) state that the brand presents the right face of the organisation to project to the market. Branding is central to business as the marketing efforts are not directed at merely selling generic products but branded products (Choudhury, 2001; Ries and Ries, 2003). Christensen (2009) clearly articulates the strategic importance of branding is necessary for marketing success as illustrated in *Figure 2.1*.

It could be argued that the issues identified by Christensen (2009) would be appropriate in the conceptualisation of the branding of a place since a place needs to engage in strategic

planning. The strategic decisions shape the brand (Paddison, 1993; Hankison, 2005). Mirza (2012) raises the notion of leadership branding where the leadership of the organisation's approach transforms the organisation's practices into a consistent performance that defines the organisational brand.

Figure 2.1 Strategic Vision as a Foundation
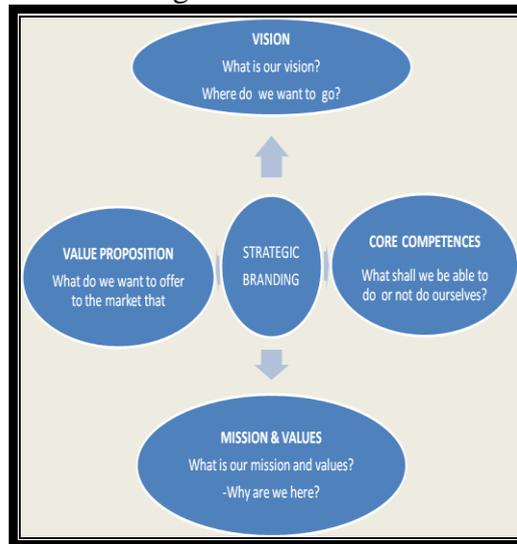
Source: Adapted from Christensen (2009: p. 26)

While the use of branding terminology might be missing the jargon employed by towns in their planning, the decisions made in the strategic planning process would affect the town brand. The framework in *Figure* 2.1 by Christensen (2009) provides a sound model for understanding the broader picture in respect of the strategic importance of branding. It could be argued that the strategic thought process of the organisation leads to the development of the brand or more appropriately defines the brand or culminates in the brand (Hankinson, 2005). Christensen (2009) would concur with Chernatony and McDonald (2003: p. 25) who suggest that:

> A successful brand is an identifiable product, service, person or place, augmented in such a way that the buyer or user perceives relevant, unique added values which match their needs most closely. Furthermore, its success results from being able to sustain these added values in the face of competition.

Chernatony and McDonald (2003) view a brand as a functional device; a symbolic device; a shorthand device; a legal device; a strategic device; a differentiating device; a risk reducer;

and a sign of ownership (by an organisation). Sterne (1999) argues that a brand is not the tangibles or other attempts to look attractive but the promise supported by the organisation. This long list of suggestions of what a brand could be may lead to misconceptions about what a brand represents. One could add that a brand is anything that helps uniquely identify a product or entity. This study argues that the key in branding is the realisation of the unique identity a brand gives to a product so that it may yield a differential personality to the product. The notion of branding is applicable to place marketing (Hansen, 2010). It is important to re- emphasize the ability of the item, place or service to meet expectations as a critical aspect in brand building (Chernatony and McDonald, 2003).

The preoccupation with branding may emphasize differentiation while failing to satisfy and that will not work as the primary purpose of any product (a good, a service, an idea, a place, a person or a combination of the same) is to meet a need or want but not to merely offer a unique name. To this end Rowley (2004) suggests that the importance of branding in business is increasing and can be enhanced by digitising the process. It is therefore the researcher's contention that effective branding is anchored in effective product performance epitomised in an identity to differentiate that product (Ries and Ries, 2003). Contrary to the submission by Chernatony and McDonald (2003) a different perspective is given by Aaker (1997) who suggests five dimensions of a brand's identity as sincerity; excitement; competence; sophistication; and ruggedness.

Oldham has a character shaped by the people who live in the area, the infrastructure, social cohesion, shopping facilities, appearance of commercial and residential buildings, the tourist attractions in the area and the leadership of the borough's messages about where the borough is going (Hemisphere, 2008; Hansen 2010). This ties in with the submission by Klijn et al.,

(2012: p. 504) who state that: "Branding then is truly an interactive process." One could perceive understanding the Oldham brand as the answer to the question, *What does Oldham stand for*? This is one of the key strategic questions, that is the basis for the mission and values of the organisation, which in this case is the Oldham town and the wider borough. Solomon et al. (2008) argue that brands provide the recognition factor for marketing success in regional, national and international markets. Ultimately the core of the whole branding process is underpinned in what Rij (1996: p. 22) writes as:

> Brand power is characterized by the distinctive nature of the brand personality, by the appeal and relevance of its identity, by the consistency of its communication, and by the integrity of its identity. Brand power is evolutionary so as to remain contemporary for each new generation of consumers.

Rij (1996) highlights essential aspects of brand power which could be explained as standing out in the market clutter, i.e., having a strong personality; attractiveness of image to the targeted market; articulation of brand personality and genuineness of offering. Hankinson (2005: p. 25) presents a strong argument in respect of the branding of places, suggesting that:

> First, places exist both as holistic entities or nuclear products and as collections of contributory elements or individual services and facilities. The job of the destination marketers is to select a portfolio from these individual elements to form the basis of a destination product. Second, the place product can be assembled uniquely by each visitor from their experiences of a chosen set of individual contributory elements as referenced from Ashworth and Voogt (1990). Third, places are multi-functional. The same place can offer historical buildings, shopping facilities, sports facilities and entertainment venues.

Hankinson (2005) presents the branding of places as a holistic picture incorporating a complex range of issues. In the re-branding and repositioning of Oldham it is important to take into cognisance the arguments by Bell and Jayne (2003) who highlight the central role of the town or city in a region's development. The Oldham town centre is the hub of both social and economic activities in the borough making it the epicentre of the borough; that makes it the focal point for development across the borough (Jane and Bell, 2003). The regeneration of Oldham has changed the features of the borough in many respects, that is repositioning and re-branding the town and the borough at large (Kadembo, 2009).

In view of the aforesaid it is important to note that brands are mental perspectives of goods, people, places, services, ideas or a combination of the same which give a personality (Fog et al., 2002; Klijn et al., 2012). Green (2006) views brands as graphic identifiers, though it is often applied in commercial contexts but that is not the full story as branding also includes people and places. The desire for the branding process is to create a favourable attitude of the entity or item to the targeted audience of the respective entity. Lindstrom (2008) draws a parallel between the notion of branding and religion and refers to branding as the new religion given its pull in attracting customers or clients. Green (2005: p. 278) states that a brand is: "… an entity where there is widespread recognition of its tangible and intangible qualities." Therefore, going by the definition by Green (2005), the identity and recognition are of paramount importance in the definition of a brand. The deposits of theory and related counter arguments are mainly about systematic, scientifically proven models as a basis of thinking instead of storytelling which would mostly be rendered to folklore and matters of superstition and other aspects of socialisation (Lewis, 2011). Bradley (2003) asserts that a brand would be as strong as the organisation behind it, related investment and the ability to keep the promise made which is difficult to uphold; and the leadership behind the brand (Mirza, 2012). Bradley (2003) further asserts that the effective positioning of a brand will largely depend on the synthesis of customer analysis and competitor analysis. In line with the same arguments Tsai (2006: p. 651) points out that:

> By combining symbolic concepts of archetypes in the representation of a brand, marketing strategists can potentially transform products from lifeless objects into icons that are exciting, aspirational, and meaningful.

This view explains the universality of the human race in interpreting images, i.e., the convergence of values and emotions (Macrae, 1991). One could argue that brands are tools of expression and thereby contribute towards social stratification. This amounts to social classes projecting associations with the brands they identify with. Ultimately, branding is not

a matter of just the words and pictures but the total delivery of the promise made to consumers (Papadatos, 2006; Hamish and Pringle, 2008). In this respect the researcher is prompted to pose questions about Oldham's promise to its stakeholders. One could argue the diversity of the branding of a place given the range of stakeholders Oldham deals with. Papadatos (2006: p. 383) identified four characteristics of the storytelling brand which are:

> Anticipation…..The story starts with a hope for the future; Crisis…There will always be a downside in the story; Help along the way…Something happens to save the situation from the adverse developments; … The goal achieved…The purpose is fulfilled and celebrated.

These observations mirror the experience of Oldham over the years where cycles of success in a booming economy are contrasted by a crisis of race confrontations and violence. If Oldham had no hope there would be no strategic blueprint for the future, codenamed, *Oldham Beyond.* The struggles the town and the borough have endured are birthed in the hope for a better future (Cantle, 2006). The researcher observed that since the founding of the Oldham village crises have come and gone and to this day Oldham's history paints pictures of times of crises like the riots alluded to in much of the background to the town contrasted by success like in the case of the cotton spinning dominance. In the aftermath of the riots European funds were provided as part of the regeneration programme to renew the borough (Cantle, 2006). Through the history of Oldham some goals have been achieved and that accounts for the positive stories after the riots. Ultimately the notion of branding is about shaping views about a given phenomenon, Kar and Samantarai (2011: p. 132) write that: "Values are formed from various contacts with persons, stories and situations, and learning. Organizational climate impacts individual behavioural pattern, which affects group behaviour."

It would follow that the development of the Oldham brand would be affected by a range of factors that impact on the image and perceptions within a given society, and there are multitudes of issues to be considered. Motsi et al. (2006) in an article on corporate branding

conclude that in the course of re-branding employees struggle with the alignment of values and recommend the consideration of sub-cultures in developing brands. Iglesias and Bonet (2012) acknowledge the role of stakeholders in the co-creation of meaning and the respective interpretations in the process of branding. Green (2006) makes an underpinning statement on the role of branding by arguing that branding does not alter the entity but alters the perception and this is valuable to the organisation. Klijn et al. (2012: p. 502) summarise what brands do in stating that:

> Give meaning to something; that is they construct webs of associations around products that have meaning for various actors (consumers, tourists, etc.); add value to the branded object; distinguish the object from competitors, such as other cities; have a visible discursive manifestation in the form of a logo, design or a name; are deliberately created and have to be managed to develop and maintain them.

The branding of Oldham would provide an understanding of the place and attribute meaning to its dynamics and attract the different stakeholders. The branding of Oldham would be expected to make the place more appealing to stakeholders so that they buy into its provisions and differentiate it from other places through both offerings and symbolism (for example with the logo). Macrae (1991: p. 141) presents seven sources for brand visibility in his book on '*World Class Brands'* which are: "… product capabilities; country representation; distribution; communications; marketing edge; star mentality and image bonds." One could argue that with the need for a global appeal in today's environment places need to brace themselves to deal with more complex situations cutting across a plethora of global expectations of the widening stakeholder block.

While capturing the fundamental issues of branding helps gain a picture of the complexity and key issues of branding it would help to draw out models that aid the conceptualisation of place branding. Iglesias and Bonet (2012: p. 12) further assert that:

> … managers also create brand identities, as well as their own personal identities through rhetorical interactions, narratives, stories, negotiations and reflections. …brands can only be understood under a multi-stakeholder approach.

Choudhury (2001) observed that brand identities exist in the minds of customers and that is the customer's projection of the brand's performance. Therefore, looking at the case of the Oldham brand, consideration should be given to how the town and the borough are perceived by the different stakeholders.

2.2.2 Branding Models

In every phenomenon where conceptualisation of issues is required the use of models is paramount. Models simplify the complex reality and make it easier to understand and relate issues. The practice and conceptualisation of the marketing discipline is no exception to this rule and the same applies to the phenomenon of branding. In this section consideration is given to different models that have been developed for purposes of advancing knowledge in the area of branding. Hatch and Rubin (2006) in an article on the hermeneutics of branding, which is the process of acquiring meaning in a multiple stakeholder context considered the interpretation of brands as an evolving process which notes meaning as dynamic and that meaning changes over time.

The case for Oldham would conform to the multiple stakeholder approach given the various stakeholders of the town and the wider borough cutting across diverse groups which include townships of Oldham, politicians, the business fraternity, ethnic groups, levels of affluence, visitors, students, etc. Kaufmann et al. (2012) provide a model that shows the interface of strategic vision, stakeholder images and identity, and identity congruence in the development of corporate brands (see appendix 17). Kaufmann et al. (2012: p. 193) argue the case for corporate branding saying that: "Its source for originality, uniqueness and inimitability is the organisation's heritage and the values and beliefs that the corporation and all its stakeholders hold in common."

Dickinson-Delaporte et al. (2010) in an article on building corporate reputations suggest that providing positional statements that the diversity of stakeholders can associate with can enhance the process of brand building and help stakeholders find common ground. Writing on the design of brand identity, Melawar and Jenkins (2002) show that a brand identity encapsulates a range of variables, i.e, it integrates various practices in marketing as illustrated in the *Figure 2.2*. Wheeler (2006) points out important facets in branding as the vision, meaning, authenticity, coherence, differentiation, flexibility, sustainability, commitment and value. There are multiple factors that impact on brand identity (Melawar and Jenkins, 2002; Wheeler, 2006).

Figure 2.2 Corporate Identity and subconstructs of Oldham
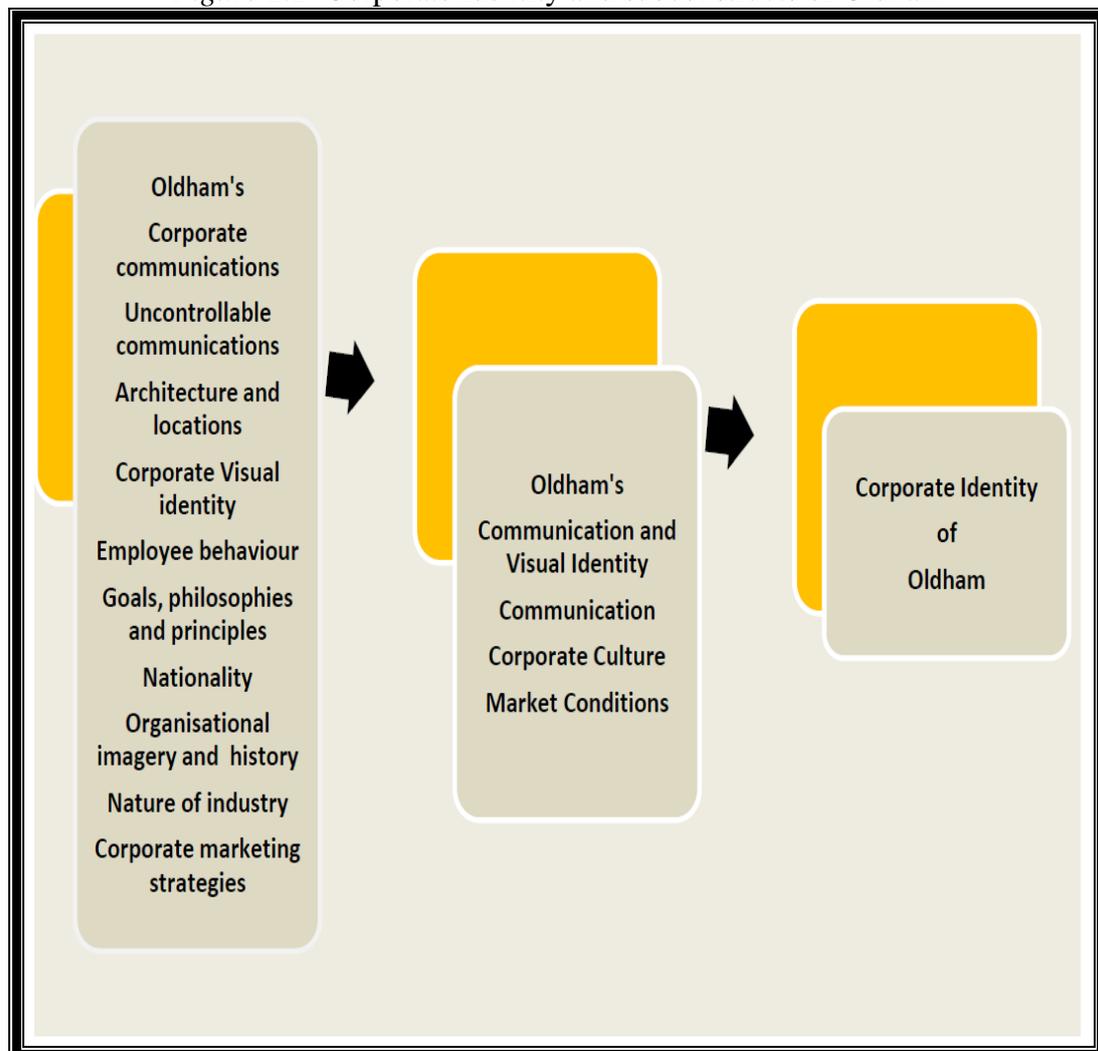
Source: Adapted from Melawar and Jenkins (2002: p. 81)

This would also add weight to the need for a unified message in communicating a brand in the case of Oldham emanating from multiple sources. The challenge in the whole branding process is about creating positive associations for the brand (Ries and Ries, 2003; Chernatony and McDonald, 2003). Berry (2000) suggests a number of inputs into the brand, which are centred on external communications, the company's communications and the customer experience. These facets of the brand provide brand meaning and awareness which create the brand equity.

The value derived from consuming the branded service, good, person or place is accounted for in these models, that is, every brand has a corresponding promise to deliver value (Hamish and Pringle, 2008). Kotler and Keller (2009) advance the customer value framework where they suggest that marketing is based on four pillars which include a) understanding value requirements, b) creating value, c) communicating value and d) delivering value. One could argue that branding a product is to uniquely identify the value provision offered by the organisation. This would suggest that effective brands need systematic processes to provide differentiated value.

Grace and O'Cass (2002) provide a model (*Figure* 2.3) which has an important characteristic which resonate well with any logical analysis of the development of a brand.

Figure 2.3 Key dimensions for branded products and services
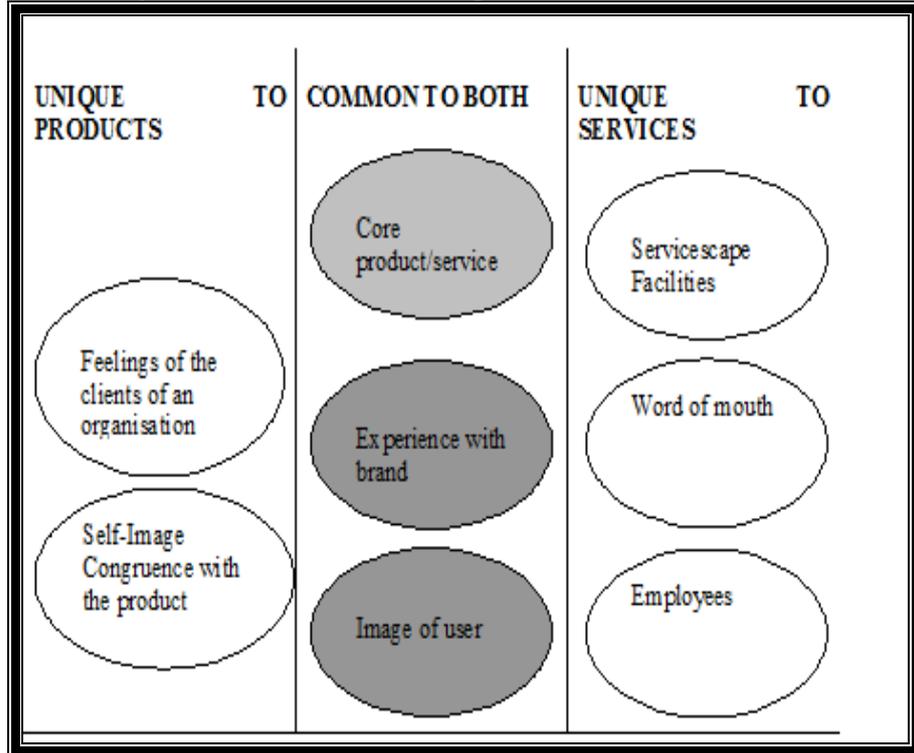
Source: Adapted from Grace and O'Cass (2002: p. 108)

Davis (2005: p. 8) observed that: "Brands are constantly seeking new ways of expressing ideas and communicating with audiences; they are constantly seeking new creative ways of promoting themselves to stand out from the rest." Therefore, branding is ultimately about communicating a positive image about the organisation in order to appeal to the clientele. Ghodesawar (2008: p. 4) highlights the role of the brand in suggesting that:

> A brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors.

The study would posit that the critical aspect of branding emanates from the marketing philosophy, underpinning the notion that there should to be a culture, an orientation that drives the organisational value system which epitomize the offering providing the value that customers seek. In that respect a place's offering to the different stakeholders should be understood and be packaged in line with the expectations of the stakeholders (Supphellen, 2004; Hankinson, 2005; Medway and Warnaby, 2008). This view conforms to the notion of storytelling (which is the narration) or storyselling (using storytelling to sell something) given

that different stakeholders should be targeted with the relevant story (Choudhury, 2001; Morgan, 2004; Hansen, 2010). Suder and Suder (2008: p. 437) in an article on the impact of 09/11 terrorist attack, identify five risks that need to be considered when branding a product:

> Financial risk ("making a bad deal", which increases the importance of the brand compared with the unit price of the product); Physical risk (being harmed by the product, especially food products) ; Technological risk (being disappointed by the product performance, it is the risk of functionality); Psychological risk (feeling guilty or irresponsible for temptation, especially in impulsive decisions – or associating harm or risk to the brand, either associated to fear or sadness); Social risk (what pairs will say or think about choices. Therefore brand is a sign of possession for a community, but also a sign of adherence, of patriotism or of association to or away from particular social issues.)

The respective risks identified by Suder and Suder (2008) apply in the branding of places as much as they apply to products. Thompson et al. (2006) present an argument in respect of short stories in relation to emotional branding which could adversely impact the brand, and this is referred to as the doppelganger brand image. This necessitates caution in telling an organisational story as some efforts may create negative effects. In the case of a place the risks are associated with decisions about buying into the place as any of the relevant stakeholders to that place such as investors, tourists, students, residents, shoppers, employees of government departments and private companies may be affected (Green, 2005; Papadatos, 2006; Smith and Wintrob, 2013). There could be financial exposure as a result of operating in a particular place, physical risk might emanate from crime or riots, the idea of being in a place with a certain culture or attributes has a certain psychological effect (Hankinson, 2005, 2006; Aitken and Campelo, 2011). Social risk would relate to the extent to which there might be resistance to the stakeholder in a particular place. The development of a brand is influenced by identities, at both individual and organizational levels (Brown, 2001).

2.2.3 The brand promise system

Brands are promises to deliver value (Pringle and Field, 2008). The key is that there is a clear performance that distinguishes the good or service, etc., from other provisions by players in

the marketing arena. Pringle and Field (2008: p. 103) provide the concept of the brand promise centered on:

> … first, the creation of the promise itself; second, how it is to be conveyed; and third, how it is to be kept. …a company should manage its performance in terms of the rational, emotional and ethical dimensions of its promise.

This logical sequence is consistent with the generic notion of the marketing value cycle as articulated by Kotler and Keller (2009). One could argue that the promise is the reason for business as it underpins the offer of value and delivery to the customer. Macrae (1991: p. 2) writes that: "A brand has mutual responsibilities as a corporate ambassador and as a consumable possession. …aims to give balance to two kinds of impression… value of its offer…and the quality of its credentials." The brand promise model is presented in *Figure 2.4.*

Figure 2.4 The Brand Promise
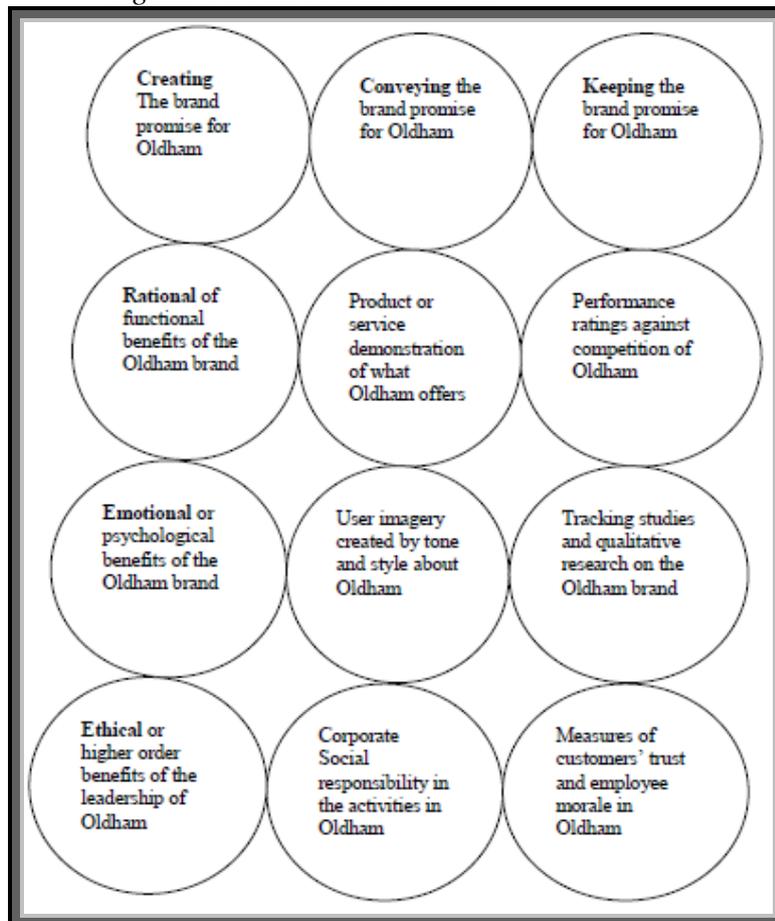
Source: Adapted from Hamish and Pringle (2008: p.103)

The model (*Figure* 2.4) by Hamish and Pringle (2008) refers to creating, conveying and communicating the brand and that mirrors the organisational process of providing value. The rational, emotional and ethical practices of the brand promise are centred on behavioural aspects of the council's leadership, council workforce and the general ethos of the community. This approach shows that brands would necessitate a systematic approach to the way they are managed for consistency and to guarantee performance; and if the promise is not met the credibility and the strength of the brand will suffer (Burman and Zeplin, 2006).

The cycle of value based on understanding value requirements, creating value, communicating value and delivering value is critical (Kotler and Keller, 2008). This is meant to ensure a focused approach to providing satisfying products to the customer. The researcher sees this as a basis for creating a brand in that the product experience gives identity to the product and image of the brand. Ries and Ries (2003) would argue that the brand is the glue that binds all marketing activities into a cohesive unity. Graeff and Harmon (2002: p. 313) observed that: "… brands are promoted and positioned to occupy a clear place in consumers' minds with respect to competition and brand image." This demands that the promise is clear and that the offering can stand out, that is differentiated to carry an image that can be recognised as unique. Burman and Zeplin (2006) assert that for a brand to be strong it takes more than good advertising and likens the brand to a person who needs a credibility and identity to earn trust. Mirza (2012) approaches the process of branding from a different perspective in arguing that "leadership branding", which is the way leaders show the way to employees as the basis of the organisation's branding. Mirza (2012: p. 23) would argue that: "… base-building behaviours….such as credibility; trust; communication; consistency; and resilience… and… that the leadership behavioural framework must be realistic." Bendisch (2013) concurs with Mirza in highlighting the case of CEO branding which is the notion that

brands mirror the image of the leader of the organisation. Mittins et al. (2011) in a research on Nashua Mobile in South Africa argue that employees provide an interface between the external and internal environments which in turn affect stakeholders' perspectives of the organisation. This view would mean that employees of OMBC impact the stakeholders to the place. This perspective tallies with the view taken by Kotler and Keller (2009) on the marketing concept, arguing that marketing calls on all employees to give thought to the marketing function and serve the customer. Lamons (2005) the marketing manager of '*Robert Lamons and Associates'* points out that employees manifest the brand promise or operationalisation into life and that the CEO takes the lead in championing the branding message.

2.3 Place Marketing and Branding

Following the review of literature in an article on place branding and place marketing Zenker and Martin (2011) highlight the increasing competitive nature of the discipline. Warnaby and Medway (2013: p. 346) concur with Zenker and Martin on the development of place marketing and branding in saying that: "Indeed, it could be argued that multidisciplinarity has deepened the understanding of the phenomenon in terms of bringing numerous contrasting perspectives to bear on the subject." They argue that the competition is against other places, compete for investors, new citizens and for qualified employees. Johansson (2012) says that place branding is expected to develop and communicate an acceptable image that conforms to the targeted market; provides ways of experiencing the brand in the target consumers' lives in a complex situation that may give multiple images. Burnett and Hutton (2007: p. 343) argue that: "Brand success will be based on developing meaningful connections with individual consumers. Each consumer is on a personal quest for a better life. Experiences, knowledge, authenticity – that is what matters." These are the fundamental issues that underpin branding.

One could argue that organisations exist for a purpose and to the extent that they meet that purpose that underpins success. Effective place branding necessitates meeting the expectations of stakeholders as their perceptions of the place help shape the image portrayed by the place.

2.3.1 Place Marketing

Place branding is becoming increasingly critical in modern business for a variety of reasons given the multitude of benefits and services associated with places. Zenker and Martin (2011: p. 33) having reviewed definitions of place marketing state that:

> …first, place marketing should aim to increase, not only economic stature but also social functions such as place identification or the satisfaction with a place. Second, place marketing is a customer orientated approach that should integrate all of a city's customers; in other words, those activities to increase social function should benefit as many residents as possible instead of one favourable group.

Places attract people for a variety of reasons. Visitors to places are prepared to spend money for the experience, like spending money on products; that allows for places to be branded and marketed like anything else that has value (Julier, 2004; Caldwell and Freire, 2004). Lennon and Titterington (1996) make reference to the place marketing of Northern Ireland after the ceasefire in 1994; and the same approach could be employed to improve the prospects for Oldham as a place. Gibson (2005) argues the case for selling a city acknowledging the importance of marketing towns and cities in the USA and demonstrates the importance of place marketing. Caldwell and Freire (2004) argue that regions and cities that are small in size would do well by focusing their branding approaches on functional aspects of the place which the stakeholders can positively relate with. Melissen (2004: p. 27) makes a strong case for public diplomacy in place branding in writing that: "But keeping branding strictly within the marketing bubble has distinct disadvantages when it comes to trying to persuade non-marketing-oriented audiences of its utility." The importance of place marketing cannot be overemphasised and that in turn leads to place branding.

2.3.2 Place Branding

Hanna and Rowley (2008) point out that place branding relates to location, county, country, nation, city or region and destination marketing is associated with tourism. Place branding encapsulates a range of activities and areas, large or small, and tends to affect a wide range of stakeholders encompassing both the public and private sectors (Rainisto, 2004; Van Ham, 2004; Hankinson, 2005; Lane, 2007; Sobral et al, 2007; Gould and Skinner, 2007; Medway and Warnaby, 2008; Booker and Burgess, 2008; Hanna and Rowley, 2008; Armstrong et. al, 2009; Klijn et al, 2012). Klijn (2012: p. 505) argues that: "This means that place branding, and all forms of branding, can profit from stakeholder involvement." Gould and Skinner (2007) suggest that there were benefits in the meeting of stakeholders at different strategic levels to facilitate the development of Northern Ireland. Fanning (2011) suggests that the branding of nations is a common practice that is gaining attention in academic discourse and is important in attracting business to a country.

Gilmore (2001) gives the example of the successful branding of Spain as an illustration of the importance of the branding for a country. Sobral, et al. (2007) argue that Brazil's tourist attraction emanates from its natural beauty and its exoticism and these co-exist with negative perceptions of the social and economic situation and a void in security. There are multitudes of players that are affected by the tourist activities making this area extremely important to the planning of towns and cities (Bell and Jayne, 2003); with brands giving meaning in a powerful way to stakeholders (Hatch and Rubin, 2006). Green (2005) observes that stories of places are layers that need to be understood in creating a place brand (embracing branding and economics). Branding involves a professional activity and ways of adding value, whereas economic development involves the improvement of quality of life and living. Sevin (2011: pp. 158-159) discounting limiting place branding to the use of symbols and slogans; financial

attractiveness, claims of government officials goes on to assert what place branding is in writing that: "Fundamentally a place brand is the perception of a place by external and internal audiences, which is based on the projected physical and psychological peculiarities of a place." Advancing the case for nation branding Gudjonsson (2005) identifies three views on whether or not nations can be branded; '*Absolutists'*, who hold on to the view that places like any product can be branded; '*Moderates'* who take a middle of the road position in accepting that nations cannot be branded but instruments of branding could be used to enhance the national value; and '*Royalists'* who dismiss the notion of branding of nations as they are too complex.

One could argue that these views would hold for any place given that places; towns, cities, villages, tourist resorts, regions, boroughs, make up countries, hence nations are an amalgam of places. The three perspectives presented by Gudjonson (2005) mirror the diversity of views on whether or not places could be branded. Since a place is a noun with characteristics that qualifies a place as a brand (Ries and Ries, 2003; Chernatony and McDonald, 2003). Having considered the arguments by a number of authors on the area of place marketing Balakrishnan (2008: p. 63) provides the reasons why places cannot be branded like goods and services like:

> …past history; geographical constraints (location, weather, resources, infrastructure and people); inherited names; stakeholders – destinations are run by governing bodies which often report to their citizens and are influenced by other stakeholders limiting the decisions they can take and personal, consumer, business and government service dependency.

The brand image building model by Balmer and Greyser (2002) put emphasis on the identity of the phenomenon but seems not to point at any aspect related to performance. While there is merit in Balmer and Greyser (2002) taking that perspective, that would not be complete in conceptualising the totality of a brand given that place branding integrates many disciplines

such as politics, business, culture, information and communication technologies (Lebedenko, 2004).

While image matters, no one would forego quality simply because the image looks good. Gould and Skinner (2007) in their article on branding Northern Ireland acknowledge the diversity of factors considered in place marketing and place branding, with branding efforts inclined towards positioning in respect of citizens and the wider world. This consideration would also apply to Oldham. Gould and Skinner (2007) further assert that in branding Northern Ireland different stakeholders should be considered, but with there being no single icon different marketing groups for the province have come up with different sub-brands. Hanna and Rowley (2008) point out that place branding is driven by the growing power of international media, reduced cost of travel, increased individual spending, shifting place power of place identities, limited international investors, competition for migrant professional skills and increasing need for variety. The general picture portrayed on the challenges of branding is the lack of clarity on the essence of place branding and this is largely due to the multiplicity of stakeholders involved in towns; as places are generally under-realised as brands (Morgan, 2004). Booker and Burgess (2008: p. 287) writing on the marketing of Niagara as a tourist destination present steps in the rejuvenation of a brand's appeal in the sequence outlined as follows:

> Movement away from competing to cooperation and collaboration; Destination branding; Movement away from relying on a single visionary entrepreneur's action; Development of a comprehensive strategy with input from a variety of impacted stakeholders; Adaptation to changing market trends; Forecasting future market trends that current customers have not even thought of; Vision, planning and leadership; Innovation, including incremental and revolutionary; Diversification; Differentiation; and Capitalising on information and communication technology (ICT).

Burman and Zeplin (2006: p. 280) argue that: "The strength of a brand, measured by how often consumers buy and recommend the brand, is determined by the different brand identity components." One could suggests that in the case of a place like Oldham there is need to have

features or stories that stand out for easy of identity. Gudjonsson (2005) arguing the case for nation branding presents the goals for branding as; firstly, the protection of business from the effects of adverse political moves in a country; secondly, to support the businesses and their identities/brands on the international arena; and thirdly, to promote prosperity and improve the standard of living for the nation at large.

Balmer and Greyser (2002) present a model that incorporates a diverse approach to analysing the branding process. This framework allows for the analysis of a brand from a practical perspective for the different stakeholders, that is things like the actual identity, the communicated identity, the conceived identity, ideal identity and desired identity summarised by the acronym AC2ID (see appendix 5). Lichrou et al. (2010) write that in the past place marketing focused on the complex nature of places and products; but the fundamental issues should instead be on the multi-stakeholder nature and fragmentation of place marketing and branding. Lichtou et al. (2010: p. 135) argued that: "The challenge here is that place marketing and branding need to bring together and negotiate the interests of the interdependent social actors". Lichtou et al. (2010) further point out that the marketing concept or orientation may not always be the most ideal orientation in place marketing; and that the product in place marketing is often intangible. In arguing the case for place branding, Gotham (2013:827) states that: "Unlike other brands that people buy and sell in markets, a branded place is spatially fixed, non-transportable, and consumed by people at the point of production." Pryor and Grossbart (2007) argue that place brands are derived from interpretative rather than managerial techniques and that there are multi-stakeholder influences at play in the process. This study views place branding as a complex and political process. Place branding has an integrative effect which brings together tourism and economic development (Morgan, 2004). The steps by Booker and Burgess (2008) show that the

development of a destination strategy requires cooperation by management and clarity of vision on the direction the place should take. Mak (2011) and (Hankinson, 2001; 2004; 2007) agree on the argument that effective place marketing could be achieved through partnerships of stakeholders in a place. Hankinson (2001) further asserts that poorly managed partnerships would employ basic brand applications in respect of symbols, logos and publicity. In the case of the Oldham brand's rejuvenation the process has been anchored by the Oldham Partnership which brings together a number of stakeholders bent on repositioning and re-branding the town and the borough at large. Davis (1994: p. 43) argues that: "A key-brand insurance strategy is a defensive strategy that should be as strong as a company's brand growth strategy." Davis (1994) further asserts that the respective strategy allows for the development of the brand's market share, revenues and share of the mind which help in understanding the brand dynamics. Anholt (2004) referenced in Mak (2011: p. 440) argues that:

> A positive place brand encourages inward investment; tourism is a magnet for talent for professional jobs, and if properly managed, can create a renewed sense of purpose and identity for the inhabitants of the country, region, or city.

Figure 2.5 Indicative planning processes for urban place marketing
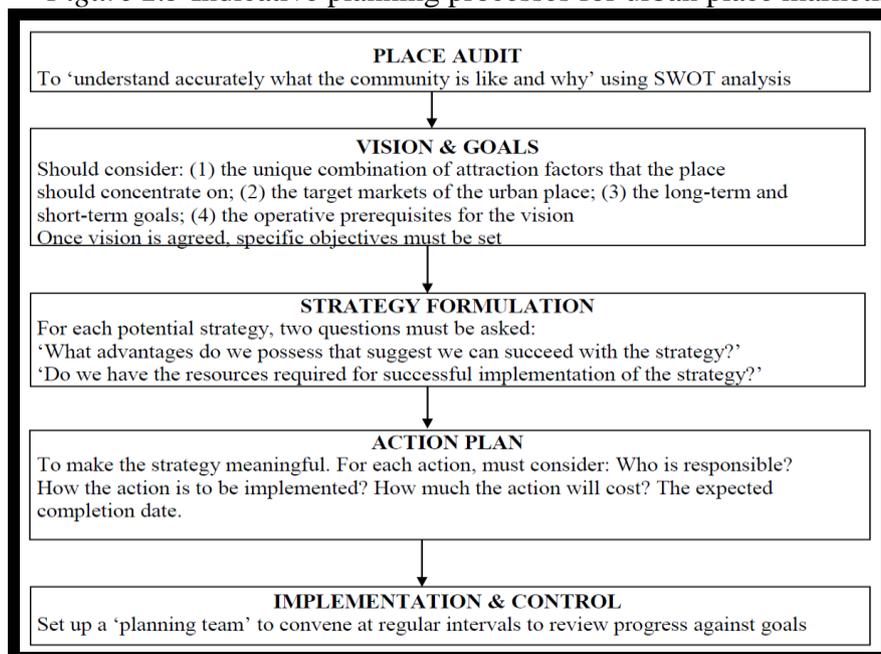
Source: Adapted from Kotler *et al*. (1996, 1999, 2001, 2005: p. 68)

The model (*Figure* 2.5) by Kotler et al. (1993; 1999) shows that the marketing of a place necessitates a strategic approach like in the case of planning for products. Places would also face challenges in respect of integrating a number of variables and stakeholders as there are many forces at play which need to be considered. Medway and Warnaby (2008) point out that often the branding of places puts emphasis on the positive aspects in creating the appropriate image but it should also be noted that taking the negatives into consideration may have advantages in some instances like in the case of de-marketing to reduce demand or "perverse place marketing" where negatives are used in promotion in order to increase demand.

This may also be done for a specific period to avoid problems with too many visitors or say protesters in a town or city but could be costly when it comes to reversing the situation. Oldham's negative aspects have affected the brand through the various turning points of the town and the borough. Mak (2011) observed that place image is analysed from the perspective of the tourist to the detriment of the industry and other stakeholders. These variables are meant to fit like a jigsaw if they are to have an impact (Supphellen, 2004). Rainisto (2004) sees leadership capabilities in utilising resources as the biggest challenge in place branding. Related to Wheeler's (2006) set of variables for identity Ghodeswar (2008) considered a wide range of literature on the notion of branding and came up with a framework for developing a brand. The framework is based on four elements put forward by Ghodeswar (2008: p. 6) which are: "positioning the brand, communicating the brand message, delivering the brand performance, and leveraging the brand equity". These elements are shown in *Figure 2.6*. This model takes the identity variables to the operational level in which positioning the brand allows for the consolidation of meaning and feeds into the communication making the promise and delivering it. Leveraging follows on as the brand gains in the market and enables consolidation. Burman and Zeplin (2006) emphasize the need

for employees to familiarise themselves with the brand identity which should be consistent with the external environment; supported by an institutional internal brand management.

Figure 2.6 PCDL Model

Positioning the Brand	Communicating the Brand Message	Delivering the Brand Performance	Leveraging the Brand Equity
• Features	• Advertising Campaign	• Product Performance	• Line Extension
• Tangible Attributes	• Themes	• Service Performance	• Brand Extension
• Intangible Attributes	• Celebrities	• Customer Care	• Ingredient Branding
• Product Functions	• Events	• Customer Satisfaction	• Co-Branding
• Benefits	• Shows	• Customer Delight	• Brand Alliances
• Operational	• Consumer		• Social Integration

Source: Adopted from Ghodeswar (2008: p. 6)

Having given consideration to the phenomenon of place branding Green (2005: p. 279) presents a range of challenges and opportunities in place branding as:

> Limited understanding and diverse opinions on the role of branding; ... Difficulties associated with communicating benefits of intangible or hard to measure qualities; An often extremely complex stakeholder matrix (competing needs etc); ... The challenge of defining differentiated and appealing propositions; …The challenge of developing implementation strategy that will be widely and consistently adopted beyond conventional logo and ad campaign applications.

Green (2005: p. 279) further argues that the respective opportunities in place branding are:

> Considerable and growing interest in the adoption and application of branding in a broader range. … Within a developing discipline, the opportunities to introduce new methodologies and fields of practical application; to promote branding as 'the single most important organising principle' (op cit) and for all to benefit from the practical results.

The researcher sees the challenges as consistent with the situation prevailing in Oldham where the understanding of the notion of place branding is not clear. Controversy surrounds what branding has achieved in Oldham and the complex social mix makes it difficult to focus on specific attributes. In advancing the case for place branding Rainisto (2004: p.14) points out that:

> Cities and regional economies are seen more and more as economic assets and building blocks in the economic development of places, and place branding is a natural element to be integrated. …and successful place branding demands professional leadership…

This view necessitates assessing the qualities and capabilities of people who take leadership positions in running places. Ham (2004) argues that the place branding process is not static and that increasingly the art of politics has shifted its focus to brand development and image management. Zenker and Martin (2011: p. 34) make a strong case for the different target groups to place marketing in pointing out that:

> Tourists, for example, are searching for leisure time activities such as visiting shopping malls or cultural offerings; investors are more interested in business topics; whereas the city's customers need a suitable environment for their purposes rather than simply a 'dot on the map.'

Hildreth (2010) explains that the ultimate purpose of place branding is to make a place better for the residents and be more competitive in an increasingly challenging world. However, Hildreth (2010) makes reference to Bekerly in (Rittel et al., 1973) who likens place branding and its complications to what is termed a 'wicked problem'. The characteristics of a wicked problem are listed in *Figure 2.7*.

Figure 2.7 Attributes of a 'wicked problem'

1. Every wicked problem is essentially unique.
2. The problem is not understood until after formulation of a solution begins.
3. A wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways; the choice of explanation in turn determines the nature of the problem's resolution.
4. Wicked problems are often 'solved' (as well as they can be) through group efforts, with members of the group having different frames of reference and different value systems.
5. Every implemented solution to a wicked problem has consequences, and may cause additional problems, all of which the planner will be held responsible for.
6. Solutions to wicked problems are not true or false, but instead better, worse or good enough.
7. Wicked problems require inventive solutions; nothing off the peg or 'tried and true' is likely to work.
8. Wicked problems do not have an exhaustive set of potential solutions, and there is no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem (so you never know if you've found the best answer).

Source: Hildreth (2010: p. 29)

The complications of branding have presented challenges over the years and attempts to re-brand have prompted other problems making the situation suit what has been termed a 'wicked problem'.

While the notion of place marketing and branding matters it is important to give consideration to the maps of places as an aid to the processes of marketing and branding. Hanna and Rowley (2008: p. 65) identify a number of brand dimensions which include: "…culture, industry, gastronomy/sports/film/literature/music and leisure/business, agriculture, heritage, tourism." Hankinson (2010) highlights the growing interest in place branding by practitioners and the increasing academic discourse in the area of place marketing. Anholt (2010b: p. 1) argues that: "Places have been promoting their attractions and their images throughout history, because they have always needed to attract settlers, visitors, traders, investors and the category of people we today call 'influencers'." Anholt (2010b) further explains the source of names for branding of places or countries which emanate from different sources; the person who names, a hero; founder, a combination of areas (provinces), geographical location, resident race, terrain, religion or superstition.

The key issues in place branding were argued by Kavaratzis (2005: p. 338) as:

> The starting point is the core brand (the place's identity and a blue print for developing and communicating the place brand), which can be defined by the brand personality, the brand positioning and the brand reality. The effectiveness of place branding relies on the extension of the core brand through effective relationships with various stakeholders.

It is important for place marketers to focus on the value of the place, i.e., what is derived from the place and identity of that place. Warnaby and Medway (2013) acknowledge the complexity of place marketing and branding and that place branding is the result of people's doing. One could argue that the Oldham brand is a result of the various developments that people have engaged in which epitomise the various stories that have shaped the place.

2.3.3 Maps, Place Marketing and Branding

Warnaby (2008) in an article on the marketing of urban retail centres argues that maps are critical in locating specific places for promotional purposes and this also applies to town centres to assist with directions. One could argue that the map is an important aspect of place

marketing since the geography of a place creates a certain appeal for the place. The map of a place would influence the trafficking in the place. Kotler (2004) and Gertner (2004) observed that the branding of places should be competitive since people and resources can be moved from a place and adversely impact on the brand of the place. One could argue that the dynamics of place marketing would present a challenge to management and research attention (Nebenzahl, 2004).

Oldham town and the wider Oldham borough have a huge stretch of green land ideal for development but its standing has been adversely affected by events of the past. Writing on the state of American towns and cities Gibson (2005) points at the competition (dubbed a semiotic warfare) and the image problem most places have to deal with and alludes to the need for repositioning of the town and city brands. Maps tell a story in the way the different features of the town are depicted. By its visual nature, rather than text, it encourages more imagination about what the experience will be like to visit the place. One could argue that for the maps where colours are used this could convey a certain feeling about a place and in any case the level of detail can be decided upon with a view to influence the prospects. Gerner (2004) points out that the prospects to a place should be aware of the place's unique value proposition to be effective. One could argue that maps are a means of communication and can contribute to the overall marketing message about the town, city, borough or region in question.

The picture portrayed by Oldham maps over the years provides a transitional story over time. Christensen (2009) provides a framework (see *Figure 2.8)* that recognises the importance of stakeholders in the process of branding an organisation. The different players identified include management; employees; culture and values; the market/ beneficiaries; the product/

service, amongst others. While the study by Christensen focuses on the corporate world, the application to place marketing would give consideration to a different set of stakeholders, among them the local government, ethnic groups, the neighbouring boroughs etc. The researcher would argue that stakeholders are considered critical to effective branding, especially when dealing with a place. Woodside, et al. (2005) in an article focusing on visitors' stories of places observed that visitors own storytelling about their own exposure to different places visited. These stories become part of the broader story of such places when shared with other visitors to the same places.

Figure 2.8   Integrated corporate branding
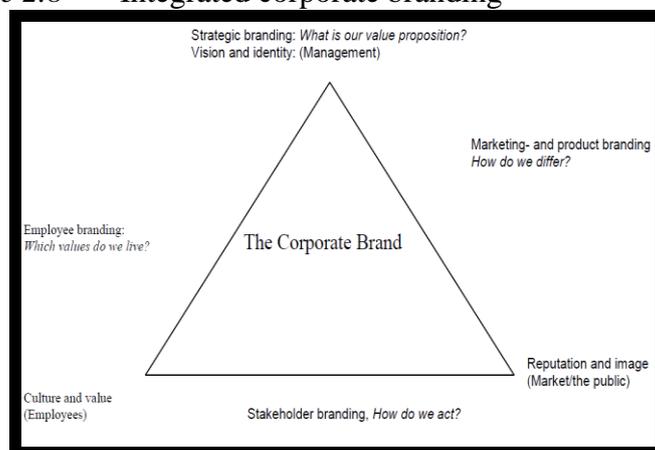
Source: Adapted from Christensen (2009: p. 26).

Clifton (2004) suggests that place branding should start with something done successfully in the place and that markets the place's attractiveness. Oldham as a place has been looked down upon in the recent past because of the deteriorating state of various aspects of its unfolding story (Cantle, 2001). In that respect the underdog storytelling approach may be appropriate as put forward by Paharia et al. (2011: p. 775) who argue that: "Across cultures, contexts, and time periods, underdog narratives have inspired people. Stories about underdogs are pervasive in sports, politics, religion, literature and film."

The underdog tag seems to inspire the disadvantaged to success and this in turn makes the story more interesting to read or listen to. As a marketing tool the underdog story would draw attention from the targeted market. Paharia et al. (2011: p. 776) further state that:

> We argue that underdog brand biographies are effective because consumers can relate these stories to their own lives and we demonstrate that the positive effect of underdog brand biographies is driven by identity mechanisms.

Oldham would suit the underdog tag because in the recent past the town has operated with limited privileges, resources such as money, skills etc. One could argue that the deficiencies of Oldham put the place in a weaker position relative to other places with which it competes. Sevin (2011) makes an important observation that place branding is more than creating logos and slogans and concurs with a number of authors on the complex nature of the place branding process. Sevin (2011) further points out that place branding would consider identity, economics, political and utilitarian factors to enhance competitiveness.

Following a comprehensive review of literature Lichtou et al. (2010) argue that increasingly place marketing has given way to place branding as the approach is more suitable in handling the respective phenomenon. Lichtou et al. (2010: p. 137) refer to the effective use of storytelling in stating that: "… narrative is a useful conceptual tool for the diverse interpretations of place meanings, which are important to marketers, consumers and other social actors." While place branding is critical to the positioning of a place it is important to note the importance of creativity in marketing and branding assignments. Trueman et al. (2008: p.33, see appendix 5) writing on the regeneration of the Manningham district of Bradford employing the AC2ID test point out that: "a *creative profile* requires diversity of buildings and people, particularly if the place is to have a unique brand identity or image." In the case of Oldham it would appear that the beautiful buildings and the cotton heritage have not been preserved. Houliez (2010) adds the virtual dimension to place branding which removes the complication of time and space in trying to understand the dynamics of place by making the whole phenomenon virtual. A visit to the Bradford website provides a rich history of the place which captures the heritage of the place and there are various museums which are tourist attractions (Bradford). While Bradford was a mill town like Oldham, the place has its

heritage captured in museums unlike Oldham which at one point was the leading cotton spinning town which has no museum. This contrasts with Oldham where the heritage has not been captured and projected positively. Kaplan et al. (2010) content that place branding goes beyond the study of destinations and image but also embrace brand personality in a complex competitive context. Peel and Lloyd (2007) highlight the importance of planning the management of branding artefacts which portray an image of a place which can stretch across time and space.

2.3.4 The Four Rs of Place Branding

Aitken and Campelo (2011) present a framework of place branding which captures many of the principles of marketing and place branding underpinned by the 4Rs (see *Figure* 2.9). Aitken and Campelo (2011: p. 913) argue that:

> The use of branding principles and especially key elements such as authenticity, essence, equity, ownership, governance, and communication assume particular importance for towns, cities, regions and countries. Brands play an integrative role when related to places because at the core of the brand is culture and the people who live in it.

Aitken and Campelo (2011) suggest that the concepts of branding can be applied to place branding; which are important for differentiation and identification (Hansen, 2010). They point out that interaction in place branding between brands and consumers lead to multiple perspectives and participants who co-create, develop, re-define meanings and complicate the role of management and that culture plays an important part in the process. At the heart of the process is the role played by culture in shaping values and forming the basis of interpretation and takes into cognisance multiple stakeholder interests (Gould and Skinner, 2007). They observed that brands are tools for self expression and identity and also for collective identity construction, thus giving meaning to the phenomenon. In a study on branding da Silveira et al. (2006) allude to the importance of brand identity in differentiating brands; the unique identity factor would be relevant to understanding the Oldham brand. Aitken and Campelo

(2011: p. 918) further assert that the: "Sense of place embraces the physical dimensions of a place and social constructions of people who engage with that place". It could be argued that an understanding of a place should give consideration to various factors and stakeholders to the town, city, farm, tourist destination, beach, among others, and that also applies to Oldham. Aitken and Campelo (2011: p. 925) state that:

> The four Rs – rights, roles, responsibilities, and relationships – have emerged from the social capital or communal practices of the place that are re- and co-created through community engagement. …The authors organised communal practices to explain the process of collective value creation in brand communities into four thematic categories: (1) social networking, (2) impression management, (3) community management, and (4) brand use.

The *Rights* of the people are part of the family heritage passed from generation to generation and the ownership of the land by the family and is immersed in the culture of the place (Aitken and Campelo, 2011). The *Roles* played are linked to rights of individuals and families in the community (Aitken and Campelo, 2011). The *Responsibilities* as presented in the story of the family and the community which are related to their rights and roles within the community (Aitken and Campelo, 2011). *Relationships* integrate the community through family ties and ensure that the community is strong, progressive and responsive to the needs (Aitken and Campelo, 2011). *Figure* 2.9 provides the dynamics of the four R's in place branding.

The four Rs represent four levels of open interactions that shape the branding of places by co-creating between the authorities and the community through different paradigms over time. The researcher has adapted the model to show the interactive nature of the 4R's within the context of Oldham from a set of four rings that are interactive with each other instead of sequential manner as the original model. Aitken and Campelo (2011: p. 927) conclude their article arguing the importance of place branding and suggest that:

> The four fundamental elements that encapsulate the experience of the place - rights, roles, relationships, and responsibilities – and the interactions between them are of fundamental importance to understanding a sense of place, structure of the community, and the role of

ownership. Generating a model that reflects the social ontology of a place not only assures brand authenticity, but also helps brand sustainability.

Figure 2.9 The Interactive four R's of Place Branding for Oldham
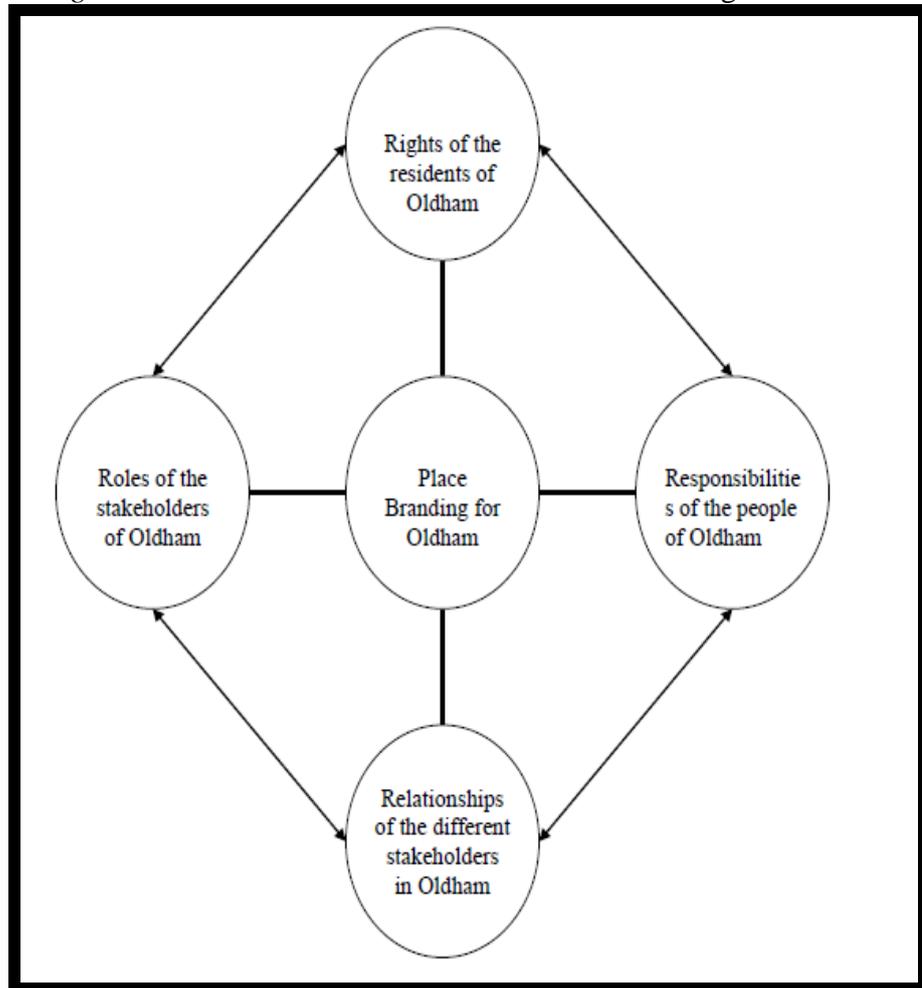
Source: Adapted from Aitken and Campelo (2011: p. 926)

While Aitken and Campelo (2011) identify four critical elements in the form of R's of place branding there are other frameworks of place branding that are used. Gudjonsson (2005) identifies four pillars of nation branding which are; *geography* (nature, cities and natural resource); *economy* (resources, culture, education, economy, industries); *people* (history, education, culture, etiquette, character) and *politics* (social system, economy, political structure, laws/regulation) where one could use the acronym (GEPP). While there is no direct similarity on the two perspectives of place branding by Aitken and Campelo (2011) and by Gudjonsson (2005) it is important to note that both perspectives help shape the place's brand and concur that place branding is a composite concept in that there are many factors and

stakeholders considered that compound the process of creating a brand. Gibson (2005: p. 274) would assert that:

> … the reason, the true realization of the planners' civic aspirations ultimately depends upon more than mobilizing images and repositioning brands. It will instead require sincere commitment to grapple with realities of class privilege in the contemporary landscape.

Johansson (2012: p. 3613) sees place branding as: "… a narrative programme that aims at redescribing a place by means of sanitising, obscuring, or alternatively emphasizing chosen aspects of reality." Trueman et al. (2008) identified twelve elements of creativity that need attention in regeneration and effective branding of cities as presented in *Figure 2.10*.

Figure 2.10 Elements of Effective City Branding
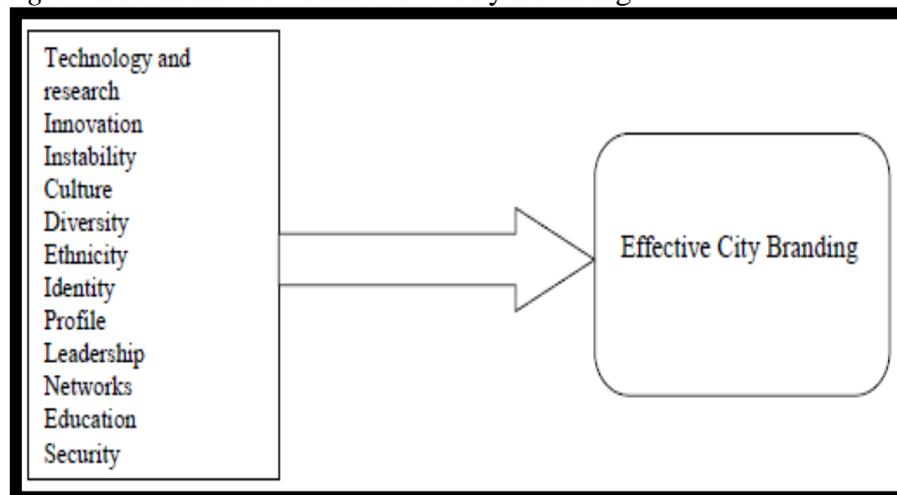
Adapted from Trueman et al. (2008: p. 35)

Overall, Trueman et al. (2008: pp. 36-37) state that: "In general, the Bradford and Manningham brands are currently perceived as negative, although like many other districts and cities they have experienced peaks and troughs of fortune." This observation is consistent with the pattern of developments in Oldham where the best and the worst have been experienced giving a mixed pattern of images of the place over time. Burnett and Hutton (2007) hit the core of branding by addressing brand commitment as the most important element of branding, i.e., what benefits the consumer or stakeholder receives from the good or service. Therefore in the study of the Oldham brand the concern would be with the benefits derived by stakeholders in their association with Oldham.

2.4 Story Based Conceptualisation

It is commonly agreed that a story has a beginning, middle and end (Boje, 2008; Cordiner, 2009; Brady and Haley, 2013). In the case of the Oldham story it is expected that the sub-stories would also follow the same pattern. Perrow (2007) puts storytelling at the core of human existence arguing that all recorded history is storytelling. Marzec (2007: p. 27) emphatically states the case for storytelling: "What makes stories an effective business tool? … At the most fundamental level, humans are wired to learn through stories." One could therefore argue that stakeholders would learn about brands and behave as a result of the effects of stories. Repede (2008: p. 226) highlights the key aspect of stories in suggesting that: "Stories weave through the tapestry of each unique life, connected by a golden thread…the essence of everything, visible and invisible." Gresh (1998) in a speech to the Rotary Club, Andover, Massachusetts argued that the world and the rest of humanity is a long story; hence our being is a story. Brown et al. (2008) argue that storytelling or the narrative is a sense-making instrument that helps in understanding and interpreting reality, past, present and future in a memorable manner. Colville et al. (2011: p. 8) state that: "… sense-making implicates storytelling and storytelling implies sense-making". Loyer (2010) sees stories as instruments for entertainment in game technology. Driscoll and McKee (2006: p. 205) in a discussion on stories point out that: "They help us to define who we are, why we are here, and what we should value." Shaw et al. (1998: p. 42) in an article on the transformational power of stories at 3M point out that: "Stories are central to human intelligence and learning." Perrow (2007) asserts that this is the approach that great religious and spiritual leaders have employed in conveying messages. She makes reference to Jesus's reason for use of parables in the Holy Bible (Matt: 13: 34-35) in that it was the way to reveal the mysteries of heaven. Stories are powerful as they impact people in many ways which include creating feelings, moving people to act, healing people and many other things (Drisccoll and MacKee,

2007; Perrow; 2007; Lindstrom, 2008; Baker and Boyle, 2009; Cordiner, 2009; Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010; Lewis, 2011). Lamsa and Sintonen (2006: p.108) argue the case for the importance of the narrative or storytelling in stating that:

> …the world consists of three relations mediated by narratives. First, our relation to the surrounding world is mediated by narratives. We understand our world by listening to and recalling stories. This is the level of the worldviews. Second, narratives mediate between individuals and other people. …Third, there is a relation between a person and her/himself.

There is a growing body of literature advancing the case for the importance of storytelling in personal and organisational dynamics (O'Gorman and Gillespie, 2010). Harris and Barnes (2006) provide a number of things that stories do, among them; inspire, help people learn, bring forth important lessons, entertain, teach or delight; evoke feelings, reactions or change as instruments of becoming and aid memory (Brown et al., 2009). The use of strategic storytelling is on the increase as most organisations are recognising its power (Van Buskirk and McGrath, 1992; Rasmussen, 2005; Lazarus, 2005; Baker and Boyle, 2009; Brown et al., 2009; Herskovitz and Crystal, 2010; Boje and Smith, 2010; O'Gorman and Gillespie, 2010). Gill (2011) argues that stories are an effective tool for deep communication which inspire, motivate and aid memory for employees' actions. Denning (2006: p. 42) concurs with Barker and Boyle (2009) as he makes a strong case for the narrative in developing corporate leadership by stating that:

> While leading companies increasingly recognize the need to train leaders to use artful narrative to inspire and guide their organisation to respond effectively to these strategic challenges, the reality is that most organisations need help to get the full benefits of using storytelling.

Denning (2006) has carved out a strong reputation as an advocate of the storytelling approach in management (Jossey-Bassey, 2007). In a review of Denning's book, *The Leader's guide to storytelling: Mastering the Art and Discipline of Business Narrative* it is noted that Denning's work puts storytelling at the heart of effective management. Jossey-Bassey (2007) acknowledges that storytelling as a performing art has four key elements; style, truth, preparation and delivery; and that a strong brand is a relationship supported by the narrative.

Many writers have recently acknowledged the underlying power of storytelling in respect of leadership but that is equally applicable to the branding process (Denning, 2006; Shaw et al., 1998; O'Gorman and Gillespie, 2010; Mirza, 2012). Barker and Boyle (2009: p. 81) state that: "A story can shape a company's strategic position, by defining and aligning its brand, and ensuring that its communications always reinforce that story and build that brand." Shaw et al. (1998) argue that in the case of 3M the use of the narrative has made strategic planning clear to employees. Carriger (2010) concurs with the view that storytelling enhances strategic planning and implementation. Lopez (1976: p. 63) in Repede (2008: p. 226) writes that: "Everything is held together by stories…That is all that is holding us together, stories and compassion." Brown et al. (2009: p. 329) see stories as "interventions in social life". Beech et al. (2013) highlight the importance of storytelling in organisational change. This is the case with the branding of Oldham where there are clear stories that mirror different eras of the history of the town and the borough at large which need to be harnessed strategically (Ritchie, 2001; Cantle, 2006). Delarge (2004: p. 76) highlights the power of storytelling in stating that: "The importance and power of stories lie in their ability to make sense of events, call up memories, teach lessons, inspire empathy and enthusiasm, and suspend belief. They are powerful tools." It follows that the story is a tool that can impact situations if used to good effect; they require thinking and doing something (Parry and Hansen, 2007). Leading organisations develop top brands as a result of their dominant position in the marketplace, that is a dominant story, or stories are about the connections between things which in turn give meaning to a phenomenon (Wilson, 2008). A number of authors concur that people are *homo narrans*, that is storytelling creatures (Bochner, 2001; Goodall, 2005; O'Gorman and Gillespie, 2010). Currie (1998: p. 2) in Brown et al. (2008: p. 1036) further asserts that people are, "*homo fabulans*- the tellers and interpreters of narratives". One could argue that if people are storytellers and interpreters they would understand the brand better if it is told as a

story. Nissan the Japanese car giant is now repositioning itself using *koto-tsukuri,* the art of storytelling which is effective (Greimel, 1998). While subscribing to the central importance of storytelling it is important to note the critical importance of language in ordering the human experience of reality (Camery-Hoggart, 2006). Moeran (2007) makes reference to the critical role of storytelling advertising agencies who promote brands by using storytelling for their clients. Stories evolve with technology and today storytelling has been imbedded into the world-wide-web and its related digital elements (Miller, 2005).

2.4.1 Types of Stories and their effects

There are eight dimensions of storytelling that Denning (2006: p. 43) identifies which are:

> Sparking action (springboard stories); Communicating who you are; Transmitting values; Communicating who the firm is – branding; Fostering collaboration; Taming the grapevine; Sharing knowledge; Leading people into the future.

The stories identified by Denning (2006) encapsulate the diversity of activities within an organization; that is carrying out of actions, communication, working in teams, building cultures, transferring knowledge and directing the course. It is important to note that the different strands of the narrative or storytelling approach have a bearing on the development of a brand as they all help in shaping the perception of the organisation and its products (Denning, 2006; Parry and Hansen, 2007; Boje, 2008). Nielson (2004: p. 20) gives a different perspective of storytelling:

> …being the great story of the community that projects the values of the community; storytelling as a tool of leadership; stories created through dialogue which are a summary of deliberations in planning, etc; the personal story projecting an individual's contribution, whether good or bad and the collective common story of the community which is shared by the community.

Nielson's approach to storytelling is more inclined towards places in that it makes reference to the community, leadership in the community, conversations in the community, the individual story in contributing to the community and the integration of those stories; an approach that conforms to the perspective taken in the study of the Oldham town brand.

Delarge (2004) sees stories from a perspective that differs from Nielson (2004) and Denning (2006). Delarge (2004) lists categories of stories as; *'hero stories'* of people who stand out in achievements; *'survivor stories'* which show recovery from a trying situation; *'steam valve stories'* provide relief in stressful circumstances; *'kick in the pants' or 'learn from mistakes stories'* warn about situations that could prove harmful; *'trust stories'* help restore good relations; *rites* (events) present the cultural practices at specific times or occasions; physical objects which represent the organizational synergy; *people* especially leaders who project a narrative in the way they conduct themselves, and *games* by way of simulation. Delarge (2004) approaches storytelling as situational and gives consideration to a diverse range of options in carrying out the process of storytelling. O'Gorman and Gillespie (2010: p. 662) assert that: "…thus stories and an organisation's culture co-evolve." DeLarge (2004) concluded that stories would give the most benefit in building trust, establishing common grounds, developing common understanding, making things simpler and providing illustrations to inform others. Brady and Haley (2013) observed that stories connect an organisation's past to the current and that senior management spend time telling corporate stories. It would follow from the findings by DeLarge (2004) that Oldham needs credibility in its story for the stakeholders to trust its brand. Reissner (2011: p. 594) writing on organizational change stories identified three patterns of stories which are: "…stories of 'the good old days'; stories of deception, taboo and silence; and stories of influence." This perspective ties in with DeLarge (2004) and Denning (2006) in that this classification can fit into other classifications of stories. The classification of "good old days" by Reissner (2011) typifies the cotton era of Oldham. Reissner (2011) further asserts that making sense of stories is often beyond the control of managers and the dynamics of stories may not be easy for managers to comprehend; as: "meaning is fluid and contextual" (Riessmann, 1993: p. 15).

The dynamics of Oldham would appear to present "the good old days" narrative from multitudes of stakeholders and "the crisis of the recent past" (Cantle, 2001; Ritchie, 2001).

Wilson (2008) points out that stories have a unique capacity to speak to people in diverse situations; that is one story can be employed to meet different objectives. One could point at the use of stories in teaching, preaching and training to meet multiple lessons or purposes and that also applies to branding. The story can be employed for several purposes (Rasmussen, 2005; Kadembo, 2012; Iglesias and Bonet, 2012). Denning (2006) explained that the narrative could be used in communicating who the firm is, where branding the offering (service or product) would be the testimony of the satisfied consumer and the delivery of the provision. Shaw et al. (1998) observed that the success of plans is enhanced by an inspiring story in which people can identify themselves. Carriger (2010) asserts that effective execution of a plan in business depends on the way the story is narrated. The explanation by Denning (2006) sought to show how storytelling is employed in branding. This approach is summarized in table 2.1.

Table 2. 1 Effective storytelling: strategic business narrative techniques

If your objective is:	You will need a story that:	In telling it you will need to:	Your story will inspire with such phrases as:
Communicating what Oldham is about- The Brand	Is usually told by the product or service itself, or by the customer's word of mouth or by a credible third party.	Be sure that the place is delivering on its brand promise.	Wow! I am going to tell my friends about this!
	Oldham speaks through its heritage (the landscape, buildings and infrastructure) and its people.	Does Oldham deliver on its promise to its stakeholders like residents, investors, the workforce, tourists, and others?	Does the Oldham experience in town and across the borough and its townships thrill the stakeholders?

Source: Adapted from Denning (2006: p. 43)

The framework by Denning (2006) demonstrates that the communication of a brand is anchored in a story that is lived or delivered and creates a wow factor on the clientele. This perspective concurs with Rhodes and Brown (2005: p. 169) who argue that: "best stories… stir people's minds, hearts and souls…give them new insights into themselves, their problems and their human condition." The study of storytelling has shown that storytelling or the narrative can lead people and can influence how they act (Rhodes and Brown, 2005; Parry and Hansen, 2007; Reissner, 2011). Gurley (1999) points out that even when real value is low on the stock market a good persuasive story can boost the valuation of an organization's shares which in turn attracts further investments. The story of Oldham if carefully considered has the potential to stir up the emotions that can lead to strong associations which can help galvanize the place towards progression. Mann (2012) states that the story and the art of storytelling dictate the path to success and the social media has provided better performance and efficiency in conveying information. Rhodes and Brown (2005) allude to the view that stories are a vehicle through which experience is reconstituted, meaning developed and communicated effectively. Rasmussen (2005: p. 231) highlights the difference between giving an example and telling a story as the presence of: "… sensuous features, feelings and thoughts, weaving the different pieces together into a wholeness, which appears to transcend the sum of single pieces." Arguing along the same line Josephsson et al. (2006) present the narrative as consistent with a non-scientific everyday experience in conceptualizing a phenomenon. McLean (2008) sees storytelling as a means to manage trouble or for dealing with the unexpected. According to Josephsson et al. (2006) the non-scientific everyday experience includes the human element in the cultural context which has become popular with human and social science studies; the term narrative is employed to capture issues related to human meaning/meaning-making incorporates human creativity. Adshead (2006)

observed that people are not interested in a senseless story despite senselessness being part of everyday life. In view of the aforesaid Denning (2006: p. 45) comments that:

> With the discovery of the central importance of narrative, the role of the brand manager becomes one of creating, extending and continually reinventing the brand narrative, while making sure that the narrative actually reflects what the company is delivering.

One could point out that there are many stories that can be narrated about an organisation. Denning (2008) suggests that, for stories to be effective, they would follow a pattern that connects to the audience by galvanising attention, stimulating a craving for change and ultimately reinforced with reasons. Following a comprehensive review of literature on stories and storytelling, Sim and Alspaugh (2011) observed that the data structures in stories affect the subsequent analysis which gives meaning to the applications of storytelling.

This study assumes that effective stories should take the perspective of the listener into consideration. However, Christensen (2009: p. 39), suggests that:

> In the marketing approach it is regarded to be less trustworthy with different stories. ….there should be one story about one company, which can then be told, creatively different – this is the practical experience behind all branding from the Marlboro cowboy to Coca-Cola. And this experience is obviously relatively imperative when it is aimed at pushing through with advertisements.

The researcher sees that the challenge Oldham faces, in developing the brand, is about coming up with a single convincing story that is consistent and is believable. Humphreys and Brown (2002: p. 422) write that: "Stories that are authored through dialogue are one symbolic means by which meaning is variously negotiated, shared and contested." In the light of Oldham's history and diversity of stakeholders the enormity of the task cannot be under emphasized. Cappielo (2004: p. 107) argues her case of acclimatizing to two different schools and points out that solving problems would be easier based on "story by story, place by place, community by community- urban, suburban and rural." In the case of the Oldham brand it would be ideal to tackle the brand development task story by story. Kostera and Obloj (2010: p. 564) state that: "Strategists can be seen as storytellers, spinning their tales around central

themes, ideas, and protagonists." In putting emphasis on the importance of organisational

leadership in branding Mirza (2012: p. 23) points out that: "When organisations get their

leadership brand right, they are in a stronger position to meet and exceed customer

expectations."

To the extent that strategists could be looked upon as storytellers it would follow that the

strategization of the Oldham brand is tantamount to engaging storytelling (Kostera and Obloj,

2010). Fog et al. (2002) suggest that a story needs a plot, a message, conflict and characters

as illustrated in *Figure* 2.11. The model shows that in the storytelling process in branding the

message, the plot, the conflict and the characters affect each other. Poletta (1998: p. 421) says

that: "A plot is the logic that makes meaningful the events that precede the story's

conclusion." This perspective concurs with various views echoed in the literature that

storytelling for branding is multi-stakeholder driven. Poletta (1998) further points out that the

narrative relies on the perspectives of the narrator, the protagonist and the audience show the

importance of shared identities in the process.

Figure 2.11 The Elements of Storytelling in Branding
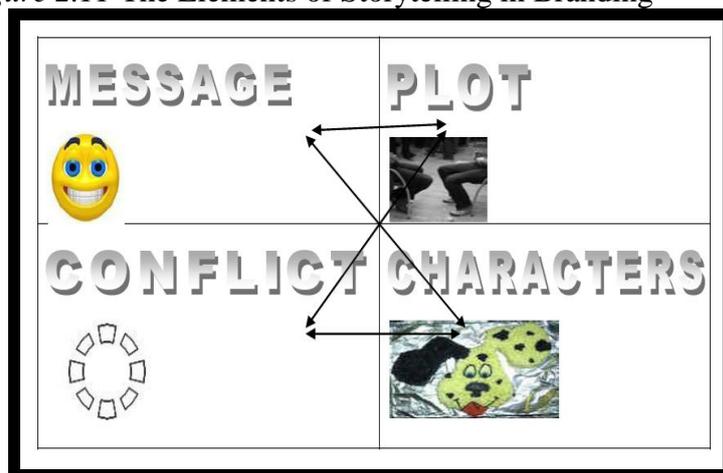
Source: Adapted from Fog et al. (2002: p. 31)

The model by Fog et al. (2002) provides a framework that mirrors the challenges that Oldham

would need to deal with as all the variables in the framework are applicable. Hawkins and

Saleem (2012) present a model that shows that a story emanates from three main inputs, which are the personal narrative, organisational narrative and societal narrative. The message about Oldham is not clear and suffers from the diverse approaches emanating from the positions taken by the different constituent groups (Richie, 2001). Conflict is obvious in the light of race diversity and the different levels of affluence stretching across the rich and poor suburbs (Cantle, 2001, 2006); these yield complex multiple identities of narratives (Humphreys and Brown, 2002). The minority ethnic groups and the white groups have had frictions and these continue even to this day at a reduced level. The characters cut across race and age. The setting is made complex as a result of unmet promises, an aspect that brings a big contrast to the dominant city of Manchester within the proximity of Oldham.

The literature review ultimately gives sway to the argument put forward by Lewis (2011: p. 16) highlighting the critical importance of the storytelling approach in stating that:

> Story is central to human understanding- it makes life liveable, because without a story, there is no identity, no self, no other. ...Consequently, humans are drawn to story through our residence in the narrative.

Therefore, if human understanding is centered on the story (Lewis, 2011); it would follow that, brands are stories with persuasive powers to draw people towards consuming the good or service (Ries and Ries, 2003). Even more importantly, if human beings live in stories (Lewis, 2011; Brown et al., 2008), it would mean that stories or the narrative approach drive functions across human engagements, hence stories become trans-historical and trans-cultural (Brown et al., 2009). The role of the narrative would make storytelling in branding unavoidable: "as stories are symbols of understanding" (Harry and Hansen, 2007: p. 287).

Adamson et al. (2006) point out that stories combine conflict, drama, suspense, symbols, characters, triumph over odds, some humour which help with imagination and aid memory. Stories also help develop relationships, crystallize values and beliefs and strengthen teamwork and a sense of belonging.

Breda et al. (2008: p. 87) conclude their article focusing on identities arguing that: "Telling a story is a way to make some links, to transfer some values from one level to another of these different identities." DeLarge (2004: p.76) emphatically comments that: "Stories give life, context and order to facts." Parry and Hansen (2007) writing on the organisational story argue that entities have stories; that they narrate stories and that they are stories themselves which influence and that stories the leadership of the organisation. Tussyadiah et al. (2011) assert that storytelling is important in the marketing of goods and services.

Good stories tend to be about breaking rules; junior people climb to the top; how seniors act when they make mistakes; how organisations face their challenges; the process of change and restructuring processes; which largely are about triumphing in adversity (Parry and Hansen, 2007). Reissner (2011) makes important observations of the dynamics of sensemaking in storytelling, alluding to the contradictions that unfold in the early stages of storytelling as storytellers shift in their perspectives.

The story is a fundamental tenet of how the: "… human mind accesses, organizes, understands and shapes reality" (Jossey-Bassey, 2007: p. 156).

Advancing the importance of storytelling Van Buskirk and McGrath (1992) argue that if narratives shape the environment they would in turn shape individuals as the values of the environment tend to rub on to the people in the respective subject, hence they shape the emotional climate of the organization; and in turn it renders itself to emotional branding. DeLarge (2004: p. 78) presents an argument on the use of a story and provides tips as follows:

> Enhance your story by asking, 'What is the story here?'; Practise active story listening; Distinguish yourself as a good storyteller; Use stories to improve and communicate internal cultures; As designers, embrace any opportunity to listen to, as well as offer stories; Actively recruit and encourage storytellers; Use "experiential" stories as evidence of the "intangible" community we trade in – design; Use stories as relational cement.

In view of the tips provided by DeLarge (2004) it would necessitate that the storyteller is clear about the story, develops the expertise in storytelling, and is an active listener and employs experiential stories to drive home the message. In this study of the Oldham brand the stories about the history, the ethical diversity, and the destiny articulated in the blue print for the future, *Oldham Beyond* should be vigorously communicated. In a study of the application of storytelling by corporate leaders it was observed that four key elements are critical, which are the Purpose, the Allusion, the People and the Appeal (Marshall and Adamic, 2010). Marshall and Adamic (2010: p. 18) explain the phenomenon as follows:

> Narratives told with a particular purpose in mind, which allude to a company's history and role in the market, told by the right person to the proper audience, and that contain an inspiring emotional appeal are far more likely to impact corporate culture and employee behaviour

Therefore, in view of the assertions by Marshall and Adamic (2010) it is important for the story of Oldham to clearly state the purpose of the story, capture the diverse history which mirrors its heritage, be told by a storyteller well acquainted about Oldham and employing an inspiring emotional appeal. Naslund and Pemer (2012) caution the possible adverse effects of the storytelling approach when there is a dominant story which could adversely impact change. In this study it would appear the dominant adverse stories for the rebranding of Oldham are the riots of 2001 and the economic decline in the 1970's as the cotton era came to an end. Leung and Fong (2011: p. 467) allude to the diverse applications of storytelling in stating that:

> Storytelling is also prominently adopted in management and organisational practices in order to achieve specific purposes such as developing the identity of an organisation or leader, connecting individuals and organisations, managing organisational change, and transferring and saving knowledge.

Following various submissions on the notion of storytelling instrumentation in different facets of life one could argue that storytelling is critical to our understanding and performance. Ready (2002), a consultant on leadership, identified elements for effective storytelling as: being specific to a defined context appropriate to the level under consideration

and narrated by respectable exemplary leaders, incorporating drama in the story and containing lessons for the listeners. Gerbner (1999: p. 9) contends that people know what they have not witnessed but see through what is constructed from stories. The function of stories would be to socialize into contexts in changing dynamics, hence the role of the story is: "…to reveal how things work, to describe what things are, and to tell us what to do about them" (Gerbner, 1999: p. 9).

2.4.2 Branding and Storytelling

Marzec (2007) argues the case for the corporate story as the driver of the organisation by galvanising commitment within the organisation and the external stakeholders by putting vision into action. Boje and Khan (2009) refer to entrepreneurs' use of storytelling to improve their brand where the entrepreneur is the hero in the story and refer to the process as *story-branding*. McKenzie (2011: p. 134) says that: "The popular press is full of stories of successful entrepreneurs". Gresh (1998: p. 124) asserts that: "branding is synonymous with storytelling".

Johansson (2012) points out that the brand connects the product to the consumer; in a form of exchange of values and meanings. Driscoll and McKee (2006) suggest that stories contain value, determine control, are liberating and are a tool for co-creation. Marzec (2007) points out that the stories are not mere narrations but the life of the organisation in that they should manifest in every aspect of the given organisation. Vendelo (1998) postulates that it would be easy to persuade customers about an organisation's products and services if the organisation's reputation speaks (tells a story) favourably and makes a promise about the future. Branding is storytelling and many branding experts agree about this perspective (Keenan, 2000; Cordiner, 2009). Fog et al. (2002) argue the overwhelming case of the importance of storytelling for the

future of branding by pointing out that despite the misunderstanding by many players, the role of storytelling in branding is undisputed.

Brown and Lewis (2011) show that identity is not simple representation but manifestation of power. In that regard Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) observe that scientific research has provided the context for clear comprehension of storytelling as an aid to memory; a reference for discerning humanity; consolidating behaviours and their associations, and relating with brand personality. This allows for the brand persona to connect with the targeted market as it can be recognized and can be remembered through the power of the story.

Boal and Schulz (2007) argue that telling stories about the past enables leaders to provide a rationale for past actions and a guide for future actions. Chiu et al. (2012: p. 263) clearly state that:

> Stories can resonate with customers and thus create competitive advantages for a company. ….
> From a business perspective understanding the elements of brand story and how these elements
> influence customer attitudes can help managers design a good brand story and increase consumer
> confidence.

The observation by Chiu et al. (2012) underpins the importance of storytelling in developing a brand and goes further to use the term brand story. It is important to note that the storytelling approach requires thorough planning so that important elements about the organisation could be made part of the story. Langer and Thorup (2006: p. 374) argue that,

> … new concepts have emerged in the literature about corporate, organisational and marketing
> communications, such as (corporate) branding, integrated communication, storytelling and crisis
> communication. ……corporate branding and integrated (corporate) communication, seek to
> establish holistic frameworks for the overall communicative expressions of the organisation
> concerned, based on its culture and values.

The field of marketing has only followed the pattern of developments in thinking and practice where storytelling has increasingly become a key tenet in the conceptualisation and practices in the fields of science and management (Langer and Thorup, 2006; Denning, 2007; Barker and Boyle, 2009).

In putting forward the same argument Denning (2006: p. 45) posits that: "The recognition of the centrality of narrative to branding however generally implies a significant shift in the function of brand management."

Kay (2006) argues that the narrative is not the brand but it is the story which plays the important role of explaining the power of brands. Cordiner (2009) observed that the great brands like Apple, Nike, Disney, McDonalds, Coca-Cola among others emanate from great stories that inspire. Kay (2006) explains that the strength of brands is in influencing customers or consumers by creating associated meanings or perceptions about a given phenomenon; that is the brand meaning and its effective management. Denning (2007) suggests that in the branding process there is a temptation to shed the truth which could be costly to the organisation and in that regard will require a clear differentiation and a process that perpetuates the positive impressions.

Keenan (2000) clearly outlines the integration of the different facets of marketing in developing the branding story for an organisation and its products. It would therefore follow that the integration of the facets of Oldham need to be approached methodically to give a good story that would present the place as a good brand. Keenan (2000: p. 29) states that: "A company's brand story should come out of its experience and mission and be aimed at engaging the customer." Therefore, Oldham's brand story needs to capture its heritage and key characteristics and engage the various stakeholders. The story of the Oldham brand gives consideration to issues associated with the landscape, the relative geographic position in the Northwest of England and its implications, the structure of the management of the council. Driscoll and McKee (2007) put forward the task for management as the re-storying of the corporate purpose through dialogue with various stakeholders. In view of the aforesaid the

brand will capture issues associated with the customer/client value that flow from the borough in the form of the landscape; cost effectiveness; quality standards in resource provision; better prospects for the future; the ordinary people who have an experience of Oldham and their perceptions of the future.

This approach would constitute the complete story about what and where Oldham has been and the future direction which in turn defines….*The Oldham brand*. Keenan (2008) further suggests that the brand story makes explaining to the clients of an organisation convenient.

Tsai (2006: p. 655) states that:

> Conceptually, a life story is an internalized narrative integration of past, present, and anticipated future, providing a sense of unity and purpose. Identity construction is a dialogical development process, in which people tell each other stories and listen to stories, in all cultures at all times. As one tells and retells one's life story, one's identity is steadily revised. … Thus, in one period an individual identifies with certain images and narratives, but at another time may switch the identification to other images and narratives.

Palmer et al. (2009) identified six images of change. The first three images of change are, the change manager as director (firm control is in place in the change process); the change manager as navigator (learning and developing in some areas in the course of change) and the change manager as caretaker (monitoring the process of change driven by independent forces). The other three types of images are the change manager as coach (shape capabilities of an organization); the change manager as interpreter (create meaning from unfolding situations) and the change manager as nurturer (where organizations are seen in the same context as babies develop). It would appear that in the case of the Oldham brand the image of change employed tends to vary with the change in the leadership of the council. It follows that frameworks or metaphors shape how organisations perceive the process of change. Lamsa and Sintonen (2006) concur with Tsai (2006) in arguing that stories help people connect to the past, the present and the future which is the basis of human understanding. Therefore, in the case of a town, city, borough or region the more stories that are told the

more they shape opinions and perceptions of that place. It is in this context that the experiences of Oldham are looked at in the light of the pivotal turning points in the history of the town and the borough. Tsai (2006: pp. 657-658) states that:

> Brand managers are also advised to bear in mind that identity is metaphorically comparable to a life story, which is composed of internalized narrative integration of the past, the present, and the anticipated future. … so brand strategists should attend closely to the metamorphoses involved.

Therefore, the archetypes formed about Oldham mirror other places given that any identity is relative to another (Bell and Jayne, 2003). The mention of a place will bring to the fore a number of connotations about size, features, architectural designs, history, people, prosperity among others which provide some kind of a comparative gauge on the town or city's stature vis-à-vis other towns and cities or any other place's branding (Hansen, 2010). Herskovitz and Crystal (2010: p. 31) in their article focusing on storytelling and branding conclude that: "The strength of your brand will come from the strength of its persona and your commitment to its behavioural implications." From this perspective it could be argued that when developing brands, focus is given to the factors that impinge on the brand persona and that is not an exception in looking at the Oldham brand. With reference to the iconic stories of Richard Branson and Bill Gates, Boje and Smith (2010: p. 314) point out that: "We can examine Microsoft and the Virgin Group as narrators of their respective entrepreneur, using more or less original styles of storytelling, and strange twists and turns of their storyline." The brand persona refers to the characteristics of a brand that differentiate it (Bernstein, 2003). Writing on the corporate perspective on storytelling McLlellan (2006) puts forward the advantages of storytelling, as being that; stories show patterns and help in making connections; stories are tools for empowerment; stories emanate in problem areas and help find a way out of the predicament; great stories are a road map which give all the actions and tasks to resolve situations; stories are a toolkit for problem solving; stories are told to eliminate suspects in a case; good stories give one a good feeling; stories aid in remembering and integrating

knowledge; stories aid the process of thinking; stories help in identifying the critical forces impacting the organization.

McLlellan (2006) points out that the advantages of using stories seem to revolve around the argument that stories make professional practice easier. The whole thrust of the story would appear to touch on the human nature in that human understanding is enmeshed in a web of stories (Lamsa and Sintonen, 2006; Lapp and Carr, 2008; Barker and Boyle, 2009; Lewis, 2011; Carr and Ann, 2011). Through the use of pictures for narrations for stories, narrated or imagined messages are better understood. Generally stories are a familiar mode of transmitting messages in organisations; thus making them: "narrative appraisal systems" (Van Buskirk and Mcgath, 1992: p. 22).

Chiu et al. (2012) observe that where a brand story gives meaning and affect customer understanding and judgment they are bound to differ in respect of products and services. Sunwolf and Frey (2001) referenced in Kar and Samantarai (2011: p. 139) assert that:

> Stories encompass multiple functions including: relational (ways of connecting people), explanatory (ways of knowing), creative (ways of creating reality), historical (ways of remembering) and forecasting (ways of visioning the future).

One is prompted to suggest that the story is at the centre of humanity. Anon (2008: p. 27) concurs with this view in pointing out that:

> Since the development of speech it seems that human beings have communicated through telling stories. In oral traditions storytellers were held in high esteem, they entertained, touched the emotions and passed on knowledge. They also made people feel part of something.

Therefore, in the light of these arguments it can be assumed that the stories that have been told about Oldham give the picture that is portrayed to the stakeholders to the town and the wider borough and hence the stories shape the image stakeholders have of the place, their lives are shaped by the stories. Sullivan (2004) raises the strategic importance of speaking as

a brand building tool. Chiu et al (2012) point out that storytelling could be used as a powerful tool for branding.

The role of storytelling in branding could be better illustrated using the model (*Figure* 2.12*)* by Fog et al. (2002) who see branding as the goal and storytelling the means. This perspective presents storytelling as a tool for branding rather than the brand. One could argue that a good brand will depend on how well storytelling is applied in developing that brand. Burman and Zeplin (2006: p. 282) suggest that: "The crucial role of employees in brand building is due to the fact that all sources of brand identity are based on the decisions and actions of employees." This view puts people at the centre of the phenomenon of branding. Martin et al. (2005) point out that corporate branding could only be realised if employees can identify with the brand and see the organisation as an employer of choice.

Patterson and Brown (2005: p. 316) argue the challenge for marketing competitiveness by suggesting that it would:

> …require marketing to market itself more effectively. …this involves identifying customer needs (one which is storytelling) and meeting these needs (by telling compelling tales) better than the competition…

In the various concepts put forward on branding and marketing, increasingly marketing is tantamount to branding realised through storytelling (Ries and Ries, 2003; Aver, 2009). The model by Fog et al. (2002), *Figure* 2.12 concurs with the arguments by Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) suggesting that for brands to be successful they would need to have a strong brand persona anchored in trust, loyalty, transparency, among other factors. Cordiner (2009) argues that the brand will be the protagonist in story branding. The brand emanates from well executed small tasks and in that regard they create a strong connection with the targeted market. Hatch and Rubin (2008) employ the art of hermeneutics in branding developed from the connections of elements, which include trace, tac and collective interpretation; and also

draw the attention of the interplay of managerial intent, stakeholder reception, the history of the brand, elements of the past and the present in providing meaning.

Figure 2.12 The Branding and Storytelling Framework

Branding is the goal; Storytelling is the means.

A strong brand is built on strong values (**Oldham brand**)

A strong brand is built on emotional connections with the consumer

Branding

Target group
Oldham Stakeholders

Storytelling
Various storytellers narrated

The target group, ie customers and employees grasp the company's values and message.
The target group empathises with the place
The Oldham community share in the story/values of the town.

A story communicates values in a way that we can understand

A story speaks to our emotions
Oldham stories impact people

Source: Adapted from Fog et al (2002: p. 22)

According to Herskovitz and Crystal (2010: p. 26) the brand persona is a key factor in enhancing the success of a brand and this also applies to a place with characteristics as: "…courage, decisiveness, determination, work ethic, honesty, flexibility, responsibility, curiosity." Smith and Wintrob (2013) observed that consumers are connected to stories which can be believed as they link ideas and emotions, and they urge brand builders to employ storytelling. They argue that effective story branding needs a narrative arc which embrace the key drivers of the outcome of the story, that is the motive, the execution process, questions or

situations to be addressed and changes to be realised. According to Smith and Wintrob (2013) there are four types of brand stories that form the anthology of story branding construct as illustrated in *Figure 2.13*. The types of stories convey the argument that there is no one story that underpins a brand.

Figure 2.13 Brand Story Anthology Maps Construct

Heritage Stories

Details the origin of the brand and its qualities

Can be told several times and give life to the Oldham brand

Contemporary Stories

The suite of stories that the brand tells today with interesting plotlines.

Project the brand promise and the qualities of the place.

Towards the Brand Story Anthology Mapping in the construct of the Oldham Brand

Folklore Stories

These are the stories that are told by others which organically nurture the the culture and sub-cultures around the Oldham brand

Vision Stories

Imagines a future state- creating the story of an eventual legacy (Oldham Beyond).

Project a future that will become the focus of the stakeholders of Oldham

Source: Adapted from Smith and Wintrob (2013: p. 37)

The notion of storytelling and creating an image is more about story selling, and it revolves around the storyteller's perspective (Jensen, 2007; Lapp and Carr, 2008; McKenzie, 2011).

Patterson and Brown (2005) point out that an organisation would need a good story to be able to sell. This view would be authentic in that it reflects the reality of storytelling, which is about projecting one's own perspective through the story we sell our self first and that could apply to a whole organisation. Lapp and Carr (2008: p. 533) bring up the whole notion of storytelling arguing that it: "...can be considered to be a metaphor for the storyteller's and story seller's experiences". Harris and Barnes (2006) in agreement with Cargiulo (2006) assert that stories make it easier to understand and recall as people learn better through stories which people are able to recreate and also entertain, teach, delight, or inspire cutting across multitudes of functions and groups. According to Cargiulo (2006: pp. 5 - 6) stories have many functions for the organisation:

> Stories empower a speaker; Stories create an environment; Stories bind and bond individuals; Stories engage our minds in active listening; Stories negotiate differences; Stories encode information; Stories are tools for thinking; Stories serve as weapons; Stories bring about healing.

It would appear from the above list of the functions of stories that stories anchor our interactions and our management processes in society and in business. The contention is that people's lives are stories and every phenomenon can be reduced to a story, no wonder Cargiulo (2006) brings into perspective the big picture concerning the abounding influence of the story in human facets. McLlellan (2006) concurs on the abounding effects of the story on issues of life and business. Chiu et al. (2012: p. 264) state that: "If elements of a brand story convey information and influence customer comprehension and judgement, they likely vary across search and experience products."

While storytelling seems to naturally fit with life it appears simple to relate with and connect to branding, there is need for caution in applying the storytelling approach. In that regard Thompson et al. (2006) warn of doppelganger brand image in which emotional brand image stories are tainted and create a negative image of the brand. Despite the adverse effects of doppelganger, there are benefits from it, which include a signal to cultural contradictions for

attention, a warning to take action and an opportunity to re-adjust the story in line with the changing environment (Thompson, et al., 2006). On the other hand Anholt (2010) points at the attraction of the bad story to the audience and further comments that it would take a stronger story to kill a strong one.

2.5 The Expanded Theoretical Framework of the Study

Armstrong et al. (2009) point out that place marketing involves activities that shape people's views, perceptions and attitudes towards a particular place, which may include towns, cities, boroughs, regions or nations. Anon (2011: p. 23) quotes Judd Labarthe, a planning director stating that: "Marketing is storytelling. To become more effective, create a better story and it helps towards winning the Effie awards". Having considered a variety of views on literature on the notion of the narrative or storytelling in branding with a focus on Oldham's branding scenarios and history the researcher presents a theoretical framework. Stromquist and Verhoeven (2004) point out the central importance of narratives in linking past experiences with verbal sequences for cultural transmission; utilisation of the events before and after (*endophora*) and application of extras in linguistics (*exophora)* respectively. This framework presents the bedrock of the theoretical underpinnings of the study. The framework is cognisant of the complex nature of Oldham. The branding process of a place is affected by a broad range of factors, and that necessitates embracing the concept of multiple stakeholder management.

The diagrammatic framework is provided to consolidate the literature on branding and the storytelling approach. The elements of the theoretical framework of the study are discussed in this section in the light of the diversity of the important issues involved. The discussion looks at the place's history, the narrative or storytelling approach in brand building, the criteria for

effective place branding and the place's strategy for growth, infrastructure, geography and place branding. Barker and Boyle (2009: p. 82) point out that: ".... in many respects, strategic storytelling can be thought of as an agent for change and a way to make a brand leader". This view underpins the essence of the study in that it captures a key aspect of the application of storytelling in brand development with a focus on Oldham.

In this study it is suggested that the fundamental issue is the identification of the stories that have shaped Oldham in the past and can help shape Oldham into a leading brand for the future. Perrow (2007) suggests that there are three parts to the narrative; which are the story, the storyteller and the story listener; and stories essentially connect all humans to other people, hence making the story is an integral component of being a human being. It is the researcher's observation in the light of the literature review conducted and other life experiences that, with regard to consumption, knowledge of the brand and its values shape expectations, hence we live by the promises of brands. The view taken by Perrow (2007) implies that a good story is told by a storyteller who is connected to the listener and is well grounded in the story. One could suggest that this is tantamount to the storyteller being the story given that if the listener does not like the storyteller the same would apply to the story told. This has the potential effect of making the story uninteresting to the listener and vice versa, or the listener could switch off and not be attentive to the story (Smith and Wintrob, 2013). Kar and Samantarai (2011: p. 144) state that: "The narratives help understanding connectedness of different aspects of an outcome." Therefore, in the case of the Oldham brand the different stories help with the linking and understanding of the different facets of a place and its dynamics.

2.5.1 The history of Oldham

The researcher's perspective is that the image of a place is intertwined with its history and that should also hold for Oldham. The history of Oldham is reflected in various facets of the unfolding story going back to the founding of the small village that has expanded into a town and the wider borough. The factors involved include the infrastructure and folklore, the people and their ethnic diversity; the institutions that have played roles in the changes that have taken place, characters that have contributed to the legacy, inventions that have made an impact, industrial developments, among others (Silver and Hill, 2002; Hansen, 2010). The different elements present the twists and turns that cast the picture of the town and the borough today as the past has shaped the place, which is the story of Oldham's journey; through the good and the bad times (Ries and Ries, 2003). Hudson and Balmer (2013) identified four types of corporate heritage which are; structural heritage which relates to the history; the implied heritage which involve historic events that could be understood from present conditions and the mythical heritage which is about inventions or imagination which is shared. The assertion by Boje (2008) that every entity is a storyteller in that we are all made by our story is critical in understanding the phenomenon of storytelling. One could argue that Oldham is made of its stories which are diverse in nature, and sometimes conflicting because of the diversity of stakeholders and differences in perceptions of the storytellers, considering ethnicity, age, role in society, experiences, education, professions, and other various aspects.

2.5.2 The narrative approach and brand building

Lewis (2011: pp. 505-506) states that: "We take in stories, our own and others and tell them back to our self and to others in a recursive process that augments our understanding." The history of Oldham relates to the narrative or storytelling about the place and that in turn

would project different pictures about the good and the bad aspects of the place which in turn reflect on the personality of the place. The main issue is the image(s) portrayed when the different stories are told about Oldham. Denning (2006) points out that organisations are concerned about how they capture the essential facets of the springboard story to trigger transitional change. This would be about being minimalist in approach given that the significance lies in the story that unfolds.

Ultimately, the story as narrated by the listener has a greater impact than when told by the organisation as that makes it more believable and compelling. Rhodes and Brown (2005: p. 178) argue that: "... narratives are means through which organisations are brought to life in different ways that people can construct meaning and identity." This argument would suggest that telling the Oldham story would put life into the borough and the town. The organisational image or identity is an amalgam of the many minds that tell the story (Silver and Hill, 2002); hence, the story becomes subjective but can be inspiring. The study of Oldham is a reflection of this ethos which include the riots story which put life into Oldham and the story of the future, that is *Oldham Beyond* have breathed a new life into the Oldham brand. Greyser (2009) writes on brand crisis or reputational troubles which can emanate from a variety of sources; this notion suits in with the riots of 2001.

The storytelling approach presents an opportunity to Oldham as Cargiulo (2006: p. 5) points out that: "Essentially, stories allow us to model what we want to communicate instead of having to explain it." One could look at the study as necessitating a focus on rebranding of Oldham as a process of re-storying for a positive image of the place. The story of Oldham portrays a picture; that would sell the place to the different stakeholders (Carr and Ann, 2011). Wang (2008) argues the importance of collaboration of the different stakeholders in

destination marketing which are assembling, ordering, implementation, evaluation and transformation. In applying storytelling Kadembo (2013, see appendix 14 for the list of publications by researcher) discussed how St Mary's primary school employed the story of the virgin Mary to brand the school demonstrating how storytelling can be used in branding.

2.5.3 Story based branding for places

The story-based approach to the branding of a place is at the centre of the model demonstrating that the approach combines a number of variables. Stromquist and Verheven (2004) argue that cultural values shape the way stories are told. Aksu-koc and Tekdemiur (2004) and Jensen (2007) suggest that narratives point to the good or service or in this study, a place. It is important to note that the story can be either real or created to project a certain image. Subsequently, the combined variables or stories should impact on the targeted market. In the case of a place the various stakeholders are considered so that they can identify with it for a positive appeal.

The notion of storytelling resonates well with the related promotional messages that organisations use in putting across messages. Lichtou et al. (2010) identified four themes underpinning place branding which are: firstly, the local stakeholder and political challenges; secondly local particularities; thirdly, participants' future visions of Santorini (the island which was the subject of the research) expressing their wishes and desire for public sector intervention for society's acceptance, for policies to succeed; and fourthly for the future visions including aspirations for a better future and abandoning elements of the past that are problematic. Reference is made to Aitken and Campelo's (2011) 4R model (see *Figure* 2.9). One could argue that it would follow that the same forces, the four Rs have a similar impact in the shaping of the Oldham brand.

2.5.4 The criterion for effective place branding

Marketers and academics have argued at length on the essence of branding in different spheres of business. There are different approaches to effective branding and that forms the core of brand development which would be critical in the development of brands. Borrowing from the diversity of literature relating to the criteria for branding the appropriate elements are incorporated into the story-based branding approach (Papadatos, 2006). Medway and Warnaby (2008: p. 642) observed that place marketing practitioners consider their function in branding or re-branding as: "… perhaps primary – role as the creation of a positive holistic image for a locality through the selective appropriation of place product elements and their commodification in relevant media."

This view amounts to a deliberate move to position the locality which in this study would increase the appeal of the respective locality of Oldham to its various stakeholders. A place as a destination needs a strategy to harness the diverse issues (composite) into a cohesive identity to differentiate it from other competitors (Booker and Burgess, 2008). Hildreth (2010) provides a number of simplified stages in the development of a place branding story. The stages provide integrated analytical stages that progressively shape into a well-crafted branding story for a place as presented in *Figure 2.14.*

Figure 2.14 Stages in the development of Place Story Brand

Step 1:   Identify the current story that dominates about Oldham
Step 2:   Decide what the story about Oldham could and should be
Step 3a: Find new and better ways to tell the story about Oldham directly
Step 3b: Use even more ways to tell the story about Oldham indirectly
Step 4:   Make the story about Oldham stronger, more true and easier to spread
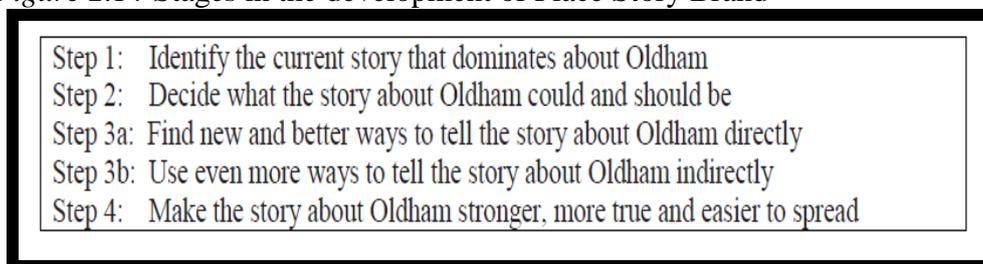
Source: Adapted from Hildreth (2010: p. 30)

By looking at the branding of a place which in this study is Oldham in the manner Hildreth (2010) suggests is simple but authentic and that should yield good results. This approach

might be a better approach compared to the way HDMC the consultancy who carried out a study on re-branding Oldham approached the phenomenon. This approach would appear easier to follow and more authentic in its systematic approach.

2.5.5 Place Strategy for growth, infrastructure, geography and place branding

The development of a place is planned deliberately and therefore takes a pattern that mirrors the strategic plan. The physical aspects of a place project images that can portray beauty or ugliness which may be attractive or not and accordingly lay a foundation for perceptions, attitudes and associations of the place depending on the connotations it attracts to different stakeholder groups. Black and Kerry (2009) assert that there is a strategic advantage to effective storytelling.

Lucado (2005) presents the story as an acronym for strengths, topic, optimal conditions, relationship and yes (story). Though Lucado (2005) writes on spiritual matters relating to common life, the tools employed appear to fit in with the challenges for the branding process. Any branding process is expected to mirror the strengths of Oldham such as its green spaces, the diversity of its community and its strategic position in the North West. Other issues for consideration include the potential for advancement and the strategic blue print and related promotional material which have different effects; optimal conditions take into account resource constrains and the efforts by the consultancy. HDMC (2008) mirrors the resource limitations with a modest budget; the relationship of the different stakeholders and the different cities is on the essence of shaping the image of Oldham relative to other similar places.

Papadatos (2006) observed that the character of (and emotional attachment to) an organisation's brand creates a lasting value for the marketer's loyalty agenda. In that respect stakeholders to Oldham who are emotionally attached to the brand are likely to be loyal to the brand. Yes, is confirmation everything fits together. Dinnie, et al. (2010) highlights the multiple stakeholder nature of place branding and the need for effective integrated marketing communications (IMC).

2.5.6 An assessment and consolidation of the Theoretical model for the study

In developing the Oldham brand through storytelling or the narrative it is important to note that the process is quite diverse in nature, given that all activities or developments amount to a story. Hence, the stories that are dominant define the branding of Oldham and its related facets (Barker and Boyle, 2009; Smith and Wintrob, 2013). In suggesting the model for operationalising the study the researcher seeks to capture the issues and weigh the extent to which storytelling or the narrative shapes the branding the place. It is important to acknowledge the sentiments by Barker and Boyle (2009) who highlight great storytelling as being, universal; tapping into emotions; relevant; enlightened and entertaining and are never completely told. In turn the stories are a conversation, empowering, selfless and are truthful and trustworthy. The branding of a place like Oldham mirrors a combination of the desired messages and the reality experienced by the various stakeholders. Therefore, it is imperative that the brand managers in place marketing take extra care in handling the different facets of the traditional marketing elements, and the unfolding stories that shape the brand.

The use of storytelling in branding is not limited by the nature of the offering hence even Oldham as a place would be appropriate for the application of storytelling in building its brand. Reissner (2011: p. 606) makes a strong case for storytelling in an article on stories of organisational change, arguing that:

> …stories will provide a better understanding of how interpretive schemes are constructed and negotiated and which other factors influence other factors. Stories are time-bound and context specific (including cultural aspects).

In respect of the elements of the theoretical framework it is important to note that the different building blocks are stories in their own right. Therefore, one could be looking at the historical story, the branding story, the place strategy story and narrative story about Oldham. While the technical and philosophical models and arguments could be put forward in trying to explain the phenomenon of branding and storytelling there are many issues to be considered. Bacon (2004) asserts that organisations only manage three things; products, price and behavior which are core to differentiating. These variables are critical in conceptualising and operationalising the branding process. Bacon (2004) asserts that symbolic differentiation derives from walking the talk for organisations so that their message is fulfilled by the actions (behaviour). The researcher would see this as amounting to living the story. The theoretical framework is derived from the contribution of various authors with some of the major contributors slotted into the diagrammatic illustration of the pillars of the study in *Figure 2.15*. The theoretical framework brings together some of the key elements together in a context to give a consolidated perspective on the conceptualization of the study within the confines of the underlying theories and concepts relevant to the phenomenon of storytelling. The theoretical framework presented is an expansion of a component of the four framework of research (see *Figure* 1.3).

Figure 2. 15 The Theoretical Framework of the Study

The place history

Boje (2008)
Hansen (2010)
Drummond and Snape (2007)
Law (1999)
McPhillips (1997)
Moses (1997)
Welsch (1998)
Balakrishnan (2008)
Hayes (1971)
Aitken and Campelo (2011)

The narrative and brand building

Barker and Boyle (2009)
Lucado (2005)
Papadatos (2006)
Denning (2006; 2008)
Rhodes and Brown (2005)
McLellan (2006)
Herskovitz and Crystal (2010)
Silverman (2004)
Fog et al (2002)
Cargiulo (2006)
Faust (2007)

Narrative/Story- based of a PLACE branding
Hansen (2011); Kadembo (2009; 2010); Trueman et al (2004); The Chronicles of Alda (2008); Breda, Delatre and Ocler (2008); Thompson, et al (2006); Parry and Hansen (2007).

The criteria for effective branding

Chernatomy and McDonald (2003)
Hankinson (2005)
Booker and Burgess, 2008
Kavaratzis (2005)
Balmer and Greyser (2002)
Davis (2005)
Wheeler (2006)
Hamish and Pringle (2008)
Ghodeswar (2008)
Hatch and Rubin (2006)

Place Strategy for growth, infrastructure, geography

Hutchinson (2001)
Kotler (1999)
Medley and Warnaby (2008)
Balakrishnan (2008)
Breda et al (2008)
Woodside, et al (2007)
Aitken and Campelo (2011)

2.6 Summary of the Literature Review

Branding is central to the practice of marketing and is tantamount to the core offering as argued by Ries and Ries (2003) in pointing out that organisations have moved from selling goods and services to selling brands. Chernatomy and McDonald (2003) see places as brands

and that is backed by an abundance of literature. Therefore, Oldham is a place brand. The Oldham brand has gone through cycles which have adversely affected it and needs re-storying in order to appeal. Fenton and Langley (2011) illustrate the interrelationships of strategic aspects of strategic practice (the macro approaches), praxis (micro activities) and practitioners and how storytelling permeates the interfaces involved. This further emphasises the critical importance of storytelling as a driver of human functionalities (Lewis, 2011; Rasmussen, 2005; Kadembo, 2012; Boyle and Barker, 2009). In the case of this study the literature review has provided insights into the power of the narrative or storytelling in shaping values (Breda et al., 2008). Chiu et al. (2012: p. 262) asserts that:

> Stories resonate with customers and thus create competitive advantages for a company. … understanding the elements of brand story and how these elements influence customer attitudes can help managers design a good brand story and increase consumer confidence.

The relevance and significance of the story in management and marketing has received significant emphasis but the applications of the storytelling approach in business are limited. Anon (2008b) observed that storytelling is a powerful tool which needs to be engaged thoroughly. This is the challenge that Oldham faces in developing an effective place brand which would tell a story that creates a positive association of the place to its different stakeholders. The story or stories that an organisation tells or are told by customers of that organisation minimise or enhance the delivery of satisfaction (Simmons, n.d.).

The literature review has demonstrated the importance of place marketing and place branding. The whole process is complex and strategic and is driven by multitudes of stakeholders. Various models can be considered in developing the strategic elements of place branding applying the storytelling approach. Therefore, storytelling is central to marketing and place branding needs to be harnessed and applied systematically (Boje, 2008). Stromquist and Verhoeven (2004) highlight the paradox faced by a mature narrator who has both referential and evaluative roles necessitating different perspectives in the same narration,

whether it is an author or chief protagonists. Thompson (2011) makes reference to existentialism as a phenomenon largely influenced by other factors or acts and that identity is a fleeting concept and that communication is very important; a submission that mirrors Oldham's image. Eagle and Kitchen (2000) and Pitta, et al. (2006) highlight the importance of the synergy of different communication tools in the shaping of a brand epitomised in integrated marketing communications (IMC) and the role of marcom (marketing communications) suppliers. Anon (2008b: p. 28) argues emphatically that: "Without a consistent story, it begins to unravel. Bull's advice is to 'think of brands as people'. A person cannot be captured by a portrait. A brand cannot be captured by a logo." This assertion resonates with the aim of this study which postulates that at the centre of a successful brand is a great story. Therefore, Oldham as a place needs a great story to usher it into a better marketing position or reposition it as a great brand. The brand is not a matter of what people say but about people's experiences with the place and what people say about that experience.

One could argue the importance of the story as the core to human understanding. One could argue that we are a collection of our stories and those stories define who we are and how we see the world around us, our history and our future. These could be stories of any entity which in this case are for a place, Oldham. Allingham (2009) emphasizes the importance of communication in the branding of various entities including places and observes that the differences between internal and external communication has been reduced. In capping the literature on the notion of stories and place branding reference is made to the assertion by Kaplan et al. (2010: p. 1290) who states that:

> Despite the difficulties in branding places, a strong place brand offers invaluable benefits to its stakeholders once developed. Having a positive and strong place brand is a critical tool to compete with other nations, regions and cities.

The study proceeds to the documented stories about Oldham. There are various contributors to the stories about Oldham. Wheatley and Frieze (2011) point out that effective stories are

founded on determination in walking out of situations to embrace new challenges; and that is what has characterised Oldham in its history but lost the momentum in the last thirty years. Signorelli (2013) a practising storybranding consultant acknowledges the effectiveness of the storybranding approach in advertising from his experience as a practitioner (see the detailed process of storybranding in appendix 16).

Chapter Three

Profiling the History of Oldham in Shaping the Brand

3.1 **Introduction to Oldham as a place brand**

The notion that Oldham is a brand is a reality, but the type of brand that Oldham is may be a subject of debate as different stakeholders take different views of the brand (HDMC, 2008). Every entity is a brand created in the story of that entity (Boje, 2008); Oldham is a story with a strong heritage (Cantle, 2001; Ritchie, 2001). Oldham renders itself to a number of stories relating to the history, the characters, the infrastructure, communities and their diversity, and that accounts for the Oldham brand (Bateson, 1985). Rasmussen (2005) emphasises the power of the story created by individuals or by a community; and to that end the story of the Oldham brand is not an exception. Turner and Lesslie-Miller (2007) argue that brands should present a coherent story and that good stories have a role for modern day marketing. In an article on the re-branding and re-positioning of Oldham, Kadembo (2009: p. 59) alludes to the case for rebranding and repositioning Oldham arguing that:

> In the case of Oldham it was essential that after the events of 2001 the borough needed to be renewed so that it was perceived favourably in the minds of stakeholders and relative to other places in UK and in the world. It is important that the mention of Oldham connotes positive attributes.

Kadembo (2009) argues that Oldham as a brand takes different images through times. Over time as situations unfold brands are transformed by the dynamics of their environment (Silver and Hill, 2002). As a place Oldham has metamorphosed many times as different developments took root in the town and the wider borough (Cantle, 2001; Ritchie, 2001). The developments are part of a natural transformation through habitation, economic development, social and cultural shifts especially in the light of ethnic diversity which is an integral feature of the borough since the 1950/60's as many foreigners were invited into the borough to take up cotton jobs (Ritchie, 2001; Cantle, 2001, 2006; Law, 1999).

In the same vein Halsall (2010: p. 114) observed that:

> Today, however Oldham is a branded vibrant place with renewal activities and economic growth, and the vision for the future of Oldham is to develop the town into a modern power base for retailing and education facilities.

The thrust of this observation is the acknowledgement that Oldham rebranded itself and is destined to further re-brand itself looking forward to the future. This submission therefore tallies with the contention of this study, which is the notion that a place is shaped by a number of stories. The developments that are earmarked for Oldham are part of the process of re-storying Oldham, as a place it will not continue to have the same appeal or carry the same features. This process would hold for virtually every entity, be it living or innate (Boje, 2008). In the rebranding of Oldham, the town centre forms the hub of the borough's administration and commercial activities. Oldham town is the nerve centre of the Oldham borough as alluded to by Bell and Jayne (2003) in the literature review of this study; and Oldham town is intertwined with the other six townships that form the Oldham borough.

3.1.1 The First Recorded Reference to Oldham

The annals of history have the first known recorded appearance of Oldham between 1170 and 1180 in *The Book of Miracles* by the monk William of Canterbury (Bateson, 1985). This reference is in respect of the three year old son of Aldhulme who is brought back to life after he had died. Bateson (1985: p. 4) observes that Aldhulme is a Norse name which he interprets to mean "…*holmr of hulm* which means *home of a farmer called Alda*" (Bateson,1985). In old Norse *holmr* refers to: "…*raised land for farming- just like is done in Iceland to this day.*" (Bateson, 1985: p. 4). Further observations by Bateson (1985) show that Oldham, the farmer, Aldhulme moved from Eccles to settle in what later became Oldham.

3.1.2   Shaping the Historical Pattern

Oldham was referred to as a reserved township in the 18th century. The urbanisation and

industrialisation started taking shape following the Toleration Act of 1689 (Smith, 1994)

which facilitated the interaction of the village with the outside world. Ferranti (n.d) narrates

the exploits of the Ferranti family in engineering works spanning 1897 to 1993 when it

ceased trading which had a huge impact on the community and the economy of Oldham.

Fanning (2001) recalls his father's hard work in the coal mine, but wonders why Oldham coal

received no fame and felt that was possibly because it peaked before railways.

3.2   The Background to Oldham (Oldham Town and the Oldham Metropolitan Borough)

Oldham Metropolitan Borough lies to the north of Greater Manchester and within eight miles

of the City of Manchester; the second largest commercial city and the third most populated

city in the UK. The sprawling City of Manchester overshadows the towns around it including

Oldham. The Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council went through a delimitation process

that redefined the confines of the borough and brought new dynamics to both the

geographical scope and social chemistry of the new borough. This development in 1974

meant that Oldham took on a new identity in a bid to integrate people towards a common

ethos. However, some disapproval by residents of some of the townships incorporated into

the new setup from the 1974 delimitation exercise to this day still hold (see section 1.3). One

could view this process as social re-engineering which attracted complex change

management. That development coincided with the era of a downward spiral of Oldham's

success story from the days of its economic boom before experiencing dilapidation,

hopelessness and race confrontation which culminated in the rioting crisis of 2001 (Ritchie,

2001). This development brought into perspective the deeper lying issues about community

cohesion, race relations and the deeper issues of segregation, economic prosperity and

retrogression (Cantle, 2006). The impetus by both the local and central governments towards redressing this setback opened up an opportunity to re-story Oldham. A number of studies were commissioned with the main purpose of addressing the causes of the riots and projecting into the future possible actions to make Oldham a better place for investment, living and tourism.

Ritchie (2001) in a report in the aftermath of the riots in 2001 highlighted critical issues that contributed towards the riots of 2001. The report observed that the lack of strategic direction at both corporate and political levels; lack of dialogue to address race relations to address myths and suspicions and no media engagement to allay fears created by biased reporting were part of the reasons for the riots. The Cantle Report (2006) focused on community cohesion as a follow up to the Cantle Report of 2001. In 2008 the Oldham Partnership commissioned a study on the re-branding of the place and engaged Hemisphere consultancy, a public relations company to carry it out. All these reports focused on renewing Oldham which in terms of this study would be tantamount to re-storying Oldham. Cantle (2006: p. 4)'s review report on community cohesion in Oldham describes the problems Oldham is facing as: "…communities leading parallel lives delineated by high levels of segregation in housing and schools, reinforced by differences in language, culture and religion." The state of Oldham would render itself to a significantly diverse place with pockets of communities which do not see each other as part of the big picture (Halsall, 2010; Cantle, 2006). This challenge necessitated developing programmes to encourage community cohesion. Langridge (1996) observed that the floral wildlife of Oldham was sacrificed for industrialisation and took away some of the beauty of the least known treasures. However, Langridge (1996) acknowledges the beauty of the flowers and the landscape from Failsworth to Saddlerworth and refers to it as a heritage.

3.3 An insight into the documented stories of Oldham

It is often argued that "no news is bad news". A lot has been documented about Oldham capturing high points and low points of the place and the borough's history subsequent to a revolution personified in the riots of 2001 (Cantle, 2006). Besides the revolutionary shifts in the state of Oldham there are evolutionary developments that have been unfolding since civilisation started (Ritchie, 2001). The documented narrations of Oldham are largely a reflection of the history, development and aspirations in the shaping of the future of the town and the wider borough which determine the broad direction Oldham takes in its development (Law, 1999). Commenting on the attractiveness of the Oldham town as a shopping destination and a place for studying, Richard Phillips a second year PGCE student at the University of Huddersfield is quoted from the website (www.hud.ac.uk, 22.10.2012) stating that Oldham offers a lot for the shopper and provides variety with the Spindles shopping Centre, Town Square and the indoor market and that the transport network is reliable.

3. 4 The Evolution and Revolution of the Oldham Brand

Hemisphere Design Marketing Consultancy (2008: p. 2) were commissioned to carry out the investigation into the rebranding of Oldham, and they noted that,

> Both the Oldham Partnership and Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council recognise that Oldham's image is an important influencing factor in the success of its regeneration and economic development plans – indeed ongoing negative perceptions are seen as a key blockage in Oldham realising its potential.

The consultant's findings from the custodians of the brand is an important observation as it confirms the general perception held by most stakeholders who have a negative perception of Oldham's image due to past events. The national statistics and available literature on Oldham portrays a similar picture on the image of the place. To the extent that the Oldham Council and the Oldham Partnership orchestrated the blueprint for the borough and the town *Oldham Beyond*, which among other things, acknowledges the poor image of the town and the key areas for improvement; it is therefore imperative that something is done. The commissioning

of the study conducted by HDMC (2008) was meant to address the brand image and the market position of Oldham.

The negative perceptions are a reflection of the impact of Oldham's history which created negative connotations through its omissions and commissions in the stories that make up the town, the surrounding townships and the length and breadth of the borough (Law, 1999). HDMC (2008: p. 4) would suggest that while a number of negatives were identified about Oldham there is a glimmer of hope in that the consultant also established that:

> The aspect of Oldham that was most cited by respondents as a positive was its potential and the sense of it being on the edge of taking a big step forward. One of the things perceived as holding Oldham back from its potential was a fear of taking the plunge and 'going for it' - this was felt to be in some part due to the divided nature of the borough and its politics.

In the light of the findings of the consultant the efforts of both the Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Oldham Partnership, one can deduce that the whole effort is geared towards changing the Oldham story of the past into a new story of the future which will usher the new vision as epitomised in the strategic blue print, *Oldham Beyond*.

This section of the discussion on the phenomenon of the Oldham brand seeks to delve into the various publications about the phenomenon of the Oldham stories and highlight the major turning points and their effects on the place's branding and positioning. Drummond (2005) suggests that Oldham had more than mills in its past heritage as evidenced in photographs from the past showing happiness and enthusiasm in a carnival atmosphere some of which continue to this day (see appendix 8).

Today, Oldham significantly differs from the once buzzing 'king cotton'. This situation amounts to a failure to change in the face of the collapse of the cotton industry. It would appear that Oldham failed in its paradigm shift as the industrial base shifted. As far as the

recent renewal process of the town and the borough is concerned Kadembo (2007: p. 59) argues that:

> The process of change in Oldham needed renewal and image change which took the form of regeneration and re-positioning in order to ultimately develop its preferred brand, whether as a home or a destination. Regeneration largely dealt with the physical infrastructure while re-positioning was focused on the perceptions of the stakeholders.

Oldham needed re-storying to revive its ailing reputation and attract business so that development could return to the town and the borough at large. Oldham needed a turnaround strategy but it would appear it went for incremental changes tantamount to muddling through without a concrete direction to pursue (Ritchie, 2001). However, the researcher has observed that in 2010 the new council leader and the chief executive of the council were in harmony on the way forward and unlocked a new impetus for development in the borough focusing on the young people.

3.4.1 HDMC's Evaluation and Recommendation

HDMC (2008) write on their website that:

> We believe brands should have life, breadth and be ultimately sustainable in the long-term, building a consistent image and profile that has the flexibility to grow and develop with the organisation or place that they represent.

This is a guiding principle for brand development for the organisation. The contribution of HDMC will be considered in view of their recommendations to Oldham for the development of the brand. The re-branding project was completed in the first quarter of 2008. HDMC (2008) made a critical analysis of the case of Oldham and they recommended a logo that has become the symbol of the borough and the town at large.

The logo is a blue ring with a shaded top. The research gives consideration to the logic and the conceptual approach in arriving at the respective symbol; a sign that appears to fail to

capture the heritage of Oldham (Kadembo et al., 2010). HDMC (2008: p. 1) state the objective of the project as:

> The aim of this rebranding project is therefore to arrive at a strong, positive and distinctive brand positioning for Oldham that will inform all of the borough's communication activity across its varied partnerships, helping to reposition Oldham to its key target audiences and improving how it is perceived, locally, regionally, nationally and internationally.

To achieve the aim of the project, HDMC underwent a number of processes to establish the perceptions people held about Oldham; identifying the desired image, for the brand; developing a mode of communicating the new brand visually and in written form and providing a communications strategy to convey the new image to target audiences. There are a number of key themes around which the brand could be developed that the report highlights before analysing and recommending the image of the town and the borough as presented in appendix 13. The report points out that Oldham has a range of opportunities to make progress and there are also negatives working against Oldham's progress.

Looking to the future HDMC (2008) point to the easy access to Manchester and the Peak District, Yorkshire, an open town centre where people would desire to go, with good housing and with local job opportunities. It was pointed out that to achieve the aspirations for the future it would require creating unity in the borough, effective communication of the vision for the future, providing better leisure facilities, opening up the town centre for transport access, improving gateways to the town, finding better use for the mills, identifying with the young people, celebrating multiculturalism and having more urban green spaces. The challenge in the report by HDMC is about making Oldham work again and restore its glorious past when Oldham had an international standing.

Table 3.1 The Application of the Branding Pyramid to the Rebranding of Oldham

Elements of Branding	Factors Relating to Elements of Branding
Attributes	Multicultural Young Green Accessible Traditional Shrewd/Thrifty Enterprising Practical Sceptical/Rational
Benefits	Diversity Vigour Liveability Dependability Accessibility Capability
Personality	Cautious/Careful Canny Straightforward
Brand Values	In it together- friendly/inclusive/contributing Smart- pragmatic/intelligent/wise Constructive – productive/positive/moving forward
Brand Essence	A wise head on young shoulders -What Oldham looks like -What Oldham says -What Oldham does

Source: Adapted from HDMC (2008: p. 13-16)

HDMC makes use of the brand pyramid model which has attributes, benefits, personality, values and brand essence as the pillars of effective branding. Directly applying the model to the rebranding of Oldham there are a number of factors that have been placed in the different categories as per table 3.1.

Subsequent to the investigation and analysis of Oldham, HDMC (2008) make a recommendation on the new image which is a turquoise blue ring. The recommended logo is meant to encapsulate the spirit of unity and usher a new era for the town and the borough at large. This is the new symbol with which Oldham is identified. It would

appear the symbol mirrors the aspirations of the town and the borough at large in trying to forge ahead a united and progressive society of Oldham. The light shading at the top of the ring is meant to represent the Saddleworth moors a place often associated with a sad story of murder, commonly referred to as the Saddleworth Moors murders. While over time the murders may not ring in the minds of the majority of stakeholders it is not clear what that light shading does to the image/identity of Oldham. In an article on the conceptual fit of the consultant's work Kadembo (2011: p. 328) observes that:

> From the analysis of the assertions of the report, one is reminded about the political implications which might have swayed the tone and focus of the report, probably at the expense of a well grounded approach. Oneness is politically appealing, but an investor, a tourist; or an employee may find no meaning in putting emphasis on that phenomena. To portray Oldham as one united borough of seven diverse townships does not in itself create a good brand.

The branding of a given entity should mirror the identity of the item, good, service, place and other variables which would create a favourable attitude towards it. In the case of the recommendation for the Oldham brand, one may pose a question on whether or not the turquoise blue circle is what people would buy into or is it representative of something that sells Oldham as an attractive destination for the different purposes.

Figure 3.1 The Oldham Logo
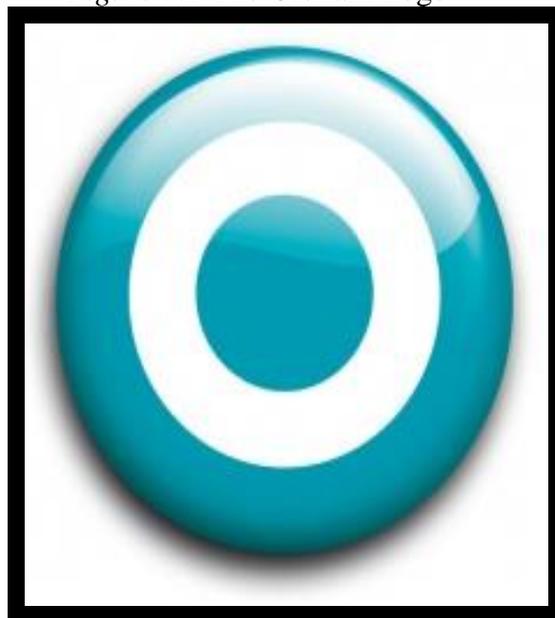
Source: HDMC (2008)

While the notion of oneness is undisputed in creating the momentum for progress, in the case of the Oldham brand there is clearly a case of misplaced symbolism (Kadembo, 2011). A characteristic of Oldham that is undisputed is segregation (Cantle, 2006); and that is directly opposite to what the recommended image implies. Concluding his article on the regeneration, repositioning and rebranding of Oldham, Kadembo (2009) argues that the recommendation for an image is simplistic and that the recommendation is without an appropriate conceptual grounding to justify the recommendation. Kadembo (2010: p. 319) argues that, "It is inconclusive whether the recommended image really makes a difference in the shaping of the new image of Oldham." The logo recommended does not bring up positive connotations about the heritage of Oldham as suggested by Hansen (2010) in an article on the branding of a Danish island.

3.5 Oldham "The King Cotton of old"

History records Oldham as a once vibrant place which was the focus of the world as the centre for cotton spinning (Law, 1999; Ritchie, 2001). That era came to an end in the 1970's with the end of cotton spinning in the borough and Oldham entered a phase of slow economic degeneration. While it was a global focus for great achievements that history sharply contrasts with a crisis torn place epitomised in race confrontations that lit up Oldham in a ball of fire reminiscent of a battleground in 2001(Kadembo, 2009).

People died in the riots and that heightened race confrontation (Cantle, 2001; Cantle, 2006). While that development was an ugly scene it provided a major turning point for Oldham as it shifted public opinion and turned the arm of government towards supporting what had become a crisis situation (Kadembo, 2009). Farnie (1998: p.4) describes Oldham as the metropolis of cotton spinning, machine making and mill building in stating that:

It is undisputable truth, embedded firmly in the textbooks of history, that Lancashire was the heartland of the industrial revolution and that the cotton mill was its most typical product and symbol. …The best place to study the mill in its perfect form is undoubtedly Oldham which became during the decade of the Cotton Famine, the leading mill town of the world, consuming more raw cotton and spinning yarn than any other single centre of the cotton industry. ….. a primacy that lasted as long as the British cotton industry. ….. The achievement of Oldham was all the greater because it laboured under great disadvantages as a hill town without either a river or any visible natural resources.

Oldham's growth was phenomenal in that by 1866 the town and the wider borough had acquired more spindles than any town in the world, and by 1871 more than any country in the world except the USA till 1837 (Gurr and Hunt, 1998). Oldham's spindlege reached 10.8 million of the world's 90.5 million in 1889- 90, which was an all-time peak of 12.4% of the world's cotton production. With this development the mill owners expressed their wealth by extending their houses, some of which still stand (Gurr and Lewis, 2007). This contributed to changing the face of Oldham for a better appeal which is a great treasure for the town and the wider borough's heritage. Gurr and Lewis (2007) raise queries about Oldham's lack of appeal despite its industrial success after observing that thirty USA towns had been named Manchester, and only one had been named Oldham. This scenario is rather surprising given Oldham's successes.

The story of the spindles of Oldham demonstrates both the bravery and dominance of the town locally and internationally with its peak in 1866 (Law, 1999). The big question one can pose is why a world leader (king cotton) should become so unnoticeable? Today the huge impact Oldham had across the world is not talked about or acknowledged. The story of cotton spinning put the Oldham brand in the spotlight. Oldham was a desired place, hence assumed to have an appealing brand. The moving story of "brave Oldham" shows that despite the town being on top of a hill with rivers that were not navigable it still attracted the global attention as "king cotton".

3.6 The Formative Years

McPhillips (1997: p. 3) writes about this topic in his book which starts by stating that:

> The years 1760 to 1832 saw the transformation of Oldham from a small village to a nationally and internationally known town. The change came about through interactions between communications, industry and politics

The development of Oldham as a place was underpinned by the industrial revolution. This was made possible by a combination of the introduction of machines, the improvement of transport and communication. These developments brought success to Oldham and projected it as a global brand (Bateson, 1985; Law, 1999; Ritchie, 2001; Drummond, 2005). Transport around Oldham was made more difficult as the streams around the town were not navigable leaving only the option of road transport (Law, 1999). The early road network of the eighteenth century development was driven by the wool merchants of the day and much of the travelling was on horseback. The first bus from Manchester to London was in 1754 and the fare was £2.25 (Drummond and Snape, 2007). Oldham only started a direct link to the capital in 1759 when stage wagons started linking with London (Drummond and Snape, 2007). In 1788 the difficulties of travelling to Manchester were made more complex with the fatal stabbing of Mr Marsh at Miles Platting while travelling from Manchester to Oldham. The coach to Manchester started in 1790 (Drummond and Snape, 2007). In 1772 another route was opened linking Oldham and Huddersfield. In 1798 a coach that linked Manchester and Hull with a toll at Watersheddings with the coach leaving Manchester on 23 June started operating, thus increasing traffic across the regions:

> Although Oldham's existence can be traced back to the 11th century, it was the Industrial Revolution - and cotton in particular - that laid the foundations for the town's prosperity. By the end of the 19th century Oldham was recognised near and far as nothing less than the greatest cotton spinning town in the world. Achieving this mantle was by no means straightforward - Oldham was blessed with fewer natural resources than its neighbouring rivals. Success was achieved largely through the determination, perseverance and ingenuity of Oldham's people, who put to good use what advantages the town possessed - its high humidity, its reserves of coal and its proximity to the factories burgeoning on both sides of the Pennines, especially those in and around Manchester.
> (http://www.letsgomanchester.com/oldham-history-c269.html, accessed, 10.11.2011)

The Oldham town centre represents a development founded on bravery and tenacity of a people whose agenda to advance their place was unshaken. Through time Oldham mustered a way to move forward despite the hindrances that stood in the way in trying to transform Oldham. One can observe that in the history of Oldham is a great story about conquering adversity to prosper. In the light of the subsequent developments one is convinced of the resolve of the people of Oldham from the past to brave themselves in challenging circumstances (Law, 1999). As Oldham looks back at what has been lost questions are raised about what happened to the spirit of bravery in Oldham upon which past successes were built (Ritchie, 2001).

3.7 The Oldham Districts in the 1950's, 60's and 70's

The era of the 1950's through to the 70's was punctuated by significant transition in the landscape. Drummond and Snape (2007: p. 5) in narrating the changes in this era as years of great change but then "Oldham was ill equipped for these changes and transformation was inevitable". After the second world war life changed for the better with improved houses and people owning cars. The infrastructure had to change to cater for better life styles; among them public services, roads were widened to accommodate increased volume of traffic and also divert some from the town centre, houses were designed in the Victorian style, places of entertainment were deserted in favour of playing bingo and watching television in homes. Regeneration schemes transformed the shopping areas, saw the expansion of the road network and significantly changed the landscape of Oldham. The Rochdale road was resurfaced in 1949-50. However, men who wore berets following their popularity in World War 2 caused delays as they marched on the road. In the 60's housing and industry existed side by side. The advertising industry had not yet grown more complicated and posters on walls were the main ways of advertising. Many masts stretching above the skyline of Oldham

told the unmistaken story of mills. There were many churches in the borough that conveyed the religious nature of the town. The health services developed and that saw the demolition of the old hospital and the construction of the new one to cater for the increasing need for better service. Security issues meant that the police and fire services were established.

Drummond and Snape (2007: p.17) describe the period as:

> The post war years were marked by gradual change and a sense of optimism- unemployment slowly declined, rationing was drawing to a close, young people were getting accustomed to earning a wage and spending a small disposable income. The period was characterised by 'discovery' –entertainments, fashions and so forth.

The description suggests a progressive society. The television was slowly gaining ground in the 1950's but most people could not afford it (Drummond and Snape (2007). Most people at this point were used to the cinema and dance halls. The first railway to Oldham opened in 1842 and it terminated in Werneth and was extended for nearer access to the town centre in 1847 (Drummond and Snape, 2007). In the 1930's cinema going was quite popular with the 1600 seater Roxy Cinema opening in 1937 and it was demolished in 2006 (Drummond and Snape, 2007). The Tommyfield Market opened in the 1950's and helped revive the economy after the World War II. The period stretching from the 1950's through to the 1970's changed the face of Oldham (Law, 1999; Drummond, 2005; Drummond and Snape, 2007). The infrastructure changed significantly giving a new face of the town and raising higher expectations for the people of Oldham. This period epitomised a significant regeneration of the town and mirrored an age of modernisation that changed the landscape for a better outlook. Moses (1997) chronicles approximately 600 changes to the landscape and names of streets of Oldham. Moses (1997) in his introductory remarks writes that:

> By the beginning of the 20th century the areas that once were fields and meadows were covered by rows of streets, mills and engineering works and pock-marked with quarries, which supplied the clay and rock for the clay buildings.

It is clear from the submissions by Moses (1997) and Drummond and Snape (2007) that Oldham has gone through a significant transformation of its landscape as more structures and road networks are constructed.

3.8 The Story of Riots in 2001

In the aftermath of the riots a number of reports were commissioned to investigate the crisis and make the requisite recommendations. Two main reports stand out, the work that was done includes the Ritchie report in 2001 which dealt with the reasons why things deteriorated to a crisis in Oldham. On the other hand Cantle reports in 2001 and 2006 considered why community cohesion was not working in Oldham. The two reports considered similar issues from slightly different perspectives. The two reports are summarised below.

3.8.1 The Oldham Story in the Ritchie Report

The Ritchie report was published in December 2001, seven months after the chaotic scenes that engulfed Oldham town in the course of the riots. The Oldham Council refers to this ugly phase of the history of Oldham as disturbances. However, live reporting by the press and subsequent commissions have called the events riots and the community has called the same events riots. Trueman et al. (2008: p. 39) echoed similar sentiments in relation to Bradford City that: "The Denham Report about the 2001 riots identified weak political and community leadership as a contributing factor, something that has been a recurrent theme for the city." The message of the report is that the transformation of the people of Oldham's attitudes is realised through the transformation of the town's various facets as infrastructure, town buildings, society and the general environment. The report observes that Oldham is a deprived borough which underlines most of the problems that the borough has dealt with over the years. The report acknowledges that the fame of Oldham as a global cotton spinning

centre became a notorious hub for racial tensions which attracted the local and international media to focus on the events in the town in May 2001. The events that took place in Oldham risked lives and made Oldham very unsafe for a while with the deputy mayor of Oldham petrol bombed. The extremist British National Party scored high in elections, 16% in West Oldham and Royal and 11% in Oldham East and Saddleworth. Subsequently, riots in Oldham had a contagious effect as they crept into others places as Leeds, Bradford and Burnley (Ritchie, 2001).

At the heart of the report are issues of the youth frustrations and racial divisions with people hardening their attitudes and presenting the OMBC huge challenges to grapple with. Despite the gloom something positive is echoed in the report by Ritchie (2001: p.4) suggesting that: "There is plenty of good to build on in Oldham, where the warmth of our welcome wherever we have gone has been enormously impressive"

The Ritchie report asserts that Oldham is a place of ethnic diversity and is in need of interchange, communication and interaction amongst the different ethnic groups in the town if community cohesion is to be realised. The report acknowledges Oldham's dominance in its boom years as the global hub of cotton spinning and spinning equipment supply enjoying 30% of the global market in the late 19th century. The report makes important observations about the Oldham economic situation; where seven wards were in the 10% most deprived category on the government's Local Needs Index with three being in the 50 worst wards in England. The paradox is that some parts of the borough are in the top 10% most affluent in England, as represented by the suburb of Saddleworth (Ritchie, 2001).

The Oldham community segregation has its roots in the immigration and settlement patterns where Pakistanis settled in Glodwick in the 1960's while the Bangladeshis settled in Westwood/Coldhurst in the 1970's. The Pakistanis and Bangladeshis would rather not interact with the white community whom they see as corrupt and have unacceptable practices while Whites wish the Pakistanis and Bangladeshis had never emigrated to Oldham. The muslim religion is referred to in a derogatory manner to further insult the Asian community (Ritchie, 2001). Furthermore, Whites suspect that the council used money to build mosques which is a fallacy among other myths (Ritchie, 2001). There are other impediments to integration which include failure to actively develop communication in the English language by sections of the Pakistani and Bangladeshi community (Ritchie, 2001). Many of the Asians owner-occupy properties and this means they would find it difficult to move from their properties, given low wages which make it difficult to acquire other properties. The report points out that nine thousand privately owned houses were unfit for living and that 13,000 houses required significant renovations; with most houses rather small. The report registers that Asian youngsters have lower levels of performance compared to White youngsters.

Recommendations on education suggest Asian and White children mix to learn and to appreciate each other's culture. Faith schools as Blue Coat, Crompton House and Our Lady's were recommended to open up 15 −20% to non-Christian children especially Muslims. English lessons for non-English speaking residents, better transition and linking for pre and post 16 education was recommended to be aligned to employers and more for vocational opportunities (Ritchie, 2001). The general skills levels are low and the jobs in Oldham are largely low skilled and poverty levels are high (Ritchie, 2001). Recommendations made on the economy include the need to up-skill, gain qualifications, end discrimination on grounds of race or religion and increase the minority representation in employment, training on

culture to be made mandatory in government and council organisations, contracts for work to also include Asians and also assist them.

Oldham has significant health challenges with a 20% chance of premature death particularly among black and minority communities compared to the national average (Ritchie, 2001). Recommendations made on health include that the NHS increase funding by £9 million, one stop shops for health be introduced, actively recruit GPs as 40% of the crop of 2001 was retiring shortly and to have a more long term strategic approach to the process (Ritchie, 2001). Policing is reported as fair in difficult circumstances and the police tend to be slow in responding to calls. Concerning the state of the town and the general outlook the report, Ritchie (2001: p. 14) states that: "More generally, we feel that a radically new approach is needed to regenerate the town in line with major proposals in this report." The recommendations for regeneration are that Oldham Council partners with the agency for development in Greater Manchester and the Northwest to uplift Oldham, that a big part of Oldham be part of the regeneration programme.

The report accuses the local council of weaknesses in corporate governance. Programmes on improving ethnic relations, tightening the electoral process to reduce cheating and ensuring fairness in job allocation within the council were also put forward in the report (Ritchie, 2001). The Oldham Evening Chronicle was considered biased in its reporting of racially related stories, something that raises serious concerns about implications for community relations. Oldham has been described as the most segregated town in the UK and this is largely due to Asians feeling comfortable living together while Whites as white flight took root (Halsall, 2007). To some extent the desire to live amongst people of similar origin, language, culture, customs and outlook etc is understandable but not when that is used to

create no-go areas tantamount to enclaves of hatred and segregation. Even the real estate agents promoted segregation by directing Asians to some areas and whites to others (Ritchie, 2001). Housing reform in Oldham was constrained by high levels of deprivation and poverty with Alexandra, Coldhurst and Werneth among the most deprived 1% on the National index of 2000 with St Mary's, St James, Hollinwood and Lees amongst the 10% most deprived (Ritchie, 2001). West Oldham is desperate for housing and most whites thought that housing allocation favoured ethnic minorities, a perception that further fuels hatred despite not being factual. Many estates in Oldham have no community centres for relaxation and interaction (Ritchie, 2001). Many people are crowded in the places where they live and grants towards housing were absorbed by repairs and not improvements (Ritchie, 2001). The report recommends a process of demolition and replacement for about 9000 houses in Oldham (Ritchie, 2001).

Traffic management schemes made access to some areas difficult, rendering them no-go areas for some people. The segregated nature of Oldham adversely impacts on the education provision in the town and the borough at large. Children may not mix at primary, or even at secondary school with children from other cultures and this has the effect of alienating children from a young age and compound thoughts of rejection and inferiority (Ritchie, 2001). The report registers that for GCSE children attaining more than 5+ A*-E grades between 1996 and 2000 improved; White pupils rose from 82% to 86%, Pakistani pupils 78% to 84% and Bangladeshi 59% to 77% (Ritchie, 2001). In the report reference is made to OFSTED's observation of children from Oldham's attendance profile where there is a high level of authorised and unauthorised absences from schools. To improve performance levels the Local Education Authority (LEA) has introduced an Annual Register of Good Practice and in 1999/2000 these were higher than the national average and sometimes these children

are taken to Pakistan or Bangladesh for long periods during term time (Ritchie, 2001). This is a big factor in influencing the performance profile of children in Oldham. The report recommends increasing opportunities for vocational courses to equip young people with skills (Ritchie, 2001). Oldham has an opportunity to improve schools being a member of Excellence in Cities (EiC) and has used it to make progress to boost performances in schools in Oldham. The report recommends that faith schools open up admissions to children of other faiths and that children are given equal opportunities.

Unemployment levels were low at 3.6% (Ritchie, 2001). Oldham's main priority was to raise aspirations and for young people to improve skills to national and international standards and enable the town and the borough at large to attract investment (Ritchie, 2001). The youth had an 8.9% unemployment level. The new economy assumed other industrial activities as manufacturing, distribution and services. Oldham is reported as a low wage town. The youth employment stood at 30% (Ritchie, 2001). The Oldham College, the Oldham Sixth Form and the then Oldham Business Management School provided opportunities to access further and higher education in Oldham. On issues of health, Oldham has a worse record than the national average. The health situation of the Oldham community adversely impacts on other aspects of the community like the economy. Ritchie (2001: p. 37) writes that, "Good health is arguably the most tangible indicator of life experience within a community."

Policing was a key factor in the riots with the Asian youths seeing the police as biased and racist in approach. The general picture of the police is that they are fair but have some weaknesses. The report recommends improvements in the investigation of race crimes which were on the increase. Police are said to be slow in responding to reports which adversely impacts on security in the borough.

Amenities for leisure were limited, especially for young Asian women. In white communities the young people have the opportunity to interact in pubs. Gang culture has been a menace in Oldham. Emphasis was placed on youth clubs as a way to encourage social education but there are fewer clubs to meet the need. Oldham parks at Alexandra and Werneth provide an opportunity for leisure to the community. Faith centres have a role in moderating community behaviour, though more interaction across different faiths is needed. Ritchie (2001, p. 53) points out that Oldham has no community-wide celebration that brings people together. The report makes some important conclusions that:

> Oldham is the 38th most deprived local authority out of 354 authorities in England on the DTLR's indices of deprivation 2000. Three wards in the borough are amongst the 1% of most deprived wards nationally, a further four within the most deprived 10%, and a further four within the most deprived 20%.

The statement provides a clear indication of the mammoth task facing Oldham in its quest to change people's lives and create a better place with better prospects.

The researcher would take the view that, to the extent that the report presents Oldham as a place that was struggling with poverty as its tag that simply puts it on the low end of the spectrum in terms of desirability, thus making Oldham a poor brand in respect of the quality of life in Oldham and the level of sophistication. As for the town centre strategy Ritchie (2001: p. 54) states that:

> There is evidence of a more strategic approach to regeneration, and one which has the potential to create jobs of a higher quality than Oldham has been used to, and to transform the physical environment of a run down area.

The fact that the town centre which is normally the nucleus of development is described as having a strategy is ideal given that normally town centres are the focal points for development (Bell and Jayne, 2003; Danson, 1999).

3.8.2 The Oldham Story in the Cantle Report

The Cantle report follows on from the Ritchie report and the "Forward Together" strategy meant to forge links across the diverse community of Oldham. The report was commissioned by the OMBC to provide an independent view on the critical issue of community cohesion following the 2001 experiences and makes relevant recommendations. Colville et al. (2011: p. 6) state that, "The riots provide a glimpse of a brave, in the sense of chilling, new world: potentially, the shape of things to come." In further discussion on the challenges in the new world Colville et al. (2011: p. 7) assert that, "We live in not just in times of continuous change but continuous discontinuous change." From the onset the report acknowledges the mammoth task of building community cohesion in Oldham and is complimenting the efforts of the council and the Oldham Partnership and places the challenge for building relations in future on the different communities.

The need for staff to work together to improve the image of the town and the borough at large is raised. Emphasis is put on the need for cooperation of the different people and communities of Oldham. While acknowledging the big challenges facing Oldham there are elements of good practice that can be passed on to other towns and boroughs. The report makes it clear that it is not all about doom and gloom for Oldham. The report urges unity of purpose and a shared vision for a brighter future as encapsulated in *Oldham Beyond.* Caution is urged on the high number of groupings or partnerships which tend to dilute efforts in renewing the borough which interfere with each other. The report suggests programmes that encourage the interaction of the different communities which necessitates working on changing the mind-set of the people of Oldham. Concern was registered about Oldham being referred to as "Where the riots happened". Despite riots happening in 2001 the scars remain and more importantly for the study, the story of riots continues to portray the image of

Oldham- certainly not a desirable image. Cantle (2006, p. 4) points out that: "Certainly, the charge made by one major report in 2001, that the disturbances signified a failure in Oldham's 'political corporate governance', could now be sustained."

The report asserts that investment could not be attracted to a community that lacked pride, confidence and the determination to move on beyond the shadow of the disturbances of 2001 which redefined the town and its outlaying townships (Ritchie, 2001). This development in the history of Oldham marked a milestone in the shaping of the Oldham of the future. The development challenged both the economic and social standing of Oldham and its surrounding areas. The protracted economic downturn and the social disintegration that had become synonymous with Oldham came under the spotlight and prompted a new urgency in redressing the economic and social ills that had characterised the once prosperous town (Ritchie, 2001). The panel makes a strong case for community cohesion across the different groups in the town and the borough at large as the catalyst for a better place which leads to a better brand and this would necessitate community leadership with a shared vision of the town and the borough. Cantle (2006: p. 9) in respect to the branding of the town the report states that,

> Consideration should be given to branding community cohesion literature and initiatives with an easily identifiable logo or symbol that could be used by the Council, the Oldham Partnership and other stakeholders. Perhaps schools and colleges might be challenged to design this logo through a borough wide competition.

The extent to which the report makes reference to branding is important. The context relates to communication of the cohesion strategies and building a consistent image of practices and portrayal of Oldham as a place. The good image would attract investment to Oldham. Efforts should be pro-actively directed at creating mutual cooperation and commitment by the council, the police and other institutions in the borough. Reference is made to the mutual co-existence of children from different backgrounds which worked well at the Oldham Sixth

Form College. The report points to the Oldham Sixth Form experience as something that could be emphasised across the town and the borough. This approach helps deal with the retrogressive issue of community segregation which is also highlighted in the Ritchie report of 2001. Cantle (2006: p. 15) would assert that the ethos of community cohesion for Oldham is underpinned by,

> Building good community relations; Targeting resources to reduce inequality; Cultural sensitivity – meeting the needs of individuals and communities; Community engagement; Creating understanding and respect and challenging racism and all forms of discrimination and prejudice; Creating a balanced workforce which is representative of the communities of the Borough; Enhancing the best practice in civic leadership.

The submission by the Cantle report on the notion of community cohesion points to a harmonious relationship. One could argue that peace and prosperity abound in mutual cooperation which augurs well for prosperity. The divided communities are the biggest challenge facing Oldham, given its past. Race relations are in need of improvement and the general outlook of Oldham portrays what the Ritchie report and Cantle report referred to as parallel communities. There is need for integration to be made a priority in the strategic document and the subsequent implementation programme. After the riots in 2001 the Oldham Partnership was accredited to deal with the negatives that worked against cohesion bringing the community together. Cantle (2001: p. 19) pointed out that:

> Oldham Against Crime, Health and Social Care, Economic Development, Local Learning, Culture, the Environment, Children and Young People, the Voluntary, Community and Faith sectors and Local Housing are significant that need action.

These groups were meant to work together to realise a better Oldham. Subsequent to the Ritchie report Oldham developed the appropriate cooperation across different interest groups in a comprehensive partnership which won the 2006 Local Government Partnership Chronicle Award for Sustainable Communities. The Oldham Council and the Oldham Partnership have put together a comprehensive communication mechanism to raise awareness and build an appropriate image of the borough and the town centre utilising newsletters, conferences, leaflets, among other instruments.

The main themes underpinning this vision are six in all, which are - Wealth Creation, Liveability, A Learning Community, Common Ground, Sustainability and New Oldham. The Cantle (2006) report differs from the line taken by the Ritchie report on the notion of community segregation and cohesion as it acknowledges a significant shift from the old order. This report points at increasing co-operation by the Oldham partnership where there is mutual support to realise community cohesion. The report recommends training leadership from different groups and elected members to support the process of developing community cohesion in Oldham.

3.8.3 The Economy

The report suggests that Oldham has been portrayed as a low wage, low skill economy; being the 38th most deprived borough in England out of 354 local authorities with three of its wards being in the 10% most deprived in England at the time of disturbances (Ritchie, 2001). The economy has managed to shift from manufacturing to service areas as a result of changes in the business environment. As part of the improvement Oldham moved from 38th most deprived in 2000 to 43rd in 2004, and from 18th on the Indices of Deprivation in 2000 to 26th in 2004 (Ritchie, 2001). At the same time unemployment went down. The report suggests that ways should be found to utilise the cultural diversity of the borough to good effect which could also attract inward investment with the economic sector seeking ways to engage the business sector in trying to beneficially exploit the diversity of the population into a productive and resourceful society. In the same vein it is observed that, "Oldham was built on manufacturing, on the making of cloth in different forms. … all form steps in the growth of the area" (Hayes, 1971: p. 7).

3.8.4 Housing

Housing is seen as one of the key elements at the heart of community cohesion and segregation. The report sees housing as an instrument to deal with problems of segregation where most of the BME (Black and Ethnic Minority) community is crowded, the dysfunctional housing market where there is a concentration of terraced houses with little scope for new structures and lack of choice for housing. The Oldham Council and other housing agents set out a vision to improve housing and upgrading the dilapidated structures.

The report makes an observation that the housing programme has significantly changed the face of Oldham with a number of houses constructed and different housing agents cooperating to improve the outlook of the town centre and the borough at large as part of the broad programme of Housing Market Renewal (HMR) project.

3.8.5 Education and Learning

The "One Borough, Forward Together" programme is driven by the ethos that gives everyone a chance to live and contribute to the good of the borough. Cantle (2006: p. 36) points at the different educational establishments which he observed as   doing well which include,

> The Schools Links Project; Oldham College's Celebrating Diversity Competition; The Youth Club twinning project; Establishment of the new University Centre; Positive outreach projects between colleges and schools; Oldham College's partnership with Tameside College in developing an Asian Underachievers programme.

Cooperation across different groupings has enriched the learning of children especially where interfaith training has been integrated (Ritchie, 2001). The efforts directed at community cohesion are robust and are drawing together those who have traditionally avoided interacting as part of one community. A proposal for an intercultural community secondary school was in the pipeline. The encouragement of children through the Junior University to perform better is a huge step towards progressing to Further and Higher education (Cantle, 2006).

(The Oldham University Centre which was a part of the University of Huddersfield), made a difference in providing access to higher education, and convenience for the Oldham community made a significant impact on changing Oldham society's aspirations through higher education provision. As a way of building cohesion, schools are being encouraged to be mixed in their approach to providing education and this also includes faith schools.

3.8.6 Policing

The situation regarding policing Oldham significantly improved from the time of the disturbances (Ritchie, 2001). Following the introduction of the Community Reassurance scheme to deal with littering, graffiti, abandoned vehicles and fly-tipping there has been a marked improvement across the whole borough since the time of the riots (Ritchie, 2001). The borough saw a 17% reduction in reported crime from April 2005 (Ritchie, 2001). Cantle (2006: p. 41) provides some important figures given on the developments in policing. These are:

> ...violent crime reduced in the last three years; … 36% reduction in domestic burglary in 2004/05; … 52% decrease in vehicle crime; … reported hate crime reduced from 1350 in 2001 to 450 in 2005.

Working with the Oldham Against Crime Partnership policing has enhanced safety across the borough working with local communities. While some concerns on race related crimes were raised the overall picture was encouraging though more could be done at the strategic level. There is more that could be done in the community through the cooperation of the different committees and groups.

3.8.7 Community Attitudes and Engagement

The Cantle report of 2001, the Ritchie report of 2001 and the Cantle report of 2006 allude to the importance of community relations as central to community cohesion. Equally important is the observation in the report that much of the improvement in Oldham was driven by the

voluntary and community sector in respect of the primary objectives in creating community cohesion and the whole ethos of working relationships with the council and the faith sector. Diversity in the faith sector manifests itself in the celebration of festivals like Eid, Diwali and Christmas including Diversity Festival, the Oldham Mela and 'Party in the Park' (Cantle, 2006). These celebrations should not overlook the things that the white community values and celebrate. Some areas will be marked Asian oriented in their character, while others are white in their orientation. These are critical issues that need cooperation of the area committees across the borough which goes some way to building bridges across the community. Cantle (2006, p. 49) writes that: "segregation and divisions between Oldham communities is still deeply entrenched."

Progress in the development of community cohesion in Oldham would necessitate the cooperation of different groupings across the borough. Some of the main concerns included racism across the borough and rivalry among gangs, which give a bad image of the town and the borough and the peddling of drugs in the town and the borough, but these attitudes and perspectives are not rigid with some improvements in relationships and peace being observed (Cantle, 2006).

Building bridges in the community reaches out to Whites, Asian and African communities, urban and rural communities as well as within presenting diverse groups. Cantle (2001: p. 52) makes reference to the importance of branding by stating that,

> Consideration should be given to branding community cohesion literature and initiatives with an easily identifiable logo or symbol that could be used by the Council, the Oldham Partnership and other stakeholders. Perhaps schools and colleges might be challenged to design this logo through a borough wide competition.

Writing on the riots, Marsden (2001) contributing to The World Socialist website argues that:

> …the groundwork for the neo-Nazis was prepared by… endemic poverty and social deprivation, the endorsement of racist sentiments by both the Conservative and Labour parties, as well as the mass media, and the repressive actions and inflammatory statements of the police. Oldham includes the third poorest council ward in the UK. Oldham's population of 219,000 includes around 24,600 of Asian ethnic origin—14,000 Pakistani, 9,000 Bangladeshi, and 1,600 Indians. The town is divided up into mainly white, Pakistani and Bangladeshi areas.

The broad picture portrayed by various reports on the riots suggests a culmination of a series of events of a racist nature and increasing frustration from a sense of segregation and economic meltdown. It would also appear that the police, the press and other authorities considered the Asian youths as aggressors and not victims and this was further compounded by the BNP fielding candidates in defence of the whites for which one of the candidates was Nick Griffin who enjoys TV coverage and fuels racism by his intolerance of Muslims (Cantle, 2006). Marsden (2001) writing on the riots of 2001 further states on the website that, "They must be understood as a manifestation of the social and racial tensions being fostered, and the way they are being deliberately channelled in a right wing direction."

3.9 The Ethos of *Oldham Beyond*

In the aftermath of the riots of 2001, Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council went through a soul searching process in a bid to champion a new direction in the renewal of the town and the wider borough (OMBC, 2004). *Oldham Beyond* is the blueprint for the future of the town and the wider borough which seeks to deal with the underlying issues about the shortcomings of the borough and to charter a strategic direction for the Oldham. *Oldham Beyond* sought to acknowledge the shortcomings of the borough at the time and project a better future and also define challenges that needed to be overcome to realise a better future for Oldham (OMBC, 2004).

At the time of unveiling the strategic document, the BBC reported that the document recommended creation of enterprise areas and the conversion of the old town hall into shops and involved more than 2, 000 people making inputs on how to renew the town and the wider borough. Commenting on the strategy Cantle (2006: p. 6) in an independent report on community cohesion says that:

> *Oldham Beyond* cannot hope to be successful, however, if divisions remain entrenched and community relations suffer from a real lack of trust. Investment on the scale required, will not take place in a community that lacks pride, confidence and the will to transcend the shadow of the 2001 disturbances.

The argument put forward in the Cantle report is central to success at any level given that stability builds success. The stories at the heart of Oldham would testify to this submission given that the peace time of the heydays of cotton mirror success and are a huge contrast to the dilapidation that coincided with the riots of 2001. While *Oldham Beyond* sounds idealistic in its appeal the key remains the commitment of all communities towards the common vision of the town and the wider borough.

 Kadembo (2009: p. 66) in an article on the Regeneration, Re-branding and Re-positioning of Oldham summarises the key elements of *Oldham Beyond*, the strategic blue print for the borough as developing:

- New business, concentration of business in two areas Hollinwood off a major motorway and the Mumps roundabout near the city centre.

- A creative borough, capturing the talents and nurturing them in Oldham for utilisation of such talents in Oldham.

- The mills of Oldham, a number of them have already been converted into creative workspace and more is in the pipeline.

- An intercultural borough, the unique aspects of the ethnic groups and their uniting factors should help spearhead multitudes of activities that should enrich the borough.

- An educated population, the university centre is the jewel in the crown in the transformation of the educational threshold of the community and raise the skills of the borough.

- Smart communities, better, safe communities will create a better place to live in through housing renewal.

- Regeneration web, by linking the many places that make up Oldham with attractive places and features will make the whole borough a better place.

- Common ground, by creating more favourable common meeting areas, in particular the town square it would create more integrated communities.

- Sustainability, what is done within the borough should not jeopardise the environment, socially and economically.

- Many places not just one, the borough is made up of many communities which are well integrated and the whole borough is part of Greater Manchester.

The vision of Oldham is about prosperity and development through harnessing the situation and advancing the town and the wider borough. To this day a lot has changed in Oldham and still more needs to be done. The story has many strands but what is most critical is the need to remain focused and galvanize the commitment of the different stakeholders.

3.10 The Council's Approach to branding Oldham

In 2007 the Oldham Council published a brochure entitled '*Think you know Oldham: Think again*' with an accompanying slogan a 'G*reat* P*eople, Great Place and Great Prospects.*' The brochure emphasized that Oldham has moved on. OMB (2007: p. 6) acknowledges the perception portrayed by Oldham town:

> A typical north of England town, industrial, old fashioned, mills, terraced houses, men with cloth caps and clogs, maybe the odd whippet.

This notion was dismissed on the back of a strong claim that Oldham has moved on and is attractive, with the OMBC (2007: p.7) suggesting that: "Oldham is a perfect place to live, work, play and set up a business".

OMBC (2004: p. 5) quotes the then Chief executive of the council, Andrew Kilburn saying that:

> Oldham has a major place in the North West's political, social and economic history. We are proud of that heritage and are committed to continuing our traditions for innovation, hard work, enthusiasm, patience, understanding and caring.

These sentiments suggest that Oldham town is strategically positioned in the Northwest. The town and the borough are taking a better shape with their own university campus, many 21st century businesses are setting up (OMBC, 2004).

The council is transforming in its service delivery and improving the transport network with the help of regeneration.

These developments are fostering a new look for Oldham, that is, renewing its features. Some of the major developments in Oldham include; green land for development in the town centre equivalent to 33 football pitches, the university campus which recruited its first students in 2005, the restoration of Alexander park which was named the best park in Britain, built a huge library and lifelong learning centre which is the biggest in the northwest (OMBC, 2004).

There are many developments meant to usher Oldham into a new era where the town can stand out as progressive, thus enhancing the Oldham brand. Hayes (1971) acknowledges the hard work of Oldhamers and their industry in the spinning of cotton and their engineering prowess in the manufacture of cotton machines. Both industries put Oldham on the global map as Oldham led the world in cotton spinning and the manufacture of cotton spinning machines making Oldham a major exporting centre (OMBC, 2004). The aims of the Oldham Town Centre Partnership are laid out in the Oldham town centre business plan for April 2006-March 2009 as follows:

- to improve the image of the town centre and promote it as a sub regional shopping, leisure, tourism and commercial destination
- to further enhance the communication and co-operation within the town centre and between all town centre organisations and individuals
- to encourage and facilitate improvements to the physical environment of the town centre and to ensure high standards of maintenance
- to continue to improve and promote the safety, security and accessibility of the town centre to all its users

- to promote the town centre as a focus for community cohesion and encourage ownership of the town centre as 'common ground' for all sections of Oldham's community
- to aid the process of inward investment into the town centre to monitor the performance of Oldham town centre and the town centre management initiative

The Oldham Town Centre Partnership business plan April 2006-March 2009 (2006: p. 11)

The aims of the Oldham Town Partnership mirror the direction that the town seeks to take in developing various aspects as a place that appeals to different stakeholders. The issues pointed out in the set of aims pursued mostly revolve around building a positive image of the town (OMBC, 2004). Education has gained a foothold in Oldham with good results coming through from the Oldham Sixth Form, The Oldham College. With the establishment of the University Campus Oldham in 2005, degree level studies were made available in Oldham at a large scale than previously with the Oldham Business Management School which was limited in its provision (Cantle, 2006). Secondary schools are expanding and also modernising and that is enhancing the quality of life for the people of Oldham and that drives development in Oldham. However, the big challenge standing in the way of a better Oldham is Oldham's past.

In a bid to reposition the town and the borough the Oldham Council decided to hire a marketing consultant to work on re-branding the town. OMBC spent £100, 000 (approx. US$150, 000) to research and develop the new logo in 2007 – 2008. The new logo was launched in February 2008. The logo often referred to as the blue ring seems not to resonate well with stakeholders. Some people have referred to it as a toilet seat and others simply call it the polo mint. The logo does provide symbolism that the stakeholders can identify with. According the consultant the logo represents something noble. The assertion of the consultant is laid out below:

Figure 3.2 The Two faces of the Oldham logo

Oldham Council (2008)

One Oldham

—based on the idea of unity: 'the whole is greater than the sum of the parts'

—creating a sense of 'we're all in it together'

—encouraging a sense of pride in the place by being positive and upbeat

—uses a circle device, the circle being a symbol of unity

—the 3D element of the circle device reflects the idea of landscape

—a reference to Oldham's countryside and green space

—uses a language that embraces the wide variety of Oldham's attributes

—emphasises the diversity of Oldham's people and places

—down to earth and real but with an aspirational slant

—traditional feel but modern interpretation

source: Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (2008), www.oldham.gov.uk

The previous logo for Oldham told a story that could easily be understood as it simply showed the map of the borough and its townships projecting diversity and landscape in a manner that was easy to understand. The logo projecting the map of the townships says something about the borough in acknowledging its diversity as it identifies the seven townships.

While there is no explicit detail provided about the phenomenon of Oldham's character and identity it still gives an indication of Oldham's diversity. The old logo of Oldham shows the townships of Oldham, Chadderton, Failsworth, Royton, Shaw, Lees and Saddleworth represented by the square in the way they are positioned with the borough.

Figure 3.3 The old Oldham logo and the new logo for Partnerships

Source: Oldham Council, www. Oldham.gov.uk

Partners of the Oldham Council identify themselves with the council by inserting the logo with a different caption expressing solidarity with the council. The caption is meant to convey the message of solidarity and unity as epitomised in the spirit of the logo.

3.11 Towards an understanding of the Oldham Brand

The Oldham town and the borough at large have suffered an image crisis due to the demise of the once vibrant cotton industry leading to poverty as many people who could manage to fend for their families found themselves unemployed and struggling financially, opportunities were lacking. These desperate situations increased the simmering of racial tensions and subsequently led to race confrontations which in turn unleashed a new challenge on the town

and the wider borough. Given what had transpired before and during the riots of 2001 there was a need for transforming the town brand and the wider borough of Oldham. In a study on the regeneration, rebranding and repositioning of Oldham; Kadembo (2009) points out that stakeholders to Oldham cooperated in the different things that were taking place across the borough and that has enhanced the momentum towards development and this is epitomised in the agenda of the Oldham Local Partnership and this has helped in the renewal of the town and the wider borough.

Kadembo (2009b: p. 70) makes five conclusions on the notion of regeneration, repositioning and rebranding Oldham which are summarised:

- Firstly that, economic and infrastructural decline created a negative image of Oldham.
- Secondly, that the crisis of 2001 triggered some positive developments in the borough through the inflow of resources for improving life in the borough of Oldham.
- Thirdly, the vision for Oldham has given direction for the re-branding efforts of the borough.
- Fourthly, the inclusive nature of regenerative efforts has opened the door for most stakeholders to participate in developmental work.
- Fifth, that efforts seem to be pointing in the right direction for the town and borough at large as it mirrors the transformation of Bradford and that proximity to Manchester helps in the regeneration and re-branding process.

Kadembo (2009a) acknowledges the critical importance of the establishment of the University Centre Oldham (now University Campus Oldham) in the re-branding of Oldham which gives Oldham something that attracts people for the development of the town and the borough at large.

3.12 Facing change for the future in Oldham

Maguire (2013) wrote an article in the *Insider*, titled, '*Are good times returning to Oldham?'* The story makes reference to the dynamic duo of the young Jim McMahon (32 years) council leader and Charlie Parker (52 years) the Chief Executive for Oldham council who have brought about the transformation of Oldham. Charlie Parker became chief executive in 2008 while Jim McMahon became the council leader in 2010. However, Marsden (2013) reports Charlie Parker as leaving the council and receiving positive reviews of his time in office from across the political divide and his vision is being realised in five years as he promised. The transformation saw Oldham, named the most improved council in the country in 2012. Previously, in 2009, Oldham had been named the worst council on customer service.

Big plans are in the pipeline which include job creation, a four star hotel and the metrolink. NOV Mono, the pump manufacturer employing 400 staff at its Manchester head office is in the process of transferring its operations from Tameside to Oldham. The chief executive of the company, Paul Nylon has been satisfied by the council's approach and feels the Greater Manchester brand and its global attractiveness should be utilised. It is reported that since the riots £250 million has been thrown at the problems that caused the riots but to very little effect. The visionary story for Oldham is '*Get Oldham Working'* which is underpinned by a programme to create 2015 jobs by 2015 (Kenderdine, 2013) reporting the Oldham Evening Chronicle of 13 May 2013; meant to guarantee youth employment for those leaving school at 18 years.

In a presentation at a conference on Oldham, Mike Braddock, a business leader expressed a new charge towards Oldham by businesses. Businessman Craig Dean who runs a £3m turnover business expressed satisfaction in the Oldham business environment and highlighted many positives about Oldham.

Wilmott Dixon, a construction company with an annual revenue of £130 relocated to Oldham from Leeds' managing director Antony Dillon is quoted saying that Oldham was raising its profile in places that are far away. Alun Francis the principal of The Oldham College launched a scheme called Study Money where students from low income families are given £20 per week to study at the college to encourage skills development and have also embraced higher education by taking over the University Campus Oldham from the University of Huddersfield and work is on-going to establish the University Technical College as part of the grand scheme of skills development in Oldham (Maguire, 2013).

The Oldham Chronicle (2011) reported on 12 December 2011 the positive comments expressed by leaders of Oldham about the good feeling provided by the event *Pride in Oldham* to reward the unsung heroes of the borough. The Oldham Partnership (2013) presents a plan meant to galvanize commitment towards prosperity. The Oldham Plan's framework for success is centred on economic growth; job creation and improving public services.

The plan seeks partnerships between the public and private sectors to invest in Oldham, playing an important role in Greater Manchester. The priority outcomes include a creating investor confidence in Oldham, developing a skilled workforce, building an entrepreneurial culture, building strong linkages in the community; ensure good health people and easy access to opportunities. McDonald (2013) reports in the Oldham Chronicle about the takeover of the Spindles and the Town Square by Beverly Hill based Kennedy Wilson who will invest to make the Oldham town centre shopping mall more attractive which would have significant effects on the regeneration of the Oldham borough. Hooton (2013) reports on the Oldham plan to make the young people fit in the next five years through exercising in the health strategy 2013 - 2018.

3.13 The Asian Business Heritage in Oldham

Stacey (2013) summarises research findings on the role and impact of Asian businesses on the economy of Oldham following a research on Asian businesses. The Asians from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh migrated to Oldham to take up opportunities in cotton spinning hoping to return after making money; but the majority settled and have made a huge impact on the life in Oldham. Stacey (2013: p. 19) says that: "Although cotton dominates Oldham's economic history the importance of local coal mining needs to be recognised as a major influence on the town." Stacey refers to the writer Daniel Defoe commenting on Oldham as a place with coal on the highest hills.

The first steam cotton mill in Oldham was built in 1794. By 1833 there were 11 000 people employed in cotton spinning. In the nineteenth century Oldham excelled in cotton spinning and Stacey would argue: "Life in Oldham could have been better." The Platt Brothers became the most successful business in the manufacturing of cotton machines (Stacey, 2013).

Prominent business persons among them, Sakichi Toyota and Henry Ford visited Oldham in its booming years. However, Stacey (2013: p. 23) would argue that: "The seeds of the slump were ironically sown in the success of Oldham's export sales of textile and machinery." Stacey (2013) notes that in 1921 the economic downturn in Oldham started and showed signs that it was not a temporary development.

Asian businesses have made significant contributions in the development of the Oldham economy and are widening to include the participation of women. There are several business people who have excelled in Oldham and have made significant contributions to the Oldham economy.

3.14 Summary of the stories that shaped Oldham

Oldham is a place with a diverse history and diverse features in its landscape. Oldham is associated with hills and valleys. Oldham town is sitting on a hill (Law, 1999) and its development is an expression of bravery which characterises the people. Historically Oldham has been associated with playing a central role in the key drivers of economic development (Drummond, 2005). In the nineteenth century Oldham became popular with cotton spinning and cotton machine making which thrust it at the heart of global spinning as the leading place in the world earning the title of king cotton. In the 1960's Oldham's successes in cotton spinning gave way to immigration of the Asian nationals from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh who came to work in cotton factories. However, in the 1970's Asians were no longer welcomed as resentment and hostility set in from the local community. Despite the complications the Asians persevered and the first, second and third generations have all made an input into the development of the Oldham economy. The new generation do not see home in Asia but feel part of the British economy and want to participate in the mainstream economy of Oldham.

While cotton led to success in Oldham, the demise of the industry led to an economic meltdown which ultimately led to riots in 2001. Following riots a lot of resources were channelled into Oldham to facilitate regeneration. The challenges for transforming Oldham remain but there has been some progress made which can further enhance the image of the place. Stacey (2013) captures views from different people suggesting that the Asian businesses have made a significant impact on the economy of Oldham. Stacey (2013: p. 113) quotes the MP Michael Meacher saying that: "Now they are central to the industrial backbone of Oldham. It is a community that is pretty dynamic, thrusting, ambitious, and vibrant. Now there is a profound change in Oldham consistent with the rise of the Asian community." Stacey (2013: p. 123) observed that:

The Oldham riots of 2001were perhaps the lowest point in the town's economic history. Yes as is sometimes the case they also marked a defining moment similar to the 1996 IRA terrorist bomb that destroyed a square mile of Manchester's City Centre. Many in retrospect view that as an opportunity for the regeneration and rebranding of Manchester.

Stacey (2013: p. 127) quotes Martyn Torr a long serving journalist in Oldham who concurs with Michael Meacher saying that:

The Asian businesses have made a huge contribution. They employ people, they bring an economic benefit to the town. They are all very ambitious. These guys want to go places. They see themselves as forging forever forward.

The contribution of Asian businesses to the Oldham economy is significant and helped change the perception of the place; hence contributing to the brand by changing the image of the place. The story of the Asian community and Asian business has made a significant impact in the shaping of the Oldham brand.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4.1 **Introduction to the methodology**

The storytelling approach is an instrument in human functionality in various facets and also in research (Vickers, 2002; Silverman, 2004; Rhodes and Brown, 2005; Perrow, 2007; Marting and Woodside, 2011; Naslund and Pemer, 2012). Below are submissions by some of the proponents of the efficacy of the storytelling or narrative approach which underpin the overarching importance of the phenomenon in human understanding. Adamson et al. (2006) and Lewis (2011) highlight the applications of storytelling pointing out that:

> Story is central to human understanding—it makes life liveable, because without a story, there is no identity, no self, no other. …Consequently, humans are drawn to story through our residence in narrative life. Lewis (2011: p. 504)

> A good story always combines conflict, drama, suspense, plot twists, symbols, characters, triumph over odds, and usually a generous amount of humour – all to do two things: capture your imagination and make you feel. It draws you in, places you at its centre, connects to your emotions, and inserts its meaning into your memory. That is why storytelling must become an integral tool of corporate strategy. …In order to be effective, strategy must not just inform, it must inspire. …In short, stories have the potential to revitalize the way we do business. Adamson et al. (2006: p. 37)

Adamson et al. (2006) and Lewis (2011) agree in their submissions that the story is central to human understanding and influences the way we think and do things. This chapter presents the methods employed in the research into the storytelling approach in the development of the Oldham brand.

The study employs a number of tools in order to capture the diversity of issues that relate to the essence of the story-based approach in the development of a brand. The chapter gives consideration to the research process, tools employed and their advantages and disadvantages. The role of literature review and secondary research and the respective philosophies that guide the conceptualisation of the phenomenon of research are examined.

The research process influences the authenticity of the findings; hence, careful assessment is given to the design and methods employed in investigating and analyzing the phenomenon of the storytelling/narrative approach in the development of the Oldham brand. The formulation of the study is geared towards meeting the stated objectives of the study which are:

a) To illustrate the nature of stories in the dynamics of the phenomenon for understanding the Oldham brand:

b) To determine the way stories are told to have any impact in shaping a brand:

c) To determine the extent to which places shape their identity through the specific stories that make-up their history:

d) To examine the degree to which the stories that make Oldham's history are reflected in the unfolding re-branding:

e) To illustrate Oldham's branding experience compared to Bradford's experience:

f) To determine the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the re-branding and repositioning of the Oldham brand:

g) To examine stakeholder expectations regarding the image of Oldham and the factors that create the respective views:

h) To create an identity matrix for Oldham in the light of its diversity based on the conceptual framework:

i) To develop a model or framework to better conceptualize the re-branding and repositioning of Oldham with a view to aiding conceptualisation and practice in place branding, and

J) To illustrate the way forward for the Oldham brand in the light of future challenges and the prevailing circumstances:

4.2 **The Essence of Research in Business**

Sekeran and Bongie (2010: p. 2) state that: "Business research can be described as a systematic and organised effort to investigate a specific problem encountered in the work setting, which needs a solution." The purpose of this research is to investigate the facts about the storytelling approach in the development of the Oldham brand which provide a solution to marketing communication for a place. Solomon et al. (2008: p.110) define marketing research as: "… the process of collecting, analyzing and interpreting data about customers, competitors, and the business environment to improve marketing effectiveness."

Often research is deliberate and conscious; however, serendipity which is chance discovery in the course of browsing or searching for different information and discovering something useful, is gaining ground in research as an important occurrence (Nutefall and Ryder, 2010). To that end Miller and Crabtree (1992: p. 3) state that: "Research has been called a 'journey of adventure'." This means that research keeps unfolding new things that inform humanity in a particular discipline.

Contributing to the notion of research Rajasekar et al. (2006: p.1) ascribe research to: "… a logical and systematic search for new and useful information on a particular topic." Nutefall and Ryder (2010) make reference to chaining (that is linking) forward and backwards in investigating given phenomenon; which seem to concur with storytelling given the link between yesterday, today and tomorrow which characterizes storytelling. This could also aid serendipity by exposing the researcher to more perspectives on related issues beyond what was previously planned. Hall and Hall (1999) refer to three key issues which researchers seek to answer as to what happened, why it happened and how it affects people. This perspective has prompted the researcher to broaden his reflection of issues relating to the storytelling

approach and the branding of a place at both theoretical and empirical levels. Rajasekar et al. (2006) conform to the view that research helps discover new knowledge and that various tools are employed in carrying out research. McGuire (1986) points out four shortfalls of research in that, firstly research is limited in its external validity; tends to focus on what can easily be measured and controlled (Bridge, 1997); secondly, that researchers have not necessarily focused on practitioners' concerns, and are rather inconsistent on goal relevance. The third shortfall is that where the problems focused on by the researchers are relevant, the variables chosen may not be under the control of those applying the research, and lastly the prescriptions offered as solutions by scholars are often "common sense".

In the study of the Oldham brand there are no absolute measures and hence the research process would be limited in capturing every element attributed to branding objectively. While authors take different views on the value of research there is merit in conducting research; given that it is the reason for the difference between good and bad decisions (Sekeran and Bongie, 2010).

Rajasekar et al. (2006: p.1) identified the prime objectives of research as,

1. to discover new facts
2. to verify and test important facts
3. to analyse an event or process or phenomenon to identify the cause and effect relationship
4. to develop new scientific tools, concepts and theories to solve and understand scientific and non-scientific problems.
5. To find solutions to scientific, nonscientific and social problems and
6. To overcome or solve the problems occurring in our everyday life.

For the purpose of this study the researcher observes the submissions by Rajasekar et al. (2006) as a guide in the study. The investigation into place branding necessitates discovering facts about Oldham and analysing respective stories. The examination of related facets of the place would help in coming up with a solution to effective place branding. The researcher hopes to make a contribution to the body of knowledge for the respective phenomenon of story branding. Dijkum (2008) acknowledges the multitudes of problems that social sciences

are expected to help solve in which research plays a big part; hence the current study would provide an insight into possible solutions to Oldham's branding challenge.

4.2.1 The Research Process

Dibb et al. (2001) provide a systematic process for research, which underpins the logical steps undertaken by a researcher to meet the defined research objective(s). Essentially, research can be specific to a defined problem, or may be an open investigation meant to inform the broader context of a given field of study. In every case the process should be robust enough to withstand tests for reliability as a basis to inform future investigations or be authentic in nature as a basis for decision-making.

In this study the main issue for investigation is the development of a brand based on the storytelling approach. Though this is an academic process, every effort is made to present findings that could be used to develop an effective place brand for Oldham. MacFarlane et al. (2006) postulate that a deep approach to learning manifests in the desire to comprehend and to seek to solve problems, linking previous understanding to new knowledge which brings inner inspiration.

The interest and desire to learn with a view to developing excellence in branding is the hallmark of this study. The research includes the collection of data and subsequent analysis of the findings as a basis for conclusions and recommendations. The logical sequence of steps mirrors the framework by Dibb et al. (2001) as illustrated in *Figure 4.1*. The model by Dibb et al. (2001) provides a simple way to conceptualise the research process which is adapted for purposes of the current study. Cooper and Schindler (2008) argue that all research is either applied research or pure research. This amounts to research being a problem-solving process

where an answer to a question is provided. The application of this model was simple and the researcher was comfortable with both the logic and sequence of steps taken in the execution.

Figure 4. 1 The Research Process
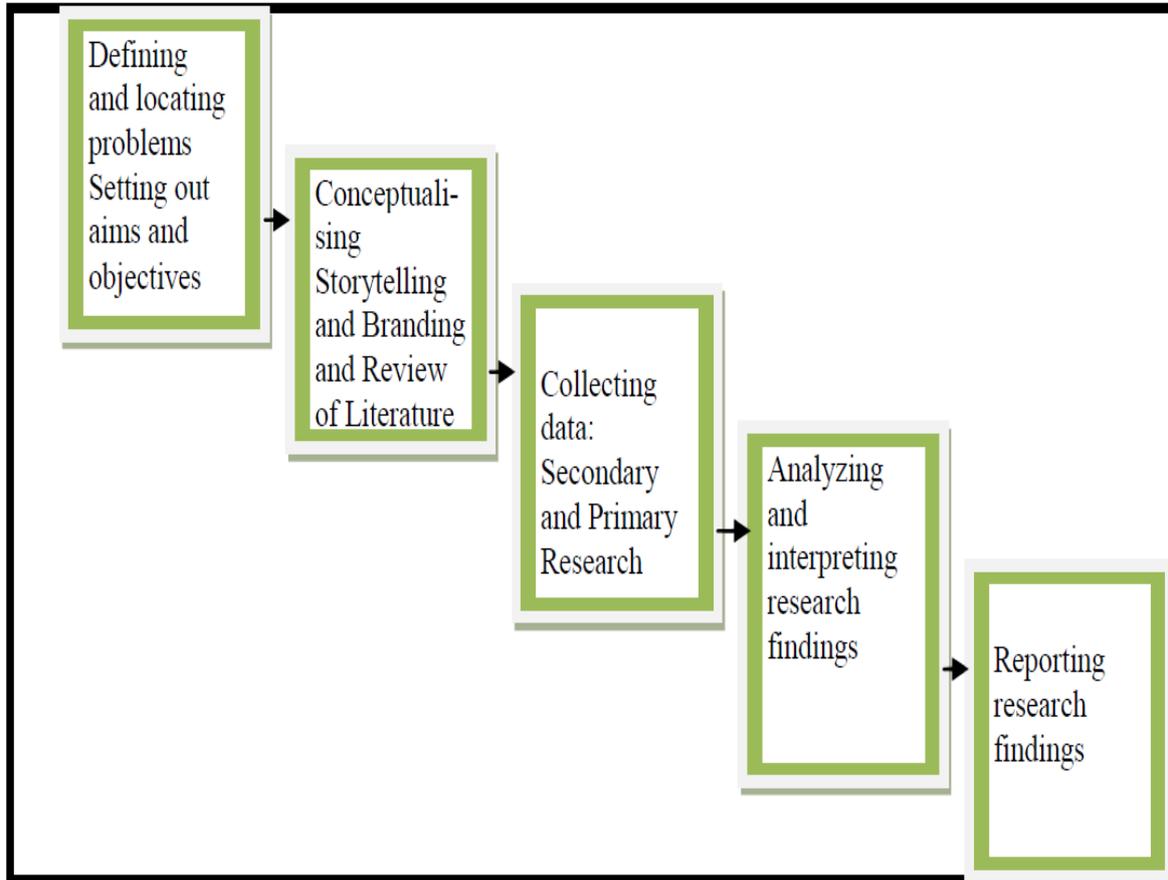
Source: Adapted from Dibb et al. (2001: p. 174)

This approach provided the researcher with an appropriate framework against which he could weigh aspects of the research process. Blumberg et al. (2005: p. 16) present a set of characteristics that account for good research as,

> …purpose clearly defined; …research process detailed; …research design thoroughly planned; …limitations frankly revealed; … adequate analysis for decision-maker's needs; findings presented unambiguously; conclusions justified and researcher's experience reflected.

Following on from the submission by Blumberg, et al. (2005) it would appear that clarity of the whole process is important for effective research. Cooper and Schindler (2008) provide nine characteristics of good research which include; clarity of purpose, detailed research process, thorough planning, high ethical standards, frankly acknowledge limitations, adequately analyse decision-makers' needs, findings presented unambiguously, conclusions

justified and the researcher's experience is confirmed. The researcher is guided by this ethos in this study and will also seek to make a significant contribution to the body of knowledge.

4.3 The Research philosophy of the Study

In a paper on the philosophy of education, Standish (2007: p. 333) observes that: "…in education the assumption is that it is the concepts of teaching, learning, authority, knowledge, understanding, creativity, imagination and so on, which need to be addressed." In trying to understand the dynamics of the philosophy the issues advanced by Standish (2007) need to be taken into consideration by realising that a thought process that will facilitate learning and imagination should be adopted. One could argue that the same thought process that helps in learning would apply to learning the brand. Cotton and Griffiths (2007) suggest that philosophy is about questioning the generalisations and theories that form the basis of people's thoughts and comprehension which is rooted in social science. Bridges (1997) raises the stakes about philosophy in educational research by highlighting that most researchers overlook their philosophical stance in any research.

The theoretical framework of the study encapsulates a number of fundamental issues that impact on the understanding and development of the essence of storytelling in branding. Knowledge development and conceptualisation of a phenomenon take a certain pattern and this section seeks to demonstrate the angle from which the conceptualisation of the study is embedded in this study. Holden and Lynch (2004) identify the two ends of the research continuum in the research orientation. The researchers are considered as objectivists or subjectivists depending on the way data is gathered and analysed in respect of the assumptions one makes about society and science. Holden and Lynch (2004) acknowledge the post-modernist's perspective which postulates that truth is indeterminate and that research

is redundant. The differences in perspectives are the reason why there are different schools of thought in approaching the phenomenon of research. Burnell and Morgan (1979) cited in Holden and Lynch (2004) provide a comprehensive frame of reference for the paradigm of research as illustrated in *Figure 4.2* which provides an overview of perspectives on research across a continuum.

Dijkum (2008) brings in the notion of induction (verification) and deduction (falsification) in trying to illustrate the need for simplification in conducting research. Dijkum (2008) further asserts that for one to make sense from an interventionist perspective one should accept the notion of chaos. This amounts to order (deterministic chaos) which conforms to the argument that despite what one might know about a situation they remain limited or operate in bounded rationality, as it would be difficult to know the ultimate outcome from the knowledge of the starting point.

Therefore, it follows that despite the researcher knowing the current situation about Oldham, it cannot be ascertained what the future situation will be with certainty, as researchers operate in bounded rationality and that truth is indeterminate. Subsequently the researcher's biases and experience, the tools employed in analysis and the research philosophy become co-creators of understanding of the phenomenon as part of the changing world (Dijkum, 2008). In that regard the researcher becomes part of the creation process of the branding story as conceptualised and narrated in this research.

Figure 4.2 The Subjective Objective Dimension
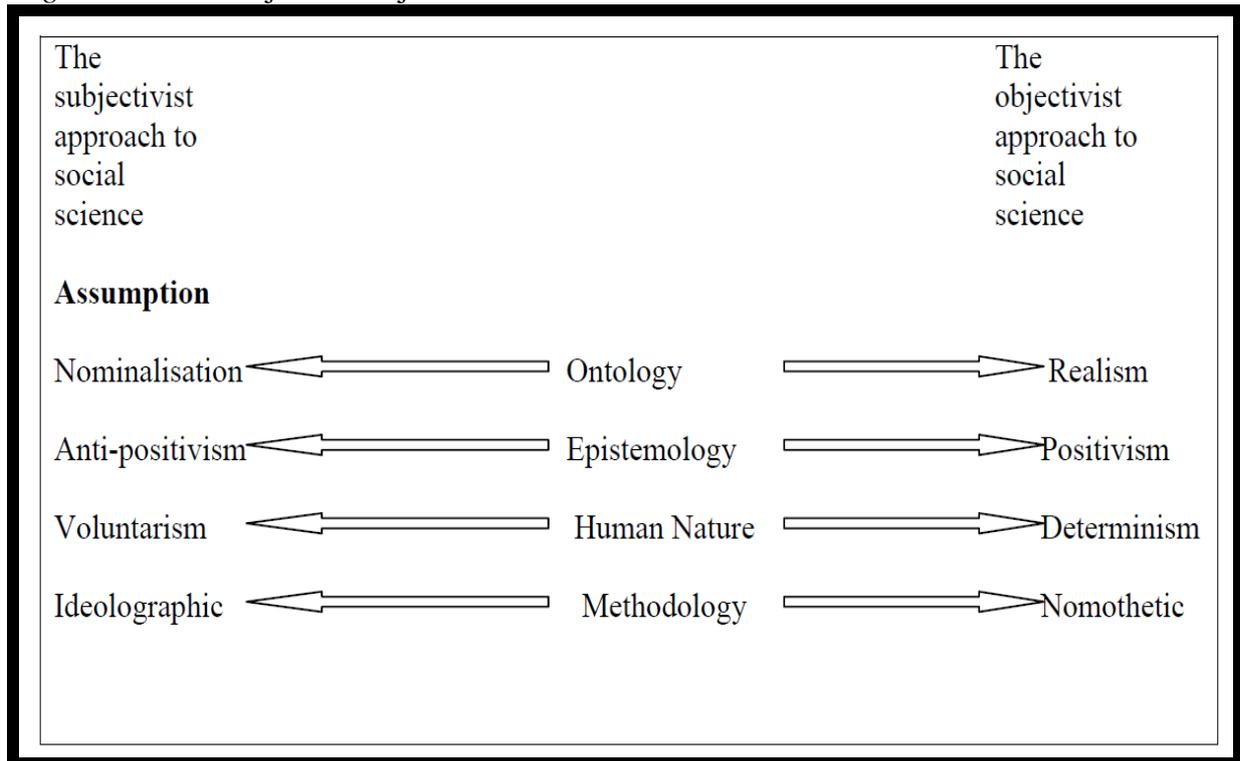
Source: Burrell and Morgan (1979) cited in Holden and Lynch (2004, p. 399)

It would follow from the model by Burrel and Morgan (1979) that subjectivists are more inclined towards an abstract approach which is more about building meaning through imagination contrary to the objectivist's approach which is more about evidenced matter or measured phenomenon, a scientific approach in trying to understand meaning. Holden and Lynch (2004: p. 400) identify that:

> The extreme subjectivist ontological position is called solipsism. These extremists maintain that reality does not exist outside oneself, that one's mind is one's world… Therefore the relevant epistemological stance is that knowledge cannot be discovered, as it is subjectively acquired-everything is relative.

The view that meaning exists in our minds mirrors some elements of storytelling in that the storyteller's world is what is projected in any given narration. In that regard Hartmann, et al. (2010: p. 254) state that: "In the positivistic tradition, problems are perceived and solved as deterministic and objective problems." In the same vein the story is a measure of the storyteller's memory and bias as well as the background to a given phenomenon (Lewis, 2011). While the two extreme epistemological perspectives of positivism and

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phenomenology (interpretivism) are generally seen as two ends of a continuum; there is scope for mixed philosophical approach embracing quantintative and qualititative research in a single study (Blumberg, et. al., 2005; Ajerfalk, 2013). Holden and Lynch (2004: p. 400) put forward a perspective of the world that is always relative to one's background and that pattern manifests itself in the views people take from different backgrounds as they look at Oldham.

> Proponents of the other extreme position, objectivism, are realists. They contend that the world predates individuals – it is prior to the existence of human consciousness and, whether or not humans assign labels and perceive the existence of an external reality, the world will still exist as an empirical entity

This view helps relate to things that are fixed in our context of research; like Oldham's landscape which give the place a characteristic. One could argue that people of Oldham's background and orientation do not change because of the exposure to the storyteller's views. Different stories impact the society in different ways in respect of age, ethnicity, occupation, education in the light of the diversity of the society. Gill and Johnson (1997: p. 3) state that: "The research process, while being the means of advancing knowledge, also serves as a disciplined and systematic procedure helping in solving managerial problems." This study can anchor the strategic moves of the Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council in its efforts to shift the strategic posture of Oldham and the borough's brand; hence it will be a catalyst in solving the branding problem of the place.

Equally, the philosophical perspective in the researcher's approach has far reaching effects on the interpretation and conceptualisation of the big picture of both the concepts and the research process. The researcher's perspective emanates from experience and his way of thinking, and hence the need to define that philosophical perspective within the context of the study. In concluding their discussion on action research and practical philosophy Cotton and

Griffiths (2007: p. 559) argue that: "Equally, the stories of practices are needed if philosophy-the love of wisdom- is to illuminate, explain and question the world as it is around us."

Collis and Hussey (2003) suggest that research renders itself to two paradigms; positivism and phenomenological, which concur with Morgan's (1979) continuum stretching from objectivism to subjectivism. The understanding of the philosophies helps in shaping the researcher's approach to the study.

Figure 4.3: The Philosophies of Research
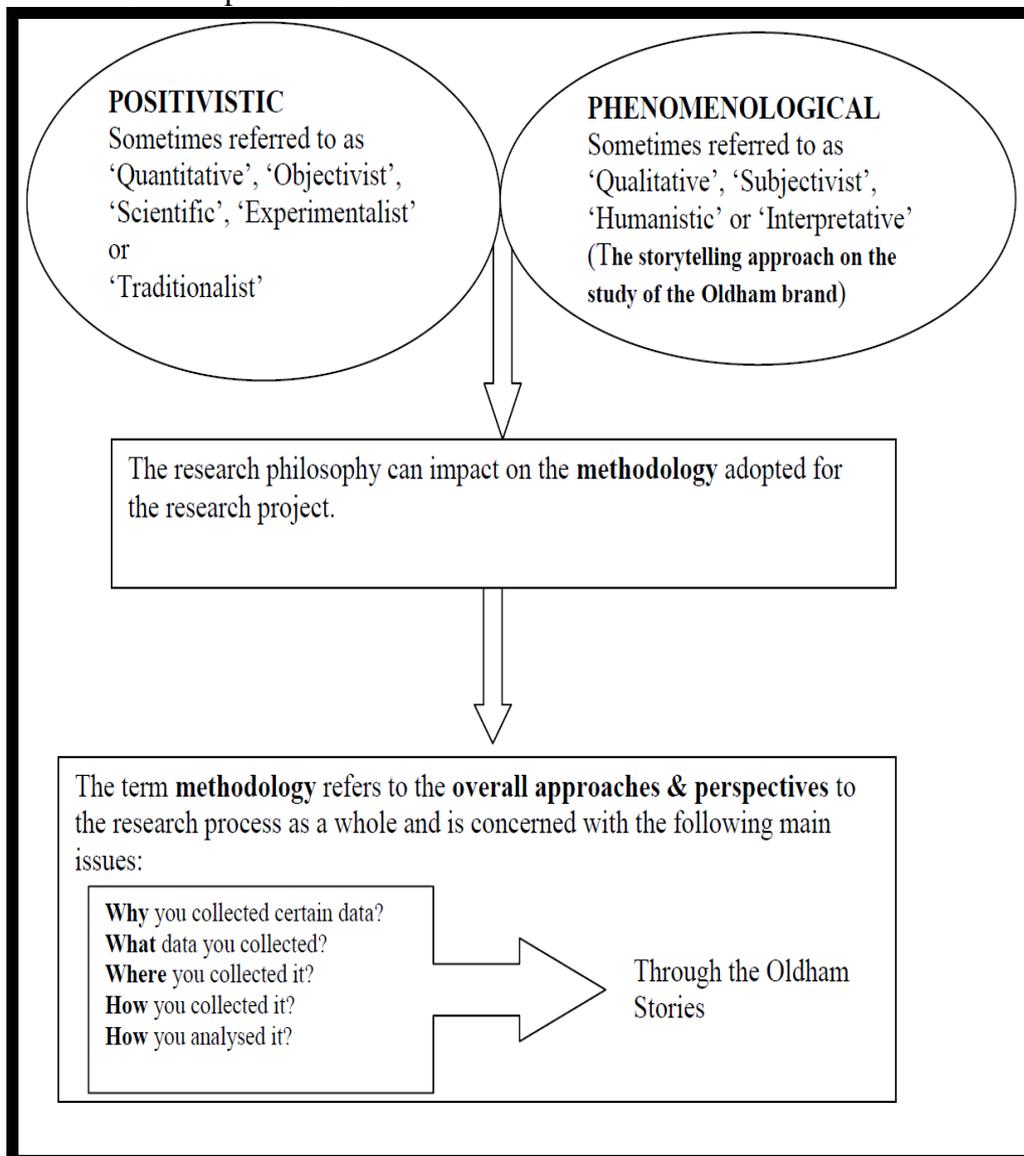
Source: Adapted from Collis & Hussey (2003: p. 55)

The model (*Figure 4.3*) by Collis and Hussey (2003) conforms to the two perspectives on the two ends of a continuum identified by Burrell and Morgan (1979) cited in Holden and Lynch (2004). Based on that continuum the researcher sees himself inclined towards the subjectivist or phenomenological approach. Research would have a greater impact on how people think if emphasis is placed on philosophy as a foundation for theory development (Furst, 2004; Cotton and Griffiths, 2007). Therefore, in this study many questions are dealt with to try and provide better insights in conceptualising the storytelling approach in the development of a brand. In looking at the philosophical discourse one is prompted to consider the view echoed by Bronwell (2012: pp. 258-9) that:

> Throughout history we have had clear evidence that genius breeds genius. The case of Socrates producing a Plato and a Plato producing an Aristotle is the way in which progress in great ideas has evolved.

Kupers (2005) observed that the phenomenological approach is embodied in the day-to-day facets of life and is interconnected with social, narrative and psychological aspects of life in shaping the tacit and explicit knowledge. One could argue that in any research process the researcher has a part to play in the creation of knowledge or construction of the phenomenon. Levy and Ben-Ari (2009) suggest that the doctoral research method could be presented as a chronological story.

4.4 The Paradigm in the Study

According to Gill and Johnson (1997) the positivist paradigm encompasses terms such as quantitative, objectivist, scientific, experimentalist and traditionalist whilst the phenomenological paradigm encompasses terms such as quantitative, subjectivist, humanistic and interpretivist. Ashworth (2009) argued that phenomenology places experience in the life world of the researcher, that is familiar practices or relative to the individual. The two extreme positions of positivism and phenomenology represent two ends of a spectrum. Therefore, any position one takes should consider how it relates to other positions (Holden

and Lynch, 2004). Flory and Iglesias (2010) suggest that the storytelling approach renders itself to the interpretivist paradigm in research; and the researcher in this study concurs.

A number of concepts are fundamental in conceptualising the research process such as the ontological assumption, where one considers whether the world is objective and external to the researcher. Furthermore, the epistemology of the study is addressed, which is concerned with the study of knowledge. Ultimately the relationship of the researcher and phenomenon being investigated is evaluated. Researchers' perceptions or context impact the outcome of the study through bias. The axiological assumption looks at the value of the study, that is what is studied is considered an object to which the researcher has no attachment. This view relates more to the positivists who take the view that whatever they study existed before their intervention, and accordingly they are detached from the focus of the study. On the other hand, the phenomenologists' view is that the researcher has values that are shaped in their perspective and influence the way they conduct the study (Holden and Lynch, 2004).

4.4.1   The Researcher's Philosophical Perspective of the study of the Storytelling Approach in developing the Oldham town Brand

In acknowledging the growing field of storytelling and change in organisations Brown et al. (2009: p. 324) point that:

> As befits a major field of scholarship, narrative inquiry now has multiple strands- realists, postmodern, critical and constructionist- and multiple versions of origins, definitions, foci and directions. In fact its very heterogeneity, its embracing of pluralism and tolerance of epistemological, ontological, methodological and ideological difference is a hallmark of the story-researching community.

The continuum of the research paradigm is presented by Collis and Hussey (2003) and demonstrates the stretch of the different perspectives taken by researchers as they consider the notion of knowledge and reality. This framework is drawn from a comprehensive review of literature in respect of research philosophies. McGuire (1986) writes that managers and

researchers see research from different perspectives as they differ in their application and analysis of research. Coughlan and Coughlan (2010) refer to action research which adds to actionable knowledge. In that respect, therefore, the researcher being an academic would differ from the custodians of the Oldham brand in their perspectives in looking at the notion of place branding. Carr (2006: p. 205) asserts that: "… the method is conducive to self-understanding in which philosophy, history and tradition can only be entertained as adversary notions and in which the concepts of technical expertise, methodical conformity and ethical neutrality play a central part. …to claim legitimacy for their work." The approaches taken in doing research can be captured on a continuum ranging from ontology to phenomenology (see *Figure 4. 4)*.

Figure 4.4 Continuum of Core Ontological Assumptions
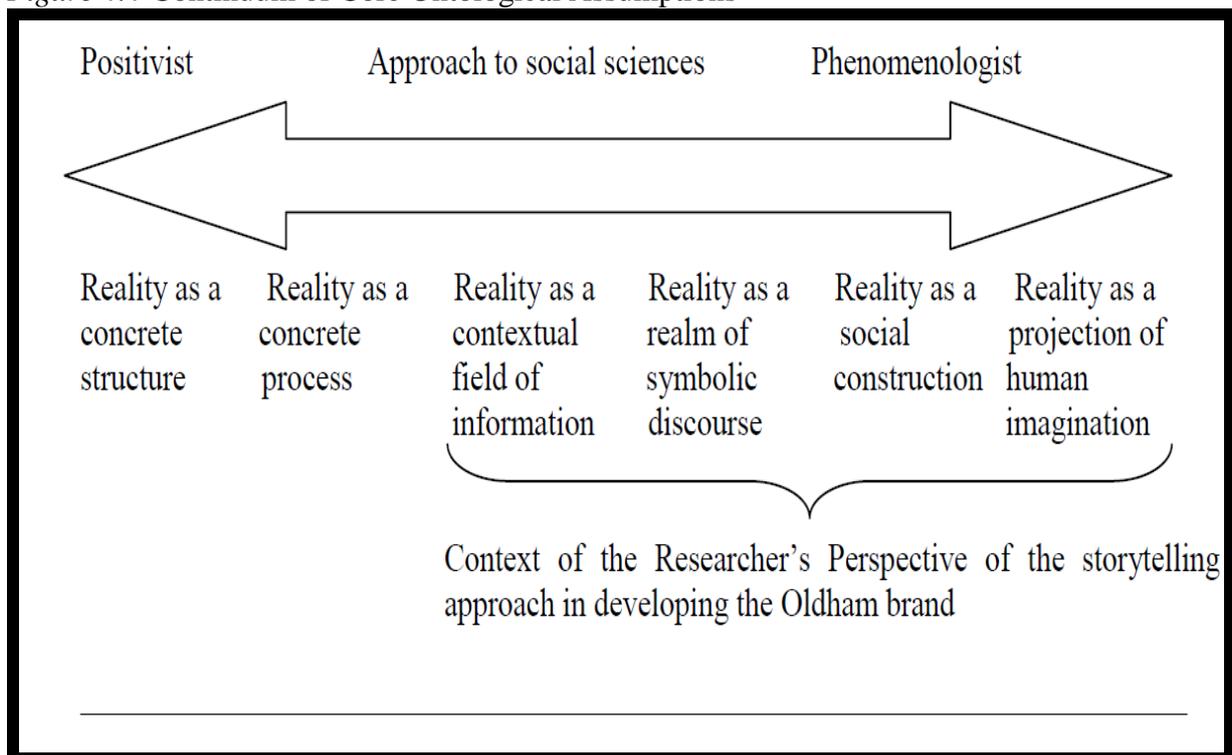
Source: Adapted from Collis and Hussey (2003: p. 51)

The researcher in this study sees the process as dynamic in that there are situations in life that are inclined to human imagination while others project a concrete structure. However, the view taken by the researcher on the phenomenon of storytelling ranges from projection of human imagination to research as a contextual field of information.

4.4.2 My Story: Ernest Kadembo's Narrative autoethnography in the Study

Goodall, Jr (2004) raises issues related to the importance of reflecting oneself in his/her published works and the researcher in this study is bringing his personal story into the study. Figal (2003) underpins understanding as key to philosophy which is tantamount to finding meaning. Hence my understanding of storytelling forms my thinking. The italics are my emphasis on the evidences to the reader of my position within the research and any possible biases that might arise from being connected with Oldham.

In view of the philosophy presented I fit into the phenomenological paradigm given that I have had an interest in the branding of Oldham for some time, and have done some work for Oldham Council. I have become a commentator on the dynamics of Oldham as a place brand, and since arriving in Oldham in 2003 I was informed about what the place was like. I was told about the brand identity by different people who gave me different perspectives. It would follow that since reality is a contextual field of information my reality of Oldham has been shaped in my experiences of Oldham in the last ten years. The high rising old mills that hover over the Oldham skyline express something about the place which amounts to reality as symbolic discourse.

While I would like to maintain an objective stance, some of my views are interwoven into the issues as I am based in Oldham for my day-to-day professional engagements as a lecturer within the University Campus Oldham (a partnership between the Oldham College and the University of Huddersfield), which is based in Oldham. Even more importantly the researcher used to sit on the audit committee of the Oldham Borough Council. In that respect the research is influenced by views shaped by that experience despite that role not directly relating to the topic at hand. I am inclined to the view that, no philosophical stance is superior to other perspectives (Holden and Lynch, 2004).

The exposure of the researcher to the Oldham press, the council, academic institutions, and the infrastructure means that my thought process has an Oldham story ingrained in it. I have come to share in Oldham's struggles and can identify with the town's appeal, aspirations and the general ethos of the place. By virtue of working in Oldham as an academic is tacit approval of the agenda for widening participation in Oldham, which underpinned the regeneration of the borough since the advent of the riots of 2001.

The experience of working in Oldham for nearly ten years, even though the researcher does not live in Oldham, makes me part of the story. It therefore makes my research more inclined to an ethnographic orientation and would render my approach to an interpretive constructionist. It is easy to assume that there is potential for bias, which becomes natural given the exposure to the dynamics of the town of Oldham and the Oldham borough at large. In the context of the model (Figure 4.4, p. 188) by Collis and Hussey (2003) the interactions I have had, and the many ideas about where Oldham can be taken to (given its journey from the past), my perspective would render reality as a projection of human imagination.

Whilst acknowledging the potential for bias in the conduct of the study, I would seek to take steps to minimise the effects of the biases. However, one will be guided by the ethical practices as provided by the Marketing Research Society, which will receive due attention in the appropriate section of this chapter. Essentially, for the study process to be credible it would need to conform to the agreed set of conventions that render themselves to research norms for authenticity. In the same vein it is noted that there is nothing as practical as a good theory (Gill and Johnson, 1997). Within the context of being an ethnographic interpretive constructionist the researcher also conforms to grounded theory. Nayar (2012) explains

grounded theory as an approach where one becomes part of the environment being investigated and becomes a co-constructor of the phenomenon, which in turn renders itself to symbolic interactionism which can be universally applied in research. The researcher would give attention to Freedman (2010) who recommends a more embracive approach to widen the scope of learning in reflective practice. All research is within a context and in my case I am carrying out the research being part of the community being researched on, making me a social constructionist on one end, or subscribing to the grounded theory in research.

According to Nayar (2012) grounded theory is weighted against seven criteria that help cement its significance in qualitative inquiry; a) the individual's perspective is held in high esteem (integrity), b) the individual's experience is accepted as authentic (credible); c) the individual interacts openly with the environment, d) the individual connects to the past, the present and the future, e) data gathered is verified across different sources for confirmation of patterns or perspectives f) what maintains the environment while looking at the players within it, g) process that sees the individual as shaping their lifestyle over their lifespan. The criteria for grounded theory were upheld in the study of the storytelling approach in the development of a place brand, in this case Oldham. Hansen (2006) adds weight to the grounded theory in arguing that the ethnographic approach which brings into perspective cultures helps link ideas and connects actions through contextual descriptions. The learning process the researcher has undergone in the Oldham story mirrors the dynamics of Kolb's learning cycle.

4.4.3 The Learning Cycle in the Storytelling approach to branding Oldham

In trying to better understand the conceptualisation of the development of knowledge and understanding Gill and Johnson (1997) make reference to Kolb's experiential learning cycle

as illustrated in the model in *Figure* 4.5. Kolb's 'experiential learning cycle' often referred to as Kolb's cycle is commonly employed in the development of teaching skills in demonstrating how learners develop their understanding (Konak et al, 2013). The same process is relevant to the development of understanding of a given phenomenon in research. The stories about Oldham present concrete experiences about what Oldham has experienced as a place which attracts observations and reflections. The observations and reflections about the same would lead to the formation of abstract concepts and generalisations.

Figure 4.5 Kolb's Learning Cycle in understanding storytelling in branding Oldham

Concrete Experiences
Teaching, shopping, touring, reading the history, the press in Oldham, the researcher's council roles, informal folklore, participation in local events

Testing Implications in new situations in Oldham
Recommending strategies to council
Participation in community training
Working on Developing the HE sectors

Observations and of concepts Reflections
Mental picture of the town
Published ideas in public domain
Comparing Oldham to other places

Formation of Abstract concept and generalisation
Forming perspectives of reality of the place's stories
Drawing up parallels with theory
Making broad conclusions of the general picture relative to the body of knowledge

Source: Adapted from Gill and Johnson (1997: p. 24)

Ultimately, the testing of the process would give insight into the implications of concepts in new situations which develop from the abstract concepts and generalisations (Konak et al, 2013). In this study the implications of the relevant theories in brand building and storytelling

will be considered in the light of how they impact brand development. A number of data gathering tools were employed to collect the appropriate information in order to meet the objectives of the study.

4.5 **The Research Tools**

Nutefall and Ryder (2010) point out that information can be obtained from various sources; hence the need to employ different methods in one study to give an opportunity to capture all the relevant information. Solomon et al. (2008) describe the research design as the plan for attacking the problem which specifies the type of information needed to meet the objectives. The type of information falls into two categories, which are primary and secondary information. Different problems would necessitate the use of different tools or techniques. Brannen (2005: p. 182) suggests that: "A multi-method strategy should be adopted to serve particular theoretical, methodological and practical purposes." This study employed three tools of investigation, namely, the in-depth interview (storytelling approach), the questionnaire, and the focus group discussion. Feather (2012) recommends use of the multi-method in order to capture a diverse range of information in a study. Fielding (2010) argues that mixed methods allow one to address different research questions that necessitate different methods. Areas such as social policy and politics benefit from the use of mixed methods in social research (Fielding, 2010). Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2009) explain mixed methods as a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches combined in a research process and are gaining widespread usage; applied sequentially or concurrently, partially or fully. The researcher felt that the current study renders itself to mixed methods or triangulation. Blumberg, et al. (2005) argue that multiple sources of evidence allow converging lines of investigation to be integrated bringing different measures of the phenomenon, hence increase construct validity. Agerfalk (2013) differentiates mixed methods (combining qualitative and quantitative) multi-methods (use of various or diverse

methods) in research. Kolko et al. (2011) in their study make reference to human centred design (HCD) and user centred design (UCD) where they suggest the need for adaptation and giving more focus to groups instead of individuals which can present complex issues to content with in research. The study of the story of the Oldham brand resonates with similar connotations as individuals see a different place depending on their background though ultimately the individual view has to be integrated into a group perspective.

4.5.1 Research Validity, Reliability and Rigor

The research validity refers to the accuracy of the findings and their generalizability (Davis, 2004). The research considered the relevant literature before investigating the storytelling approach in branding, which provided the appropriate context and substance of the research. Furthermore, research reliability is about the extent to which the research could be replicated. To the extent that the researcher investigated what people have experienced and can recall in Oldham it can be argued that another group of people with similar experiences would provide similar results. In this study some of the stories are commonly shared in the communities and through the different channels of disseminating information to the public that further strengthens the claim for validity and reliability of the research undertaken.

Tobin and Begley (2004: p. 390) point out that: "The attributes of rigour span all research approaches. It is the construction, application and operationalization of these attributes that require innovation, creativity and transparency in qualitative study." In this study the use of triangulation was meant to ensure a comprehensive and thorough investigation of the phenomenon to capture most of the important facets. In that respect Tobin and Begley (2004) argue that triangulation provides a tool for completeness in research through complementing different tools or paradigms in research as it links the qualitative and quantitative instruments.

4.6 **The Storytelling Approach in Research**

The authoring of stories takes different perspectives depending on the way of experiencing change, managing change and/or operating as a researcher making observations (Boge, 2008; Smith and Wintrob, 2013). Brown et al. (2009: p. 330) conclude their article stating that: "The story of narrative research into organisational change is itself unfolding." For this study on the storytelling approach in seeking to understand the Oldham brand, the perspective taken is that of an operational researcher's observation. Lewis (2011: p. 506) argues that: "Narrative being is human and human being is storied; so pervasive and powerful is this relationship that if we change our story, we may even change our lives…" This view puts the story at the centre of life and suggests that the story defines who we are. Complementing this view Rasmussen (2005: p. 235) points out that: "Every time a story is told in a changed context, the meaning of it may be changed too." Ospina and George (2005) observed that more concerted efforts have been made to understand the practices and assumptions of narrative inquiry and this has led to the recognition of the approach as an integral part of the research process. This observation is consistent with submissions by various authors that the story feeds into the thought process of people, hence, the story is critical to understanding and research (Cargiulo, 2006; McLellan, 2006; Lewis, 2011). In trying to understand people it would therefore be appropriate to use a tool they can identify with for purposes of interpreting the complex reality of life and ascertaining the phenomenon of the study. In the same perspective Clandinin and Connelly (2000: p. 20) point out that: "Narrative inquiry is stories lived and told". Therefore, the investigation conducted takes into account what people have experienced in their life in their involvement with Oldham, whether as residents, visitors, tourists, settlers or entrepreneurs. In concluding a discussion on the entrepreneurial story and re-storying research paper, Kar and Samantari (2011: p. 144) suggest that: "The narratives help understanding connectedness of different aspects of an outcome. Every

entreprenuer has a lived story behind an outcome." Therefore, given the multi-stakeholder nature of a place, which in this case is the town and the borough at large it would follow that there would be numerous stories told by different groups at both group and individual levels depending on the storyteller's background. There are many entrepreneurs in Oldham with a diverse range of backgrounds which presents multitudes of stories.

The use of the storytelling approach does not readily render itself to conventional methods of investigation as Vickers (2002: p. 611) observes: "However, the work of researchers as storytellers remains underrated, dismissed, and trivialized, especially as a useful, deliberate, and provocative approach to organizational research." The general expectation in research is the use of conventional tools of data gathering while the storytelling approach is rendered folklore or some irrelevant social occurrence. However, as the literature review has shown the storytelling approach is getting recognition within the realm of research and business practice (Denning, 2006; Boje, 2008; Barker and Boyle, 2009; Flory and Iglesias, 2010). Vickers (2002: p. 614) challenges the researcher arguing that: "We need to find the strength of our voice—our story." The context of the discussion is centred around the researchers' stories as a source of information but this can be emotional and can be depressing if one opted to pursue it, hence the need to be courageous. Vickers (2002: p. 617) further asserts that: "Interpretive authority most commonly resides with the researcher. In this role, we might attempt to reflect rather than distort another's experience." Essentially the author uses his/her personal mirror to relate to new information in daily life or in the pursuit of academic investigation and narration. One could argue that the mind people use to discern situations is as good as their exposure and that defines who they are; their experiences, their passion, their biases, their hopes, aspirations, strengths, weaknesses, beliefs and attitudes. Therefore, the researcher's submissions and conceptualisation cannot be separated from his background.

One could argue that in storytelling research, the researcher starts with a story which would form the initial building blocks and bias in looking at issues under investigation. Lewis (2011: p.605) poses a key question in respect of the phenomenon of research in asking: "If the story is central to human existence and understanding why, in the research world, is there not more storytelling, particularly in the social sciences?" This question raises an important aspect of learning and understanding of the phenomenon in the research. While it is a glaring fact of humanity that the story and storytelling approach are what individuals use to learn, to reflect, to imagine, and above all to think; it is important to find ways of incorporating this important facet of humanity into the research process (McKenzie, 2011). Hawkins and Saleem (2012) suggest that the identification of organisational and societal narratives requires stories to be obtained from many people, especially where the research is looking into organisational change, it necessitates consideration of more narrative artefacts, to ensure stories are put into context. Subsequently, the re-branding of Oldham is a process of change and this perspective concurs with the observations by Hawkins and Saleem (2012) about the need for a story that borrows from various stakeholders. In their study of place branding Aitken and Campelo (2011) employed an interpretive-constructionist approach where the researcher seeks to understand the dynamics of place branding from a context. The dynamics of place branding help in the development of a framework for understanding the process of storytelling in branding. This approach tallies with the current research's approach undertaken in relation to the study of the Oldham brand. In the same context Aitken and Campelo (2011) refer to multi-sited ethnographic applications (identification with the community of Oldham), historiography (gives consideration to past events and records) and the grounded theory (focuses on the extent to which the researcher identifies with the population under investigation) which are incorporated in the study.

4.6.1 Reporting Findings in Storytelling

Flory and Iglesias (2010) acknowledge the abundant literature on rhetoric and narratives in management research, and the fact that these tools are increasingly being used as research tools. Lieblich, et al. (1998: p.1) acknowledged the growing significance of the concepts of narrative and the life story in a number of research areas in social sciences as: "…theory, research, and application of various disciplines, among them psychology, psychotherapy, education, sociology and history." Flory and Iglesias (2010) further assert that rhetoric and narratives are powerful in driving change in organizations. If this argument holds there are grounds to think that with the right rhetoric and narrative Oldham can be transformed into a better place using the storytelling approach.

In putting the effects of the story in research into context, consideration should be given to stories being reconstructed representations of experiences and that stories are subject to multiple interpretation (Flory and Iglesias, 2010). Kar and Samantari (2011: p. 136) observed that: "As a method, it begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals. Writers have provided ways for analyzing and understanding the stories lived and told." Therefore, the stories about Oldham would capture a variety of facets cutting across the documented stories in the form of reports, history books, stories by residents and employees working in Oldham, council plans and reviews and the business perspectives on Oldham. In telling the story about a place Martin and Woodside (2011: p. 40) point out that:

> Finally, icon building for a destination has merit. Like consumer goods, a destination's icons create reasons for customers (tourists) to visit a destination. Creating myths that are consistent with visitors' views can create a compelling reason to visit a specific destination.

The submission by Martin and Woodside (2011) subscribes to an important aspect of this study which is brand development. Therefore, an iconic building would help create interest in a place from stakeholders. Ultimately, the desire is to create something that would attract the attention of those who are targeted by the place; be it for residential, education, business or

tourism. Flory and Iglesias (2010: p. 114) give a stark reminder about the role of the researcher in the whole process of storytelling: "When writing the stories down, we select, we change, and construct meaning. Therefore it is important that as researchers we look at ourselves as meaning creators."

Therefore, one would note with interest the process the researcher undergoes in the interpretation and assigning of meaning to the stories about Oldham. The researcher is aware that there are a number of research instruments to choose from when one makes a decision on carrying out research and interpreting the findings of the subsequent investigations. This interpretative perspective would mean that the researcher's biases and background may have an influence on the respective decisions (Ashworth, 2009). To this end, one would utilize the concepts from literature and employ ethical principles in conducting research, so that the stories are authentic. According to Lamsa and Sintonen (2006) in using the storytelling approach in research, consideration is given to *emplotment*, which is the integration of the different stories and refers to the way the events are condensed and structured in an intellectual manner. The storytelling approach is not space and time restricted as the integration would embrace both the past and the future as an aid to understanding (Lamsa and Sintonen, 2006). Daiute and Lightfoot (2004) acknowledge the diverse applications of narrative analysis across multitudes of disciplines and acknowledge that it tends to be artful, inspired, flexible, systematic and complex in application.

4.6.2 Content Analysis

Krippendorff (2004: p. 18) states that: "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of the contexts of their use." There is a growing application of content analysis in various facets of

human interfaces such as religion, politics, newspapers analysis, research, propaganda analysis, broad general content analysis, computer analysis; and qualitative analysis which includes discourse analysis, rhetorical analysis, ethnographic content analysis and conversation analysis, among other factors (Krippendorf, 2004). Krippendorff (2004: p.3) explains that: "Content analysis entails a systematic reading of a body of texts, images, and symbolic matter, not necessary from an author's or user's perspective." Neuendorf (2011: p. 277) writes that: "Content analysis is a summarizing, quantitative analysis of messages that relies on the scientific method, including attention to objectivity/intersubjectivity, a priori design, reliability, validity, generalizability, replicaility, and hypothesis testing." Content analysis should be reliable, replicable and that the results should be valid.

Krippendorff (2004: p. 19) summarizes the literature on content analysis giving three definitional perspectives as:

1. Definitions that takes content to be inherent in a text
2. Definitions that takes content to be a property the source of a text
3. Definitions that takes content to emerge in the process of a researcher analyzing a text relative to a particular context

One could argue that researchers are preoccupied with the desire to recognize meaning, and that is aided by the process of content analysis. Brown (2010) raises the importance of psychoanalysis in research and warns against the limitations of the respondent and the researcher's psyche in understanding the phenomenon in a given context. However, Krippendorff (2004) argues that content analysis should take into account that other people read the text involved and that the interpretation of text has a cultural bias.

Miller and Tsang (2010: p. 145) in an article on critical realism argues that: "Critical realism portrays reality as stratified." They further point out that critical realism renders itself to various research methods in empirical studies in order to deal with falsification of data within

the complex organizational setup. This means that data is subject to diverse interpretation. He makes six observations about content analysis as follows:

Figure 4.6 Characteristics of Text in Content Analysis
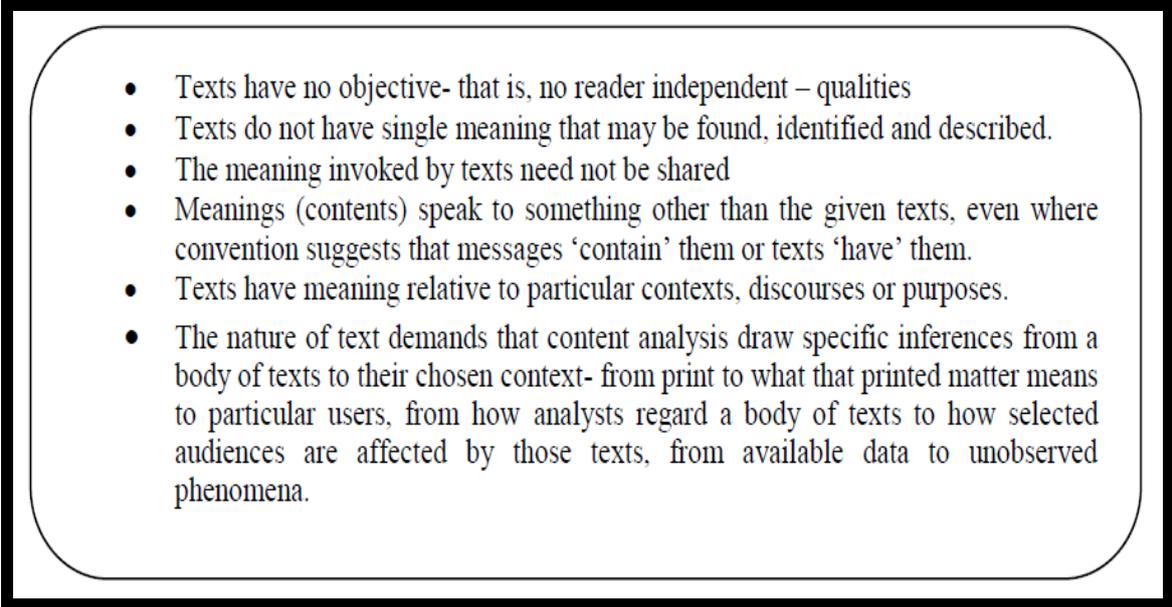
- Texts have no objective- that is, no reader independent – qualities
- Texts do not have single meaning that may be found, identified and described.
- The meaning invoked by texts need not be shared
- Meanings (contents) speak to something other than the given texts, even where convention suggests that messages 'contain' them or texts 'have' them.
- Texts have meaning relative to particular contexts, discourses or purposes.
- The nature of text demands that content analysis draw specific inferences from a body of texts to their chosen context- from print to what that printed matter means to particular users, from how analysts regard a body of texts to how selected audiences are affected by those texts, from available data to unobserved phenomena.

Source: Adopted from Krippendorff (2004: pp. 22-24)

The submissions by Krippendorff (2004) demonstrate the subjective nature of text in content analysis. In the analysis of the text from various sources on Oldham the different stakeholders present different perspectives on the text perception of the respective information. Ricoeur (1984) in Rhodes et al. (2010) presents three stages of operationalizing storytelling in real life which are; *'prefiguration', 'configuration' and 'refiguration',* which are about frameworks of the world; plotting the narration and interpretation to find meaning respectively. They give meaning to the narrative by integrating events in a cohesive manner which also relates to research ethics. Krippendorff (2004) summarises the components of content analysis as the body of text, a research question, the context of the research, the analytical construct, inferences and the validating evidence.

4.7 The Study

The study employs the case study approach to researching the concept of storytelling in developing a brand with a focus on Oldham. This study renders itself to triangulation which encompasses a number of qualitative instruments in gathering relevant data in the form of stories, which are told by different people from different perspectives. This amounts to the application of mixed methods in conducting research for completeness (Tobin and Begley, 2004). Subsequent to the narrations by the storytellers, the other research instruments employed to complement the study include the questionnaire and a focus group discussion. For clarity of findings, the questionnaire seeks to confirm whether the stories that make the Oldham brand are perceived in the same context by a wide spectrum of stakeholders. The focus group discussion gives an opportunity to clarify interpretations of the stories identified. The methodological framework of the study which captures the range of instruments used in the study is presented in *figure 4.7*.

Figure 4.7 The Methodological Framework of the study
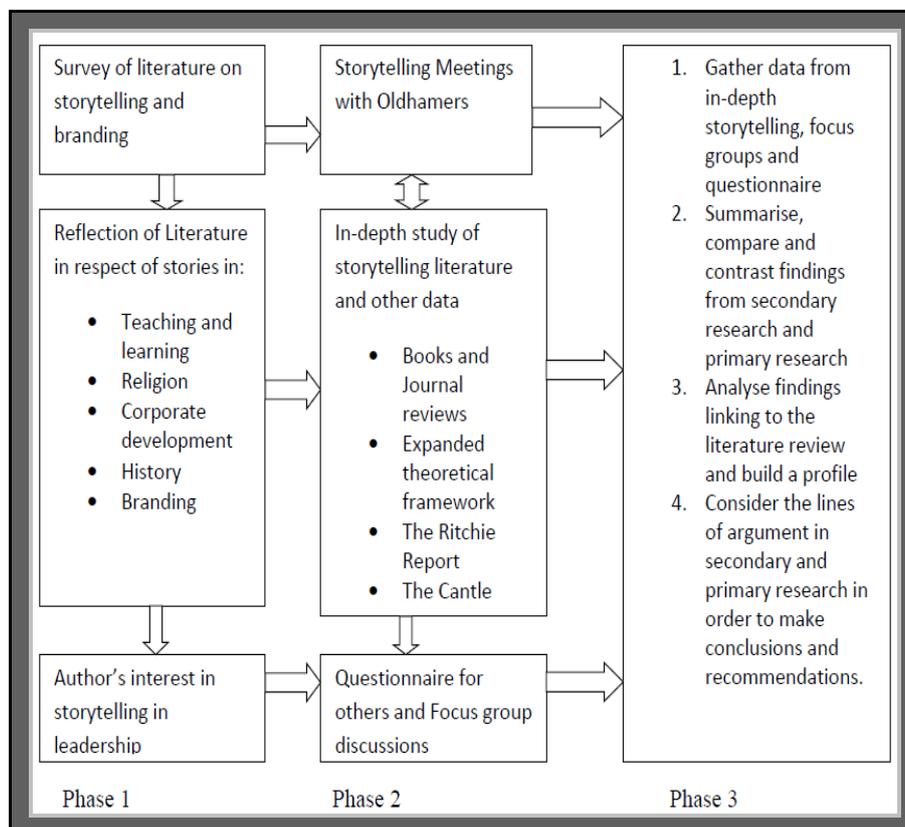
4.7.1 The Research Design

Having considered various research methods such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaire, observation, the storytelling approach, surveys, etc., the study primarily focused on three instruments to meet the set objectives of the study. The methods selected for gathering data for the study include the storytelling approach, the questionnaire and the focus group discussion. In employing the methods, careful consideration was given to the appropriateness of the instruments in meeting the objectives of the study. Lieblich et al. (1998) explain the narrative research as any study that utilizes narrative material or the story cutting across various disciplines. The application of the narrative would therefore be imbedded in any research process given the centrality of the story in every human process. In this study the need to capture the story of Oldham meant that a storytelling approach would be ideal. The focus group discussion gave an opportunity to clarify the submissions made at the storytelling phase of the study. The questionnaire helped to cross-check with the wide spectrum of stakeholders the extent to which society identifies with the different stories that make the story of the Oldham brand. The approach taken in the study was deductive as the process started with a formulation of a conceptual framework which the study sought to confirm (Feather, 2012).

4.7.2   The Research Sample

In a narratological study Brown et al. (2008) used a sample of 26 people taking 60 – 90 minutes formal interviews to good effect. Rhodes et al. (2010: p. 537) say that: "A total of 32 interviews were conducted across all three of the organisation's sites". Rhodes et al. (2010) reported that the interviews to narrate stories were conducted over periods ranging from thirty minutes to two hours and the findings were thoroughly recorded to facilitate narrative analysis. In the study on destination marketing considering four sectors Wang (2008) used a

sample of 32 with 8 respondents picked from each sector. In a research study on integrated marketing communications and branding, Eagle and Kitchen (2006) used a sample of 56 members of the Advertising Agencies Association and 87 members of the Association of New Zealand Advertisers Association for their study on storytelling. McKenzie (2011) in a study of storytelling by entrepreneurs used a sample of thirty two storytellers. In this study a sample of thirty storytellers was used, which cut across a range of Oldham's stakeholders. This study sample size compares favourably with the cases identified in the literature review on researching the subject of storytelling.

4.7.3 The Secondary Research

The conducting of both secondary and primary research is necessary in order to effectively meet the research objectives set out (see section 1.4.2). The history provides the story of the past; but there is also the current story and the future story which matter in understanding a given phenomenon, in this case a place. By the nature of this study the narrative approach to research is ideal as storytelling is the way to tell a story. Stories are narrated to make an impact on a given situation. The reports on Oldham commissioned in the aftermath of the riots of 2001 present comprehensive stories from the past and also make recommendations for the future. The Ritchie Report of 2001, the Cantle Reports of 2001 and 2006 provide a rich vein of the heritage of Oldham, which naturally fits in with the research objectives set out in this study. These reports were complemented by history books and other literature on Oldham, (including literature from the Oldham Council's website and other online and offline publications, the Oldham Library and the Oldham Archives) which offer a rich tapestry from which to draw information. The secondary research provided the documented stories of the study which underpin the origin, past events, milestones, the progress and challenges Oldham has undergone. In order for the study to reflect recent thinking at a

strategic level the story behind the rebranding of Oldham as presented by the consultancy, HDMC (2008) is reviewed to inform subsequent investigations and analysis. This respective review provides an opportunity to compare the position taken by the consultant to that of the different stakeholders who have been part of the respondents in this study.

4.7.4 The Storytelling Research

Parry and Hansen (2007) argue that people follow the story as much as they follow the storyteller or author, and in that respect the story becomes the leader. It was identified that there were a number of people who are familiar with Oldham, and their narratives concerning their stories on Oldham were sought. Storytellers were selected from amongst people who the researcher knew and have substantial knowledge about Oldham. Other storytellers were selected from leads provided by colleagues about people who have a good understanding of Oldham. The approach rendered itself to convenience purposive sampling on the selection of the storytellers for the study. As a former audit committee member on the Oldham Council the researcher could secure meetings with councillors and council personnel with relative ease. With the researcher based at University Campus Oldham, which is within Oldham town, it was easy to access both students and staff for stories on Oldham. At the same time the people the researcher interacted with both formally, and informally, provided further leads linking to other people who were resourceful as storytellers. This process amounted to a snowballing sampling approach built on purposive convenience sampling (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). Ultimately the sample of 30 storytellers cutting across, race, generations, professions and backgrounds was secured. The storytellers told their stories without interruption and were guided by the researcher's introduction that requested them to tell stories that made Oldham a good place, stories that made Oldham a bad place and ultimately answer the question as to whether or not Oldham is a brand and the reasons why it is or why

it is not a brand. A special interview of the storytelling approach is recorded separately. This is the narrative of Oldham from the historian's perspective. The historian provides a summary of the key events of the place and echoes perspectives cutting across different stakeholder groupings and this is treated separately from other interviews about the Oldham stories. Hawkins and Saleem (2012) point out that the use of the narrative in research renders itself to the interpretive approach, which take several different forms.

Every storyteller who agreed to sit down with the researcher would provide their background in relation to their experience of Oldham as a place (see appendix 1). The profiles of the storyteller encompass ethnic diversity, generational diversity, working professionals in Oldham, residents born in Oldham or migrated to Oldham, students pursuing their studies in Oldham, etc. The approach to the narration was exactly the same in every case, i.e., the storyteller was briefed about the purpose of the study and asked to give their profile. They would then tell their familiar stories that make Oldham a good place and then stories that make it a bad place in their view. The last input was their opinion about whether Oldham town is a brand, or not a brand and their reasons to back up their views. Occasionally, the researcher would ask questions to clarify stories, but in most cases the storyteller would narrate with minimal interruption.

4.7.5 The Questionnaire

A questionnaire was drawn up to complement the findings from the storytellers and those of the secondary investigations from the documented stories. The questions acknowledged the findings from the storytellers as those submissions were incorporated into the questionnaire. The objective was to cross-check the views expressed by storytellers and ascertain whether or not there is an agreement or difference in perspectives. The questionnaire design sought to

ensure brevity, relevance and above all simplicity to enable understanding, avoid ambiguity and complication in analysis (Sekeran and Bongie, 2010; Quinlan, 2011). There are elements of the questionnaire that are quantitative and others which are qualitative as different types of data are needed. The aim is for the questionnaire to enable certain information to be captured so that, subsequent to the analysis, conclusions could be drawn to inform the broader marketing and branding fraternity on the phenomenon of marketing and branding through storytelling. The questionnaire was administered through face-to-face distribution and by e-mail. The number of questionnaires sent out was 300, and the number returned was 80 thus giving a response level of 27%, which falls within the 25 – 40% range for the return of questionnaires (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). The researcher did not follow up the questionnaires sent out and that could have affected the response level to the questionnaire.

4.7.6 The focus group discussion

The researcher conducted a focus group discussion of eight participants to further synthesize the stories by the various storytellers and perspectives of the image of Oldham as a brand. This tool allowed for more issues to be clarified concerning the stories. The main issue was the identification of stories that make Oldham a good or bad place and ultimately addressing the issue of whether or not Oldham is a brand. The use of the focus group discussion had challenges in terms of the people selected and their characteristics. One would need to be very careful with how the questions are put to the group. Participation in focus group discussions could be affected by low or high levels of participation, which could mean alienation of some members, or domination by other members (Silverman, 2000; Sekeran and Bongies, 2010). However, the moderator should try and get everyone in the panel engaged for better results (White, 2000). In the focus group discussion conducted the researcher managed to control the participation and minimized the dominance by a few participants. The

focus group discussion sought to engage every participant by making it clear at the onset that all views mattered in the research and encouraged all to participate. The participants in the focus group discussion included two Asian female youths who were born, and grew up in Oldham; with one now living in Manchester. An Asian male who was also born and grew up in Oldham, a black retired woman originally from Zambia who has lived in Oldham for the last thirty years, a white middle aged lady, a white man in his late fifties, and two white youths born and raised in Oldham, (one male and one female). The researcher listened to public conversations about the future of Oldham, which tie in with the sentiments echoed in the focus group discussions.

4.8 Justification of the Methodology

The researcher is confident that the methodology employed was ideal for the task at hand. The use of the narrative as the main tool, backed by a questionnaire and the focus group discussion enabled the researcher to look at the phenomenon from different perspectives. This enabled the researcher to be critical of the views, which could be contradictory at times as they came from a diverse range of stakeholders. As Ellis and Hibbert (2008: p. 5) suggest: "… at their most foundational, stories are a way of sense-making, a way of understanding the present, preserving the past and dreaming a future." This view fits in with the title of the study in that one can make sense of Oldham's past, understand its current dynamics, and project the dream into the future of the town and the borough at large. It is important to point out that this is a very subjective issue, in that people who tell stories see the same situation from different perspectives (Welsch, 1998; Turner and Leslie-Miller, 2007).

With the views being relative to the storyteller's perspective it would also mean that the researcher would consider a range of issues to reach a meaningful cohesive position on the

array of stories from the diverse range of storytellers. The storytellers are passionate in their different perspectives and there are polarised positions Oldham from different stakeholder groups. Ardley (2006: p.197) posits that:

> The stories we get involved with provide a language for how we talk about the world and hence how we act towards it. The contention here is that people think narratively in organisations, where they will tell stories about their experiences in order to make these experiences manageable.

Given that people think narratively about any given phenomenon, one could argue that the use of the narrative/storytelling approach would yield authentic responses, which would make the research-process reliable. The topic of this study being narrative based tended to be inclined towards the storytelling approach as an ideal research instrument. Bond (2002) observes that the narrative as a tool for research borders on cutting edge research depends on the metaphor applied and the extent to which it is seen as credible. In respect of the same issues Bond (2002) alludes to the subjective nature of this type of investigation and for some of these tools to hold, the research should be defined more widely. The feeling of entering a naked interpretation and all its related emotions and biases would apply to Oldham storytellers. The experiences of the storytellers become quite vivid as reference is made to racism, which manifests at times in the community.

The researcher employed the questionnaire and the focus group discussion in the study in order to complement the storytellers' narrations for completeness in the study. The sample of thirty storytellers narrating over forty-five minutes to one-and-half hours meant that storytelling would take a significant amount of time. An in-depth interview with the historian took long to complete and provided a good complement to the stories narrated by the thirty storytellers. The constraint in sampling for storytelling is acknowledged; hence the sample for storytelling could not be significantly big. In order to cross check the stories with a significant number of people it became necessary to employ a questionnaire.

The questionnaire provided a good complement in projecting the bigger picture on the stories that shape the Oldham brand. While the nature of the study renders itself to qualitative research it would appear there is no scope for the use of a questionnaire. However, the questionnaire was used to confirm whether the stories identified by the storytellers are common and whether or not they are seen as affecting the Oldham brand. Ultimately the use of the questionnaire provided the opportunity to check on the validity of the stories and provide rigor to the study. Furthermore the use of the focus group discussion provided an opportunity to verify the stories shared by the questionnaire respondents and what the storytellers' narrations provided. Use of the focus group discussion clarified the stories narrated by the storytellers and confirmed by questionnaire respondents. The use of three methods provided clearer insights into the dynamics of the stories shaping the Oldham brand. By considering perspectives on Oldham coming from different research instruments the methodology employed provided completeness to the study. The researcher was convinced that the process provided adequacy, depth, validity and rigor in the study.

4.9 Ethical Issues in the Study

Kelemen and Rumens (2008) highlight a critical issue that the whole research process is ethically charged and that presents dilemmas, which necessitate re-flexibility in respect of the issues relating to the researcher and the researched phenomenon. Rhodes et al. (2010: p. 540) argue that, "Narratives focus attention on those actions that are positioned as being subject to such ethical scrutiny and those which are not." Kelemen and Rumens (2008: p. 176) further suggest that ethics refer: "... to the study of morality, specifically attempts to construct frameworks of thinking that govern morals".

This amounts to a challenge on the researcher to observe practices that uphold the values and integrity of the researcher thus the researcher becomes a rule following entity by not manipulating power or abusing power by design or by default (Cooper and Schindler, 2008). Sekeran and Bongie (2010: p. 15) arguing the case for all parties involved in research to uphold ethical behaviour argue that: "Ethics in business refers to a code of conduct or expected societal norm of behaviour while conducting research." Balmer et al. (2007) point out that ethical identity is increasingly receiving critical importance in business.

Gill and Johnson (1997: p. 97) observed that: "The key feature of the ethnographic approach is that it is based on what are termed naturalist modes of enquiry, such as participant observation, within a predominantly inductivist framework." By virtue of its social interactive and collaborative nature the process is susceptible to manipulation or abuse by parties involved, depending on their motives and interests in the respective process. Researchers should seek to understand the general principles that guide the interactions of society, so that they do not breach the laws and norms of the given society or the professional standards expected in a given practice. It is therefore imperative that in research; feelings and views are considered in case the reasons for research may be misunderstood and thereby create unnecessary tensions that could easily be avoided if the parties involved are informed. Gill and Johnson (1997: p. 126) point out that:

> Ethical issues in ethnography arise from the nature of the relationship between researcher and host organisation and between the researcher and the subjects he or she studies, both of which may block other researchers if hostility is aroused.

The nature of research gives scope for diverse outcomes from stakeholders as a result the diversity of perspectives of Oldham. Organisations and individuals could be offended by findings and may block the publication of findings to protect themselves. The access to

certain information under The Data Protection Act (1998) may render the researcher and informants to prosecution, and therefore make the research process risky for parties involved.

Potocan and Mulej (2009) present an integration of the different elements of the general and specific factors that shape the business ethics (BE) associated with a given phenomenon. Potocan and Mulej (2009) profiled the different perspectives of looking at the meaning of business ethics (see *Figure 4.9)*. From the different perspectives the researcher sees his former role in the audit committee as supporting the activities of the Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (OMBC).

Figure 4.9: Factors that influence organizational Business Ethics
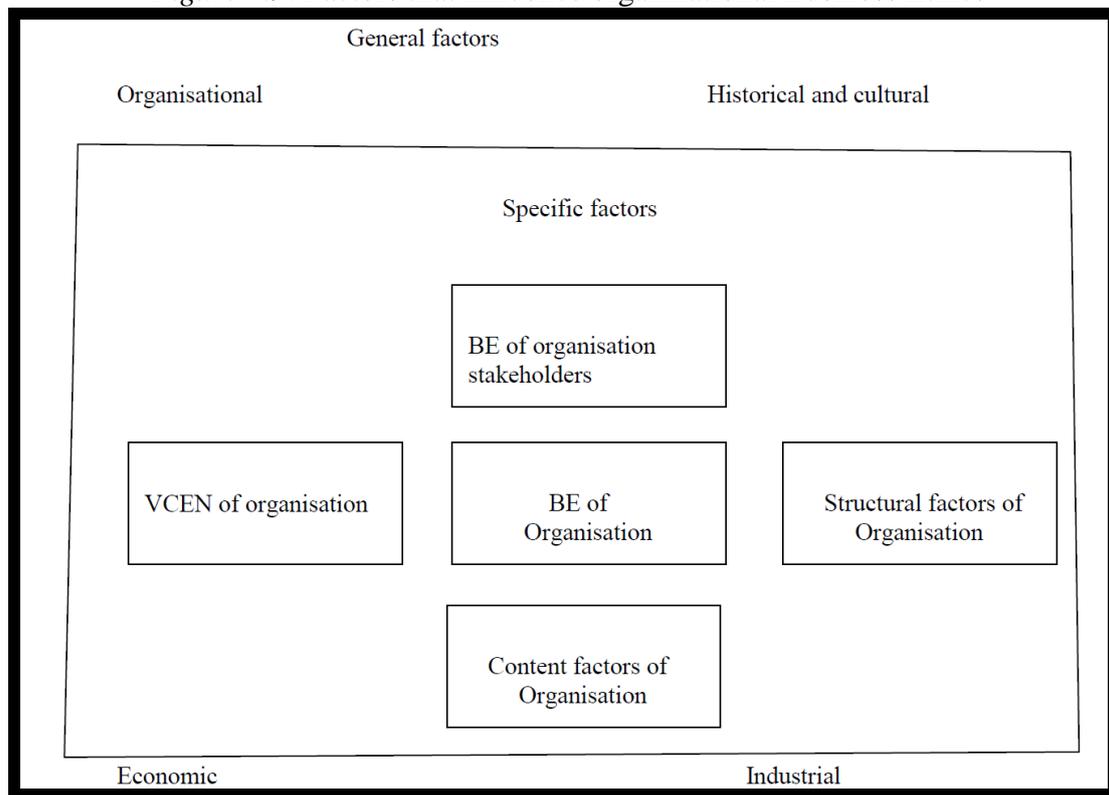
Source: Potocan and Mulej (2009: p. 591)

The role in the audit committee involved helping to protect the finances of the borough by probing any elements of waste, or poor performance on the part of the borough management team and compliance with financial guidelines set out (OMBC, 2005). The different perspectives are not mutually exclusive as they are intertwined and my previous role in the

Oldham audit committee was related to business ethics as a factor (e.g. influential element/attribute) of organisational functioning. Business ethics as a process of observing morals and applying in organisations is central to research as a result of organisational functioning as all these elements fit in with the functions of the audit committee. The researcher was involved with the OMBC at the organisational level (that is, the audit committee as an organisational group). It is important to consider important perspectives in looking at business ethics as presented in *Figure* 4.10.

Figure 4.10 Perspectives in looking at Business Ethics (BE) and levels
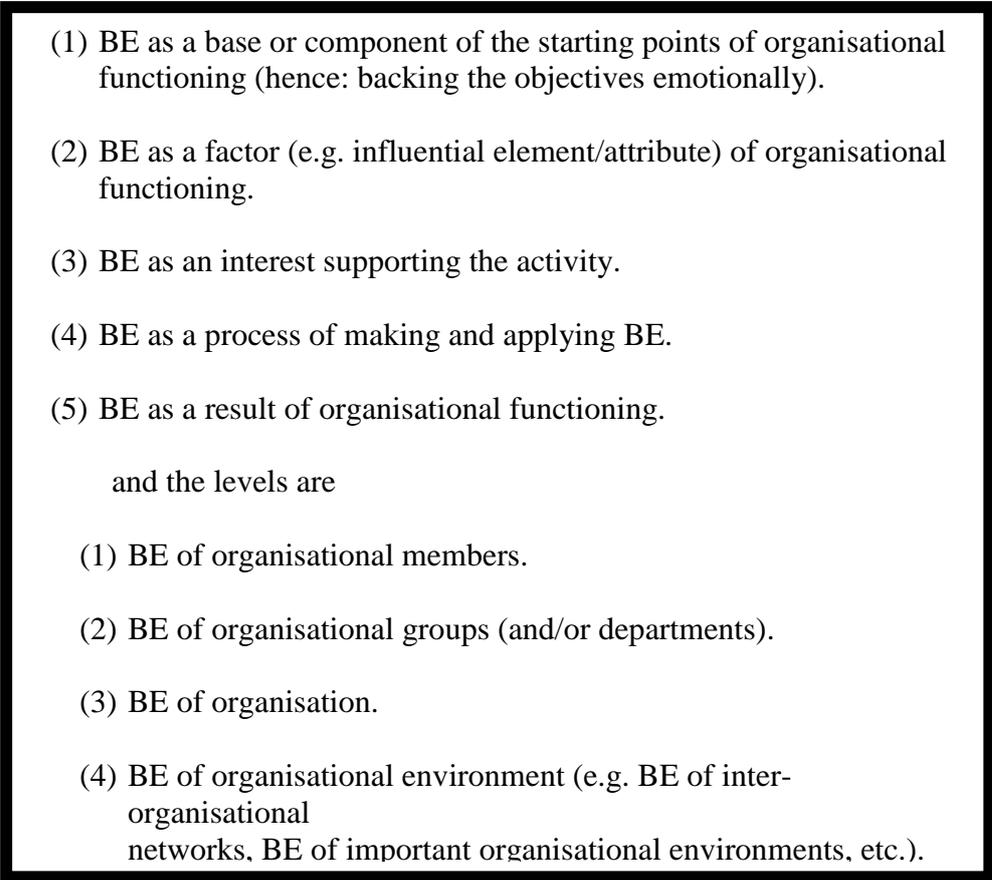
(1) BE as a base or component of the starting points of organisational functioning (hence: backing the objectives emotionally).

(2) BE as a factor (e.g. influential element/attribute) of organisational functioning.

(3) BE as an interest supporting the activity.

(4) BE as a process of making and applying BE.

(5) BE as a result of organisational functioning.

and the levels are

(1) BE of organisational members.

(2) BE of organisational groups (and/or departments).

(3) BE of organisation.

(4) BE of organisational environment (e.g. BE of inter-organisational
networks, BE of important organisational environments, etc.).

4.10 Upholding Ethical Requirements in the study

The researcher will seek to maintain integrity and professionalism in the study by observing the morals expected in academic research. The researcher was guided by the ethical practice code of the Marketing Research Society (see appendix 6)

- The researcher shall treat all the respondents and interviewees in a manner and character that neither threatens nor undermines their integrity

- Since the researcher was a member of the audit committee of the Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council it would be easy to access key people in the Oldham Borough Council. However, the researcher will not act in any way that would jeopardize either the personnel or organisation at large.

- There is no gender sensitivity or under age exposure pertaining to the study and therefore, the related issues do not come into play regarding the study.

Overall, the researcher found the code of ethical practice as published and encouraged by the Marketing Research Society easy to uphold (see appendix 6).

4.11 Summary of the Methodology

The methodology employed in the study utilized a range of tools, rendering the methodological approach of the research to triangulation. This provides a comprehensive approach in that the data collected using different tools has a better chance for being complete. The storytelling approach renders itself to a phenomenological philosophical perspective and the researcher sees himself as an interpretive social contructionist who is grounded in the case as an employee in the community in which the research is conducted.

Chapter Five

The Oldham Brand: The Storytellers' Narrations of the phenomenon

5.1 **Introduction to the storytellers' narrations**

The study into the storytelling approach in the development of a place brand focusing on Oldham could not be completed without the storytellers in the study. The approach to the study is interpretative in that the researcher listens to multitudes of stories. Subsequently, I developed my own story out of the respective stories from the storytellers, integrating my story with findings from other methodologies employed. The study has given consideration to the complex nature of Oldham's infrastructure and ethnic diversity.

There were 30 storytellers who sat down with the researcher to narrate their stories about Oldham as a place. Each storyteller took approximately between 50 minutes and 2 hours of narrating their story. The sample of storytellers was derived through convenience purposive sampling with storytellers identified from the researcher's experience within the borough and pointers from people who are familiar with the place. The sample of storytellers mirrors the complex nature of the borough and the town at large. The profiles of the thirty storytellers are provided in appendix 1 and *table 5.1*.

Table 5.1: The storyteller Profile summary

	Asian	White	Black	Total
Male	6	14	1	**21**
Female	1	8	0	**9**
Total	**7**	**22**	**1**	**30**

The ethnic diversity in the sample provides a decent proportion of the population stratification by race. In gathering the data it is not the size of the sample of storytellers that matters but the depth of knowledge and the authenticity of the stories that the storytellers

present. The narrations were quite comprehensive and informative. The approach to the storytelling approach allowed for the storytellers to articulate their story without much influence on what they should say.

5.1.1 The identification of the storytellers

In this study the storytellers are identified by the code R (respondent). R1, R2, R3…….R30 represent the thirty respondents from respondent number 1(R1) to respondent number 30 (R30). The coding (R1 to R30) is used for identity purposes only with the descriptor for each respondent provided in appendix 1. The coding was used to preserve anonymity for the respondents. Appendix 1 provides the profiles of the different storytellers. Appendix 2 identifies respondents' participation in narrating dominant stories in the study of Oldham. Therefore, the descriptor profiles and the storyteller contribution matrix to the different stories link the individual to the different stories that were prevalent in the narrations.

5.2 Approach to the narration of the Oldham Stories

Storytellers, R1 to R30 (Numbers 1 to 30) told their story about Oldham. Every storyteller who agreed to sit down with the researcher would provide their background in relation to their experience of Oldham as a place. The profiles of the storytellers encompass ethnic diversity, generational diversity, working professionals in Oldham, residents born in Oldham or migrated to Oldham or students pursuing their studies in Oldham. The approach to the narration was exactly the same in every case where the storyteller was briefed about the purpose of the study and asked to give their profile. The storytellers would then tell their familiar stories that make Oldham a good place and then stories that make it a bad place in their view. The last input was their opinion about whether Oldham is a brand or not a brand and their reasons to back up their views. Occasionally the researcher would ask questions to clarify stories, but in most cases the storyteller would narrate with minimal interruption. The

report would seek clarification on the timing of developments and the storyteller's opinion on the stories that make Oldham a good or bad brand.

It would appear that the stories told by participants tend to relate to their generation and their background. Storyteller, R10, a technocrat on community development said that people like storytelling in Oldham and that there is a history of storytelling in the place. Being an employee of OMBC, R10's induction included an attachment at the local archives where he learnt about stories that have made Oldham. There is no consistency in some of the stories told by different storytellers. However, R10 would question: "How can 220 000 people be represented in a story?" There is also an observation by some storytellers to the effect that the story is a tool for breaking things down in trying to understand the vision using a narrative of Oldham's aspirations. There are no obvious groupings of people and the historical background of the town comes into perspective. R10 also observed that the story changes as one sees the audience's reaction. People tend to interpret things based on 70% looks, 20% what the storyteller sounds like and 10% what you say (R10).

5.3 The general perspective of storytellers

In most cases the general feeling was the same, that Oldham is a place which has a great past but has been on a decline for a long time (R3; R4; R5; R11; R12; R14; R20; R21). Oldham is seen as a poor place struggling with community segregation (R3, R10, R20). The stories told are relative to the background of the storytellers making the process largely subjectivist in orientation. The main general themes coming through are summarised below. There is a common line in the various stories told that Oldham is a place in the shadows of the expansive City of Manchester and some referred to the situation as instinctive broadening of Manchester and Greater Manchester (R3; R4; R7; R21). Storyteller R4 suggests that: "The

key for Oldham's success is Manchester or Greater Manchester and taking away decision making responsibilities from Oldham." Storyteller, R3 pointed out that: "Oldham sits on the M62 motorway linking the M6 to the west and M1 to the east making easy access to most parts of the UK as the two major motorways link the north and south across the country". Storyteller R7 argues that: "Oldham has a mini identity within Greater Manchester and is not significant." Storyteller R11 concurs with R7 in stating that: "Oldham clings to its identity instead of being swallowed by Greater Manchester." Storyteller R11 would further argue that he sees himself as living in Manchester as there is very little to identify with in Oldham, except the coliseum. One could argue that despite the advantages of its position Oldham faces challenges for development and branding. Most of the storytellers fear that Oldham town is becoming a ghost town as the structures are deteriorating and the place is increasingly being deserted by most reputable organisations (R4; R11; R20; R21; R23; R22; R24; R28; R30). There appears to be a general pattern of everything working to take people away from Oldham, examples being the railway and the main roads which by-pass the town centre (R23; R27; R29). This was suggested to mean that people are not brought to Oldham, but rather taken away (R11; R21; R25; R30). There is a general fear that the celebrated coming of the tram linking Bury, Manchester, Oldham and Rochdale expected to start operating in 2014 could take more people away from Oldham. Oldham is seen as sandwiched between Manchester, Leeds and Liverpool, which some storytellers see as an advantage and the motorway access is seen as conveniently positioned for Oldham. The M62 and the M60 main roads (motorways) pass through some parts of the Oldham Borough making it easy to access Oldham by road (R2; R3). The busy Manchester airport is about forty minutes away by road and that provides easy access to a fast local and international gateway (R2; R3).

Oldham is seen as diverse in its physical outlook of the landscape as a residential area, ethnic mix, business diversity, affluence of its communities and the business profiles. The expectation presented by storytellers is that institutions in Oldham should help people achieve, inspire them and support them to develop skills. The landscape presents the town as a place largely on a hill and generally inaccessible, also making the town centre windy and cold (R10; R19).

The successful cotton era preceded an economic downturn that saw the standard of living for Oldhamers and the general state of the town slowly degenerate since the 1970's (R2; R3; R5; R6; R9; see section 3.8.2). The community is seen as segregated and racism rears its head on occasions (R12: R14; R15; R16; R17; R18; R21; see sections 3.2 and 3.8). The issue of ethnic diversity dates back to the 1950's when immigrants started trickling into Oldham from Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and the West Indies (R3; 14; R16; Halsall, 2007; see sections 3.2 and 3.13). Oldham is understood to have had many twists and turns in its history. Oldham's recent past is defined by the riots of 2001, which coincided with the disappearance of the manufacturing industry and this seems to have led to a series of initiatives which have helped renew and restore the town and the borough at large (R3; R29; see sections 3.7 and 3.8.2). There is a general perception that the developments in Oldham came from regeneration funding following the riots of 2001. Most of the storytellers agree on the Oldham brand being a pale shadow of its glorious past when the town was "king cotton" (R1; R2; R3; R5; R9; R10; R12; R14; R17; R18; R26; see chapter 1; see chapter 3). There is nothing or very little to celebrate in Oldham that helps stakeholders to expect to see or experience something great, moreso, even the heritage seems to be systematically disappearing (R3; R5; R11; R14; R17; R21; R23; R25; R26; R27; R29).

A negative outside image of Oldham town is perceived by stakeholder and R7 would state that: "Oldhamers appear not to value themselves and the things that are worth celebrating are destroying their heritage as buildings are not maintained unlike in Saddleworth." Opinion is divided on whether the name Oldham is appropriate for a borough that embraces seven townships of a diverse nature with specific unique identities diametrically incomparable to Oldham town with respect to many facets of the landscape and the communities that make up those respective townships. Oldham is a low esteem, and low aspiration society, with a low education threshold and the society is closed (R7; R19; HMDC, 2008). The University Campus Oldham, the Oldham Sixth Form and The Oldham College have had a significant effect in shifting aspirations of the Oldham community for the better (R15). Storyteller R6 pointed out that, "Training of managers by Positive Action Northwest was meant to help change the mindset of Oldhamers and help change minds and perceptions to facilitate re-branding." The objectives of the project were partially achieved as the training was done for a short period and then stopped. The transformation Oldham is seeking is similar to what Bradford went through before realizing vibrancy and prosperity in the place. (Trueman et al, 2004) There is need for effective planning in order to make progress. The young people of Oldham are more tolerant and more progressive as they have had exposure as they have been to school and have mixed with other races (R5; R20; R21; R23; R25). Unlike the majority of the old generation where the majority hold onto past suspicions and dislike of other races, the young people are comfortable embracing multiculturalism (R25). There is still some way to go in this important transition process of Oldham (R2).

5.3.1 Key Perceptual Underpinnings of Storytellers about Oldham

In order to demonstrate biases and persuasions echoed by the storytellers below are recorded some strong sentiments expressed verbatim in the course of storytelling by the different

storytellers who narrated about Oldham. There are different perspectives taken by the different storytellers. The way some statements are put across has connotations on the image portrayed by the story narrated. Further reference to the verbatim extracts from the narratives by storytellers are provided in appendix 11.

The overriding picture painted by the storytellers' underpinning statements present Oldham as a place with a strong past that saw it flourish and attracted the immigration of people from different parts of the world. Asians immigrated from Bangladesh and Pakistan and South America, especially Jamaicans from South America to take up jobs in cotton mills. The immigration gave way to segregated communities, but subsequently entered an economic downturn that has reduced the town to a pale shadow of its glorious past culminating in race riots in 2001. The instability gave way to regeneration and renewal. Some of the storytellers think that for Oldham to prosper there is need for one clear outcome of its agenda focused on development. There is doubt on the practicality of *Oldham Beyond,* the blue print for the place which is seen as just another document lacking in vision and focus. It would appear that Oldham is attempting to do too much in a short period to address the different challenges.

There are a number of observations brought up in the narrations which acknowledged the plethora of services provided in the borough by a variety of institutions among them; the council, local government, government, quasi government departments, charities and the private sector organisations. However, with limited communication many people do not seem to appreciate the various institutions playing important roles in the town and the borough at large.

There is a tendency to band people together even if they do not manifest similar characteristics. The desire for financial gain has meant that to participate in certain programmes racial hatred had to be suspended. There are too few people who are participating in projects for the common good of Oldham. As long as the programmes initiated do not take a long-term perspective they might not be sustainable as they would not allow for incremental improvement. It was also noted that in other places people are pushed to bring development. However, in the case of Oldham there is the complex cultural and history of segregation that works against the push for collective responsibility and focus for development. It was observed that there is a trade-off between deprivation and development. Looking back to the past some storytellers acknowledge that in the recent past as much of Manchester was improving and up-skilling Oldham remained behind. People of Oldham look back to their past with nostalgia, as they recall the days of prosperity when the borough and the town had more millionaires than any part of Europe (R3). However, Oldham has now deteriorated into a welfare town (R6; R11; R23). R26 says that Oldham holds onto its glamorous industrial past which is associated with successes in cotton. R29 observed that Oldham is seen as a great engineering and cotton centre.

The overall perspective is epitomized in the comment by R12 who stated that, "Oldham is a very insular town with no industry with memories of a market which is no more and a town centre that is no more." People see it as a place where residents get drunk and fight, with high levels of teenage pregnancies. It would appear that OMBC has no initiative to dispel these negative perceptions. Some storytellers suggest that the negatives of Oldham do not appear to cause concern to those in authority. R27 expresses concern about the dirty buildings, the state of dilapidation of the town, demolition of some of the beautiful buildings in the town and the general security risk posed by excessive drinking on "Yorkshire Street" in

the town centre. With the degeneration of the town and the wider borough, there are too many companies that have deserted Oldham (R11; R23; R26).

R28 was transformed by storytelling as a pupil at school and makes some important comments about the storytelling approach; saying that: "The story has a different slant depending on the storyteller and the writer of the story also takes a different angle. Each time one tells a story, how the story unfolds is influenced by the listener; depending on the mood of the storyteller." The different storytellers gave narrations on a number of stories; and the different storytellers come from different backgrounds (see appendix 2).

5.3.2 The Cotton Story

A number of storytellers pointed out that Oldham was a dominant player in the area of cotton spinning and cotton machine making during the industrial revolution. The great things about Oldham are attributed to this great past anchored in cotton spinning (R3; R5; R21; R29). The worst thing that has ever happened to Oldham emanates from the collapse of the cotton industry in the 1970's (R3; Ritchie, 2001). Oldham's industrial ethos was evident for people who settled in the area in its heydays (R3; R5). Increasingly the curriculum at the further education college in Oldham was being divorced from the cotton industry (R3; R26). The shift from the cotton era was evident in the conversion of cotton mills into classrooms. The cotton industry shifted to the developing countries where the cotton spinning technology was cheaper (R3). The end of the cotton era threw many people out of employment and affected lifestyles. Some situations benefited from the development with Alexander park being built by unemployed cotton workers (R1; R14). Despite the last cotton mill shutting down in 1980 the heritage of mills that once made Oldham a major attraction, there are several cotton mills still standing in parts of Oldham which remind the community about Oldham's great past

(R3; R21; R29). The mills have become homes to a variety of industries. Part of the legacy of mills is that the Asians who migrated as guest workers did not prepare their children to work outside mills as they did not anticipate staying longer than the heydays of the cotton era (R13; R16; R26).

In the 1950's the Oldham industry was largely cotton mills and that is what influenced the culture of the place. The Platt brothers manufactured cotton equipment for the whole world, which complemented the cotton spinning business. In the 1970's big shops moved to Oldham, because of its affluence at that point (R3; R14; R16; R26). The success in cotton spinning provided a trigger for the flow of tourism into Oldham, which had become an attractive destination (R1; R2; R5; R11; R14). To this day Oldham struggles with unemployment. There is no job growth in Oldham, meanwhile in neighbouring areas of Oldham such as Tameside and Rochdale job opportunities are also shrinking (R2, R3, R5, R12, R16, R21, R26, R29).

5.3.3 The Immigration into Oldham

The Asian community found their way into Oldham as migrant workers who took up roles in the cotton mills coming mainly from Bangladesh and Pakistan in the 1960's (see section 3.5). The Asian element in Oldham is not as prominent as the outside community is made to feel (R4). There are twenty wards with 3 or 4 dominated by the Asian community. Pakistanis' came in the late 1950's and 60's as a source of cheap labour to work in mills (R3; R14; R29; see chapter 3). The Pakistanis brought their own culture and did not understand the local culture. Pakistani and Bangladeshi people tended to live together in certain areas like Werneth, Glodwick and Westwood and slowly took over the areas as a result of white flight,

that is a situation where the white community relocated from certain areas to avoid living with the Asians.

While the economic justification of the influx of Asians had merit, the white Oldhamers could not understand and looked upon the Asians with disapproval and suspicion (R14; R16; R22; R29). R27 says people used to stare at Asians as they had never seen them and as there had been no explanation from the authorities on the reasons for their presence in Oldham.

The first generation Asians in Oldham were made redundant from factories in the Thatcher era before the 1990's (R3). The second generation leaving school at the time worked in restaurants and takeaways and had no aspirations beyond just working (R13; R16; R26; R29). The desire to develop saw young Asians who left school in the 1990's go for further education. In the 1990's until about 2000 a number of the young Asians working in restaurants and takeaways moved away to find better jobs and the majority returned to Oldham (R16). In this same period the first generation was retiring from jobs and their children took over. The children maintained the life style and remained segregated from the majority white people (R16; Halsall, 2007). This period was like a boom on the influx of Asian people into Oldham (R14; R16). However, a new challenge set in when drugs and alcohol became a menace for the community as it was against muslim values, which shaped their lifestyle (R2; R3; R19; R26). This amounted to social rebellion by the Asian youths. The third generation entered the fray after 2000 with a big shift in the community expectation (R13; R25). The youth from the Asian community were expected to go for further education (FE) or higher education (HE) to improve their prospects in life (R11; 13; R25). Asians started challenging for professional jobs, while another influx of Asians took up previous Asian jobs (R16). While the second generation suffered an identity crisis having some

knowledge of countries of origin and Oldham the third generation is quite adaptable and they genuinely feel "British Asians". It is disheartening to Asians when some whites refer to them as second citizens (R14; R16; R29).

In the late 1990s through to the first decade of the 21st century there was a big influx of Asians into Oldham. Those who came to Oldham as asylum seekers were seeking areas where they could identify with the residents culturally and they also tended to gravitate to areas that are economically cheap to live in. The general settlement pattern saw the Asian groups consolidating as clusters in certain areas as Coppice, Westwood and Glodwick.

5.3.4 The Re-drawing of Oldham Boundaries

The delimitation exercise to redraw the boundaries of counties and councils in 1974 created significant discomfort to communities which found themselves unwillingly bundled together. The 1974 expansion of the borough which made Oldham town the administration centre for the borough seems not to have worked well as there was resistance from the different townships, which were bundled together to form the new borough (R23; R26; R29). Old people were particularly resistant to the new setup, which amounted to a takeover by Oldham for areas like Saddleworth whose residents want to identify themselves as part of West Yorkshire (R3; R5; R23; R29). People from the different townships were proud of their identities and could not identify with others and moreso with the name Oldham due to implications of the effects that name would have on properties values and the feelings of losing identity (R21; R23; R29). Combining seven townships meant integrating seven heritages that were largely incompatible due to the significant differences of the townships (R3; R11; R23). Naming the borough Oldham gave a feeling of being taken over for the other townships (R22; R23; R29). In other places where delimitation took place merged townships

chose borough names that did not correspond to any one of the townships within that borough, for example 'Tameside' and 'Calderdale' are not township names and borough names as well like in the case of Oldham. The merger attracted six new wards to the then existing seven wards making it a total of thirteen wards (R23; R29). Failsworth being close to Manchester largely felt they could not be identified with the Oldham borough which the delimitation process created.

The case of Saddleworth, where there are strong sentiments, echoed with arguments pointing at the fact that this was not just a matter of identify with Yorkshire but felt that their level of affluence was diluted by being bundled with six other townships and named as being part of OMBC (R23; R26; R29). The people of Saddleworth value their independence and they see the merging of seven townships into the Oldham Metropolitan Bourough Council 1974 as a disaster (R23). Saddleworth residents saw themselves as part of Yorkshire. In a referendum that took place 80% of its residents were against merging with Oldham (R29). The people of Saddleworth would prefer to be separated from Oldham. They would opt to go to Ashton-under-Lyne, Manchester or Huddersfield instead of going to Oldham because they do not want to associate with it (R21; R26). The townships of 'Shaw', 'Royton' and 'Chadderton' to some extent were not prepared to join the Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council. The township of 'Shaw' felt more inclined towards the borough of Rochdale but did not pose a big challenge (R23). This could be partly because the lifestyles of the people of Shaw are similar to the majority of the people of Oldham. R22 points out that since 1974 a complex situation was created as Failsworth, Chadderton, Royton, Saddleworth and Crompton came under the same umbrella council named Oldham. This resulted in political disagreements and resistance as most areas did not want their identity to be absorbed into Oldham.

5.3.5 The Multiracial Community of Oldham

R14 notices a prolific change in the ethnicity of Oldham. Before 1950 there was no other race, other than white compared to today (R14). In the 1950's West Indians immigrated into Oldham to work on the railway and society looked down upon them (R3; R14). No public houses would open on a Sunday in observance of the Lord's Day. The Ukrainians, the Polish, West Indians and Italians who had been prisoners of war following the second world war settled in Oldham (R14). The Ukrainians and the Polish had their clubs where people could mix and this helped with cohesion in the community. The Pakistanis purchased houses and made sure they would take over areas, often making their offers irresistible in the 1960's (R14). Houses were shifting hands for the workers in the mills as they were alternating sleeping times to ensure the various occupants could rest.

Houses had a multipurpose as they were also used for worship. Mosques only appeared in the 1980's (R13; R16). Subsequently, in 1980 there was an influx of immigrants into Werneth and Glodwick (R3; R14; R16). The government provided grants to improve the houses for the Asian community (R16). More resources were provided to meet other community needs. For example at Warburton Bakery, they were always experiencing labour shortages and they relied on the Asians to meet the need (R14; R16). One could argue that the housing grants for development and the job opportunities for the Asians helped them settle in Oldham (R13; R14; R16; R29). Communication between the Bangladeshis and Pakistanis without others was very poor as the adults could not speak English and only the young people spoke English so the young Asians became the mediators in communication between the adult Asians and Whites in Oldham. Asians concentrated in a few places; Bangladeshis concentrated in Westwood and Coldhurst while Pakistanis concentrated in Glodwick, Werneth and Coppice. The Indians were a rather small group concentrated in Heathershaw.

R14 says that initially the non-white people were called "coloured" which was not politically acceptable and this changed to "black" (R14). R7 suggests that there is endemic racism, which he believes is close to the surface and the hope of reducing this social cancer lies in the young generation who do not share in the intractable racism. R8 points out that for older generations racism was with people from a young age. It could be argued that racism is a reflection of many years of separation and hardening of feelings against each other. R8 points out that the ethnic clusters in Oldham were born out of segregation. The failure to integrate compounded the separation and perpetuated a sense of rejection for the Asian community. It would follow that with the high level of segregation the interaction between the communities was minimal or non-existent in some cases.

Certain areas were "no go" areas for the Asians but with time some areas became "no go" areas for the Whites (R14; R16). R11 points to the fact that in the 1970's racist jokes were common and attitudes were bad and distasteful (R14). Racism in Oldham is exacerbated by knowledge of itself, that is, awareness of other people who make up the broader society of Oldham. Subsequently, for the white young people the worst problem was drinking and not smoking (R5; R11; R14). They went about on what was termed, "Paki bashing", which is the harassment of the Pakistani people (R14). One storyteller said that the era was very bad. The white people of Oldham are looking for places where they would feel safe away from the cosmopolitan community (R11). R16 poses an important question, "Why should the Asians be asked to make efforts to integrate when it is the Whites who moved from areas where Asians came to settle?" The historical imbalances and the lack of planning to address the end of the cotton era had a big effect on the legacy of the town and the borough as many people hold onto their fears and intolerance of each other (R3).

However, despite the racial tensions that are attributed to Oldham, R13 says that he is, "Absolutely colour blind and have not suffered racism." One could observe that this attitude has come from an open approach and being ready to engage with different races and communities having been born and lived in Oldham in a multiracial and multicultural environment. Part of the reasons for improving the situation can be attributed to the increase in the number of Asians who speak English and the young people who have come out of mixed schools where cohesion is integral in the schools' ethos (R26; see section 3.8.2). The improved communication between the two races has helped in the integration of the people. Storyteller R28 is pleased with the cultural diversity in that it has brought some variety to practices, like greetings in the community, giving something different to the traditional English greeting which is seen as flat with no handshake. R28 further suggests that diversity has provided a variety of food dishes, enriching the community of Oldham. R21 down plays the notion of riots in arguing that: "The incident of the scuffles was blown out of proportion even though it was more of thug mentality or mob psychology." R22 pointed out that the whole community needed to cooperate in addressing the riots so that Oldham could move forward. R23 says that Oldham's new identity is riots following the experiences of 2001.

5.3.6 The Education Story of Oldham

R21 is concerned with the segregation in education and the general lack of interest and low levels of education in the town and the borough at large. For the few who progress in their education it would appear Oldham turns out to be a training ground for other places with better attraction for skilled people (R5; R15; R11; R13). R26 sees Oldham as the science centre which epitomizes the future which would facilitate change for the better by contributing to research and development in the borough. R26 further observes that Oldham Sixth Form shows extreme situations of wealth, poverty, social, political and ethnic diversity

and spread out geographically. History shows that Oldham has generally pulled people towards prosperity (R26).

R5 argues that in 1991 Oldham Sixth Form College was the worst in 'A' level grades across the whole of England but has experienced a phenomenal transformation that has also impacted on Oldham. In the last 20 years £15 million was spent transforming it and has made it the most powerful force in education within Oldham with innovative staff (R5). Working on twelve key human experiences the college managed to transform itself into a needs-driven educational institution that helped raise aspirations in Oldham (R5). Short courses which utilised the twelve key human experiences were attendance and assessment based. The short courses equipped students for life by providing them with a range of tools for the interview process. Staff had to align themselves with one of the categories like dance or local history (R5). The renewal process focused on a new agenda, a new building and new school. In 1996 the Oldham Sixth Form launched the Junior University which was meant to encourage young people to aspire to go to university. Most young people had no one to look to for inspiration to go to university (R5). The process started at the age of 13 years. Oldham carved itself a niche as a centre for science in the Northwest of England in contrast to all other parts of the country where local economic activity has been scaling down. On average graduates earn £500,000 more than non-graduates over a lifetime (R5; R9). There were many benefits gained from the educational advancements at Oldham Sixth Form College in that it,

- Made young people more aspirational;

- Gave pride to the town as it allowed for social and political maturity;

- Led to the establishment of the university campus in Oldham, and

- Brought the university to within proximity of the Oldham community (R5; R9)

The higher education provision was initiated in 1999 starting with the Bachelor of Law degree (R5; R9; R11; R19).

Subsequently, many degree validation arrangements were entered into with various universities. Subsequently in 2005 the University of Huddersfield took over the HE provision in Oldham and established the University Campus Oldham but as of 1 August 2012 this arrangement shifted back to The Oldham College (R9; R11; R190). The status of a university town has benefits that Oldham has been enjoying, but it is unclear what the effects of untangling University Campus Oldham from the University of Huddersfield would be. R5 pointed out that within 20 – 25 years the University of Oldham would depend on government funding. R20 feels that Oldham would benefit from being a university town. R6 argues the complex case of segregation in education where certain courses were naturally for whites while such as medicine, law, dentistry, engineering, accounting and other prestigious programmes; while teaching, nursing and other less prestigious programmes were for Asians. R5 further asserts that the system simply blocked certain positions from Africans and Asians, which was tantamount to discrimination. Positive Action Northwest (PANW) an equality and diversity organization championed the opening up of opportunities for all, by engaging senior management in the different organisations to observe the relevant aspects of the law (R6). However, this good work could not continue as the project was terminated and PANW stopped operating.

With the establishment of the Northwest Centre for Science and Technology in Oldham the new great thing for Oldham is science and new technology (R26). R24 says that support for learning from primary level has improved, and this has helped improve performance for children, especially Asian children. Equally the increase in the number of centres of

education is a significant shift from the previous situation when Oldham was devoid of learning opportunities especially progressing from secondary education to further education or higher education and adult learning (R5; R11). Widening participation has been a topical issue in Oldham at the turn of the century, and that helped with access to further and higher education in Oldham (R6; R9; R16; R23; R28).

R27 laments the fate of those graduating from the various education establishments in the light of the collapse of the town and the lack of employment in Oldham town, and the borough at large. However, R26 sees Oldham as a good town with potential which can help improve expertise through relevant education and training in law, business studies, technical and IT, excellence in university delivery and science advancement through the regional Science Centre. R26 would state that: "The Science Centre in Oldham epitomizes the future that is changing and will facilitate the greatness of the past when Oldham was a great engineering and cotton centre of the world."

The education results in Oldham have been improving and that would aid in the improvement of life styles and the general outlook of Oldham (R5; R11; R26). In some situations children whose first language is not English have struggled with tasks, which in some cases do not relate to their culture (R5; R16; R19).

5.3.7 The people of Oldham

In the 1960's and 70's the people of Oldham were vibrant as one moved about town (R5; R9; R19; R27). In the past teachers encouraged learners to be a success in life (R5; R19). The 2001 census put the population of Oldham at 210,000 people (R10). In the 1950's people had large families and R28 says they were eleven in their family unlike today when couples opt to

have one or two children. Families are no longer as close as they used to be. R4 states that: "There are few progressive people in Oldham. The people with ambition and a good look in Oldham are mostly working professionals who live outside Oldham." However, R26 sees the Oldham community as mutually cohesive being a genuinely mixed community and functioning well. Children play together in the areas of residence irrespective of race and that helps improve social cohesion.

Multiculturalism is increasingly becoming common across towns and cities, but can have negative effects if there is segregation as in the case of Oldham (R26; R29; Halsall, 2007). The library, the coliseum and the art gallery support people and help bring them together. Alcoholic places also bring people together but the majority of Asians seem not to like to frequent those places (R12; R26; R27). R4 suggests that there are many white underclass in the centre of Oldham, what he says are people who live on state benefits income support. It is also suggested that Asians are quite diverse in their orientation as they have many smaller groupings within the main bracket with the majority described as not progressive. R5 observes that as a failing town kids from Oldham drifted into drugs and prostitution because of abuse. People from Oldham appear not to value themselves. They seem to largely identify the Oldham Athletic Football club but do not necessarily agree on other areas on their sense of identity. It would appear people from Shaw, Delph and Saddleworth see themselves as part of South West Yorkshire; with Shaw, Royton seeing themselves as part of Rochdale, while Chadderton and Saddleworth see themselves as part of Manchester. Saddleworth appeals to affluent people who seem to appreciate its beauty when they move into the area. R10 observes that people of Uppermill, which is one of the villages in Saddleworth, are not friendly.

The people of Oldham largely fall into two main groups, the White people who are the majority and Asian people who are the minority (R7; R13; R14). As far as the Asians are concerned the third and fourth generation has a different lifestyle which is relative to where people live, which is being community driven (R21; R23; R25). The White culture is open and gives independence to decide and associate compared to the Asian culture, which is family driven. The Asians are shaped and directed by the family and the community and tend to be concentrated in specific residential areas. The storytellers observed that mindsets are shifting and that raising people's aspirations is key in making Oldham a better place. The third generation of Asians feel part of Oldham as R25 says, "I like Oldham because it is my home and that is where I grew up."

As people become skilled oftentimes they leave Oldham in search of better opportunities, but interestingly they remain connected to Oldham wherever they go. Bury is a very good example of people who want to go back after settling in other places and also attracts people from outside. R10 submitted that 52% of people from Bury have a degree qualification, while 25.3% from Oldham have a degree. This is a significant improvement from 19%, five years ago. Bury is marketed as a place of opportunity with its entrepreneurial initiatives, and is the only place in Greater Manchester where house prices are rising during this period when the country faces an economic gloom (R10). It is also observed that Oldham town is an open arena with 40% of its workforce travelling from outside the borough to work, in contrast to Bury where 50% of the workforce travel to work from outside the borough (R10).

R10 suggests that residents want Oldham to be boxed, that is no entry no exit. The town centre is not attractive with old buildings that are neglected and dilapidated as the beautiful heritage of the town is left to deteriorate and the general feeling is one of deprivation for the

people of Oldham. R11 says that the people of Oldham are pessimists and doubt if ever good things could happen to the town and the borough. They have a protective response to hardships which amounts to exercising caution in risky situations. Most people have no ambition and have a backward mentality believing in just working; they do not venture away from simple or manual jobs (R16). They are not willing to take up the chance to change and do not value higher education.

As recent as the late 1980's there was resistance to progress to higher education even by bright students. Even to this day in the year 2012 some sections of society do not see the need to pursue higher education and expand the mind. The White working class sections of society are concerned about their identity given the ethnic diversity of Oldham. It has been suggested that education is good for integration as exemplified by the Oldham Sixth Form. However, despite increasing levels of education and integration efforts "ghetorisation" remains where people find it difficult to mix and the community sees the "ghettos" as another world (R11). A town centre street, namely Yorkshire Street meant for relaxing, is popular for excessive drinking, that makes it unsafe for families to travel in the town at night (R12).

Other areas in Oldham have tarnished reputations due to crime and excessive drinking. This has resulted in Oldham coming up regularly on police files for bad behavior further casting a negative feeling about the place. Young people need inspiration and direction for them to do better. There are a few people in Oldham who inspire young people by their stories. It is also noted that people managed to reflect and make efforts to improve race relations following the riots.

5.3.8 Attractions of Oldham

Oldham's past had so much to look forward to for residents and visitors. In its successful past Oldham was a global cotton spinning centre with a booming outdoor market. However, to this day the Tommyfield market is signposted as a tourist attraction, but there is nothing to see. The Saddleworth moors murders in 1966 put a blot on the appeal of Oldham as that provided negative headlines of the place. There was a time when the local football team, Oldham Athletic was in the top league and almost won the major cup in England, but Oldham Athletic's fortunes waned like the place and now the team sits in the third tier of the football leagues (R12; R23). These situations uplifted the spirits in the town and the borough at large creating a sense of great achievement. In this era Oldham stood out in the "bloom and groom" project of flower gardens where it has been rated the best town in the Northwest (R26).

Oldham's recent past is characterised by a number of individual regeneration projects which are not coordinated. There are very few things that attract people to Oldham, no bowling alley, no clubs, not many good shops are available in Oldham, and there is nothing unique that will cause people to bring others into Oldham (R4; R12; R23; R29). Furthermore, there is no leisure complex for the community. R27 says that a place that used to have six cinemas has none at this point. R4 comments that it might be a good idea for Oldham to align itself with Manchester as one of Manchester's centres or be branded as an Asian town which might give it a chance for success. There are good places in Oldham which include Costco and Housing Units attract people who may not want to go into Oldham town (R4). There seems to be a systematic process of pulling away the best things from the heart of the town (R11; R21; R23). The main shopping centre has lost most of the upmarket retail outlets. The Spindles shopping centre at the heart of Oldham town has Debenhams as the only notable outlet. Part

of the argument put forward by storytellers is that the town centre car parks are expensive to park and many of the decent outlets have established at Elk Mill retail shopping park (R23). This development pulls people away from the heart of the town. On the other hand big players like Tesco and a number of other big retailers have opted for destination shopping making the town centre look like a ghost town (R12). R4 says: "The centre of Oldham town is not as bad as the external impression portrayed. However, the surrounding streets are run down." R27 says that: "Oldham's beautiful buildings are grotty and are losing their beauty as the council has neglected them." R12 expressed concern saying that: "I am scared Oldham is becoming a ghost town." R21 says that: "The beautiful buildings in Oldham town are wasting away." There is a general perception that the Oldham town centre is not attractive as the place is run down. R22 sees Oldham as thirty years behind schedule on development and that the buildings can be restored with some investment. R23 suggests that there are many cheap retail outlets dominating Oldham town as most good outlets relocated from Oldham town centre in 2010 and that is not good for Oldham, hence "Spindles took a backward step."

There is a general concern about Oldham being devoid of places for family gathering (R1; R2; R11; R13; R23; R30). In Yorkshire Street where there are many bars and restaurants there is excessive drinking and the atmosphere is not good as families do not feel safe (R26; R27). As far as industrial development is concerned Oldham is not taking full advantage of the media/digital age (R26). R13 concurring with various storytellers points out that Oldham does not have a thriving industry or some other major attraction, unlike Manchester where sports and bands form the main headlines, Liverpool had the Beatles and London has Soho, museums and hordes of other attractions. R20 and R23 observed that there is nothing for young people to come together in Oldham. Oldham has a gallery that was built at a cost of £35 million which attracts interest from a variety of stakeholders (R11; R12; R22; R23).

R26 concurs with R27 in pointing out the negative effects of poor cleaning standards in town. R26 makes reference to twenty-five years ago when one would go for shopping in Ashton-under-Lyne because Oldham was filthy with papers littering the streets. The town centre was uncared for and unsafe with graffiti remaining on walls. OMBC took a decision to ensure that graffiti was removed within two to three days of its appearance on walls in Oldham (R26). However, R26 felt that with the cuts taking place on public spending cleaning standards would go down in Oldham town as it is being downgraded.

5.3.9 The Townships of the Oldham Borough

The different townships that shape the Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council are not necessarily the same in a number of respects such as ethnicity, affluence and the delivery of community and local services. The aspirations of the different areas and needs for development differ. R26 feels that Failsworth, Chadderton and Royton have largely similar situations for the middle class society. R26 stated that: "Each area has different needs for development." R22 thinks that bringing together Failsworth, Royton, Chadderton and Crompton created complications as there were political disagreements on the merger with Oldham to form one council.

Saddleworth is the most affluent of the townships within the Oldham borough (R2; R3; R4; R11; R21; R21; R23; R26; R29). The residents of this area are people who have developed themselves and are rich. A number of people moved to Saddleworth as part of white flight in the 1970's, allowing much of the town centre and neighbouring townships to be occupied by non-Whites (R9). It was suggested that people from Saddleworth do not want to go into Oldham, instead they go to Ashton or Manchester as there is very little attraction for them in

Oldham (R4; R11; R21; R26; R29). This is evident when one goes around the town. There is a good chance that Saddleworth could benefit from developing tourism, given the scenery and that it is near the Peak district. The hills around Saddleworth present a feature that even Manchester does not have, which is an important differential factor (R3; R4; R19). R4 asked, "Where else in Manchester is anything near a hill?"

People could come in for short breaks and could not come for long breaks. The dales and the moors present another differential factor (R4; R10; R9; R23). Saddleworth is said to be beautiful and attracts rich people as it is expensive to live in (R4; R11; R26; R29). R29 points out that Saddleworth has been transformed from being a poor rural village in the 1960's to a prime area today. In the 1960's the preferred place to live was Coppice but that has changed through social re-engineering. Most of the affluent people moved to Saddleworth (R9). Meanwhile Coppice has become predominantly the home for Asian people (R16).

There is tension and discomfort between the people from Saddleworth and other residents of residents of other townships following the 1974 delimitation of the borough that brought Saddleworth into the Oldham borough; and that development has never been well received by the residents of the township of Saddleworth (R9; R21; R23). The corridor linking Huddersfield and Oldham has a lot of potential. Holinhood, which is adjoining the motorway is strategically located as it is low enough for easy access unlike much of Oldham which is on the hill (R3; R5; R8; R10). Failsworth which is nearest to Manchester within the Oldham borough is a place with a bit of money (R4).

5.3.10 The Riots in Oldham

The riots of 2001 seem to be at the centre of the Oldham story. However, riots have been experienced before in 1870, which were on religious grounds (protestant versus catholic) and also for cotton versus wool (R10). The Oldham Council refer to the development as 'disturbances' for what was beamed across the nation and internationally by the media as riots (Kadembo, 2009). The riots of Oldham left a dent on the image of the place.

The storytellers recognize that this development stands out in the projection of Oldham as a place in that many people would refer to Oldham as "Where there were riots" (R3; R4; R6; R8; Ritchie, 2001; Cantle, 2006). R1 said that: "Riots in 2001 presented a challenge for the community to come together." R3 suggests that: "The situation of the riots was exacerbated by the fact that it coincided with the disappearing industries in Oldham." Cantle (2001) argued that the riots redefined Oldham as a place. R5 observed that: "Oldham is seen as an Asian town with a tarnished image because of the riots." R6 stated that: "Riots resulted from misinformation especially amongst the poor whites." R8 said that: "Riots were initially a confrontation of Asian and White youth which involved the police, but the media distorted the situation through hype." R29 said that: "The riots created a sense of insecurity and segregation with both Asian and White communities reluctant to cooperate."

The negative effects of the tag of the riots would not be erased by referring to it by another name, no matter how insignificant they want to portray the event. The riots appear to attract different perspectives. R8 says that, "Initially it was young people of Asian and White boys, firstly against the police before they turned against each other." R8 in agreement with R24 points out that this was never a race confrontation, but the media and the politicians labeled it like that. R11 was concerned that: "There was instinctive racism over 40 years which led to

the riots in 2001." The riots led to so much funding being directed to Oldham for regeneration, but the anticipated development did not materialize. R12 is concerned as people seem unable to let go the experience of riots. Subsequently, the riots attracted funds to change Oldham (R3, R8, R13, R23, R26).

5.3.11 The Regeneration of Oldham

The face of Oldham today is the sum total of regeneration programmes targeted at uplifting Oldham from the demise of the economic meltdown of what was once the cotton spinning centre of the world (Ritchie, 2001; Cantle, 2006; OMBC, 2004). While a lot of money was poured into Oldham it is assumed that policy makers do not seem to embrace the entrepreneurship of the BME community as they seem to be straight jacketing everyone instead of being innovative (R3; R8; R16; R23). The regeneration programme that was embarked on in the aftermath of the riots picked up for 10 years but subsequently lost its momentum towards its targets for 2020 for transforming the town and the borough (R10). The regeneration programmes included The Town Centre, Former Clegg Street Bus Station/ Old Town Hall, Tommyfield Market, Integrated Care Centre, St Mary's Estate, Arcades, The Mumps Area, University Centre Oldham, The West End Area, Hollinwood/M60 Junction, Local Centres (Failsworth, Shaw, Huddersfield Road District Centre and Chadderton), Economic Development Zone, Other new or proposed industrial/commercial developments, Industrial Commercial Activity and Housing Market Renewal as presented in *Oldham Beyond* (OMBC, 2004). The list of projects was quite long and that presented a big challenge for both funding and implementation of the regeneration programme. R13 postulates that in a few years Oldham would have the best schools. The future Oldham would benefit from the complete transformation of a mill town and the wider borough into a modern place for living, business and tourism following the different programmes to change Oldham (R3; R8; R13;

R26). The developments taking place would also consolidate the wider borough and the town's heritage. R16 refers to a statement from a friend who maintained that, "If there were no riots there would be no regeneration."

R29 is of the view that Saddleworth is already regenerated while much of Oldham is still undergoing renewal in most of its wards. Many of the areas in Oldham are poor. Following the successful regeneration, Saddleworth faces the challenge of maintaining its heritage. R3 and R8 argue that regeneration could have been more effective if an independent board had been tasked with the programme, but the former chief executive of OMBC, Andrew Kilburn had opposed it. R8 is of the view that regeneration did not yield results: "Money was wasted on the Single Regeneration Point (SRP) and the process failed to change hearts and minds. New Deal for Communities, £50 million fund was wasted" In retrospect the riots helped to initiate the regeneration programme for Oldham (Cantle 2004; Kadembo, 2009).

5.3.12 Perceptions of the Oldham brand

R29 argues that: "A brand for Oldham is important when dealing with investment". As far as the Oldham brand is concerned, one word that best describes it for R29 is "failed". Oldham is a hybrid brand, that is, it combines different township brands into one (R3; R4; R9; R10; R11). R25 said that: "Oldham is a place with a strong Asian heritage in a diverse community; where there are some racist people. Oldham has an old look with rundown buildings and roads. Oldham is not a brand as it is not noticeable if one is not from Oldham." R29 stated that the Oldham brand is not important for local people as they see their township or street as their identity. R23 said that: "Oldham is now more of a brand than it used to be with the signage visible, but people resist that image. The new identity is riots and the heritage has

been lost with nothing new offered." R24 stated that: "Oldham is a brand with its good and bad aspects. Multiculturalism is positive for the brand; and racism is negative for the brand."

R26 suggested that Oldham is developing its brand for its residents and not for the outside world. R10 referred to multiple branding in respect of the staff at OMBC, the residents, external agencies and other stakeholders. R7, R11 and R12 agreed that Oldham is holding on to its past. R26 argues that the Oldham brand is inward looking with streets they live in representing most people's Oldham. The places are diverse in their outlook; that is the buildings, the racial mix and the respective cultures. The people look at things differently relative to their area of residence and background (R26; R29). R29 sees Saddleworth as a brand within the Oldham borough, but is not the same as the Oldham brand. With the merging of townships in 1974 it was ideal to come up with a new name for identity and also for inward investment (R3; R22; R29). R 29 pointed out that: "It was a mistake to name the borough Oldham as that blanketed the different places under the name of one of the townships." R3 said that: "Oldham is a manufacturing place in the middle of England with no plan, no brand and no vision." R4 concurs with R3 that Oldham has no vision for going forward which is consistent with Ritchie (2001). R5 said that Oldham has a tarnished image. R7 argued that: "Oldham as a place cannot be branded like a supermarket; people did not want corporate-wide branding, and that there is no consistency in the offering from the different areas in Oldham." R13 said that: "Oldham could be branded but at the moment it is not, because it sends out mixed messages." R14 stated that: "Oldham is a brand that people would avoid, though Saddleworth is a good brand, but has poor access." R15 commented that: "Oldham was a brand, but is no longer a brand." R17 pointed out that: "Oldham is not a brand because of the multitudes of inconsistencies presented by the multi-stakeholder nature of the place." R18 suggested that it was difficult to comment on whether Oldham is a brand

or not but the ingredients are there to make it a brand. One could argue that the submissions by the storytellers are relative to their understanding of branding and experience of Oldham. Oldham is a brand; given that it is an entity or a place (Chernatony and McDonald, 2003; see sections 2.3 – 2.3.4; see section 3.1).

R30 argued that Oldham is not a brand but just a "cotton mill town." R30 further suggested that the authorities are trying to make it look like a brand by changing the logo and promoting new development. R19 pointed out that Oldham has always been a poor place. Oldham town was referred to as "up town" while other surrounding areas were identified by name (R19). Oldham town is referred to as a town on the hill, cold and windy with all the roads in the valley leading away from Oldham town (R4; R19; Law, 1999). Marks and Spencer could not open in Oldham because it was considered too windy; instead it opened a branch in neighbouring Ashton-under-Lyne (R19). Most of the transport network in the town lead out of Oldham (R11; R12; R21; R23).

Many events stand out in Oldham and R19 would rather perceive Oldham as an event led place and not a brand. R19 suggested that poor whites probably see Oldham as a brand. R20 stated that, "Oldham looked out of date and that the local authority has not defined the Oldham they want to see in future." R21 argued that Oldham is poorly branded and cannot compare with similar mill towns. Various storytellers concur that Oldham has nothing positive for the present or the future and most worrying is the lack of a selling point for Oldham town and the borough (R4; R11; R23; R29). It is also feared that the tram anticipated to be commissioned in 2014 might take away people from Oldham instead of bringing them to the place (R12; R21).

R12, R13 and R30 agreed that Oldham tries to be a brand yet it is not a brand as there is no uniformity in the provision across the town and the borough; and that there is no consistency in what Oldham promises. R15 concurs with R27 in suggesting that Oldham was a brand but not a brand at this moment. There appears to be a half-hearted approach to planning for the town and the borough and OMBC tends to employ quick fixes instead of moving forward with a clear vision and strategy. With many shops closing down in Oldham, the place casts a gloomy picture of its prospects for the future (R3; R12; R23; R30). There is a mixed message coming out of Oldham in that the desire to attract the big players in business has harmed the small to medium businesses but no big players appear to have come into Oldham. The message from the borough is emphasizing oneness but the council has moved to a cooperative society of the townships and the town centre (R10; R23). R14 sees Saddleworth as a strong attractive brand which is part of Oldham but not easy to access. Oldham has a reputable theatre but has not been properly utilized despite yielding stars in Coronation Street soap and composers like Sir Walton (R11; R14). The council seems to have its priorities wrong in that many buildings are neglected but still spends money on new buildings instead of using old buildings and redirecting resources to other pressing needs of the town and borough. The Oldham theatre has been in existence for 120 years and has had seven proposals for a new structure but nothing has materialized (R12). Often promising and subsequently failing to deliver adds to the frustrations of the stakeholders and denies Oldham the efforts of those who have a passion to develop the place (R9; R26).

The various changes that Oldham has undergone as a place have given way to different perceptions of the place. R11 points to the fact that Oldham held onto its identity instead of being swallowed by Manchester or Greater Manchester but doubts if this would last a generation given the increasing prominence of Manchester which is overshadowing most

areas around it; among them Oldham, Bury, Rochdale, Bolton, Stockport, Wigan, Trafford, Salford and Tameside. R14 recalls a time in the 1950's when people had outside toilets and this changed around 1958 – 60 when people started getting grants for bathrooms and toilets. R9 narrated the great days of Oldham as a once prosperous place of attraction which was progressive and was a hive of activities, an industrial hub and a tourist destination. Of particular interest to the visitors was the Tommyfield market which started operating in 1904 (R9). In 1910 the market was booming and people would come into Oldham on a charabanc (which is a horse drawn cart with five rows of passengers which originated in France) and was a means of transport to tour the Oldham. The market remained quite vibrant through the 1950's, 60's and 70's. In 1974 the Oldham market was burnt down and this coincided with the beginning of the economic downturn for the town and the borough (R3; R9). Efforts to restore the market were not successful in bringing back the glory days of Oldham and in 1979 the town entered an accelerated decline in its fortunes and the attraction which included a lot of the mills started a downward spiral (R3).

Oldham is said to have had a tarnished image because of the riots of 2001 and most of the storytellers concur on this perspective of Oldham (R5). The challenge for branding Oldham is centred on the desire to integrate the community and revive the successes of the past. The name Oldham is seen as a name for avoidance with some Oldhamers claiming they are from Manchester instead of identifying with their own town. Some residents of Oldham look forward to leaving Oldham at some point and their children are keen to relocate (R11). They argue that Oldham is not habitable and that the place is too small. Some young people who want to relocate say that those who remain in Oldham are odd (R25).

The things for celebration in Oldham are not valued by the community and there appears to be neglect of the important issues which has led to the destruction and deterioration of much of the heritage and architectural fixtures, hence the heritage is not maintained in an appropriate manner (R7). However, Saddleworth has a better approach to maintaining heritage compared to other areas of the Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (R29). Externals look at former manufacturing towns like Bradford and Manchester and find no comparison with Oldham. Some storytellers suggested that Oldham is tarnished because of the significant number of Asians in the town. However R5 argues that it is a racist view to label Oldham as an Asian town (R4). R17 contents that Oldham is reminiscent of most of the mill towns which are increasingly becoming ghost towns. R17 goes further to argue that the majority of Asian concentrations attract undesirable elements of society; as poor infrastructure, poor quality of life, and a low threshold of aspirations in society. This reflects on the brokenness of society. Some of the storytellers suggested that the Asian community is symptomatic of a retrogressive society, that is a ghetto community (R11). This problem has its roots in the heydays of cotton spinning when local governments in the former cotton spinning towns failed to plan for the end of the cotton era which threw the respective towns into disarray and dilapidation (R3; see chapter 3; Ritchie, 2001). The Asian population particularly grew in numbers but there was no plan to cater for the needs of the respective population (R8). R18 says that Asians want to benefit but do not want to conform. On the other hand R24 sees the multicultural nature of Oldham as a positive but is concerned about the racist elements in the society. The issues are compromised by the law enforcement agents who seem to tolerate the racist characters in society rendering them complicit to the spread of racism (R9).

While some storytellers mention the coliseum as an important attribute of the town others suggest that it is not very popular and not financially viable (R11; R12; R27). Many storytellers suggested that Oldham needs a big thing that pulls in people as tourists, students, investors or as residents of the town (R11). Oldham has a long way to go and might learn from Bolton which provides open spaces for relaxing and walking about in the centre of town. Comments on what could make a difference on creating a powerful brand for Oldham include, exploiting the great parks which are in need of development, making use of ambassadors to carry the message of the Oldham promise, need a focused plan for something big that attracts people from different walks of life and have something to celebrate like the 1954 Festival of Oldham (R2; R7; R19).

The Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council is seen as negative in its approach to planning for the future and sustaining prosperity for the town and the borough (R3; Ritchie, 2001). Some storytellers argue that Oldham has a silo structure where the different directorates are like standalone organisations not integrated with the whole and that poses a challenge for branding, given the inconsistency (R10). R14 points out that it would be very hard to attract up-market business to come into Oldham and that they perceive it as a cheap place. Many of the shops in the main shopping centre have very little to offer (R23). Subsequent, to the riots Oldham cast a picture of many players with one agenda, many communities in one town and that is what the branding consultant picked up as the main focus of the re-branding of Oldham (R10; R26; HMDC, 2008). The Oldham Evening Chronicle's editor Dave Whalley's campaign on Oldham called *Positive about Oldham* is one of the good activities being undertaken in Oldham which contribute towards a good image of the place (R7). It is said that Dave Whalley deliberately shifted the publicity stance to help project a positive image of the town and the borough at large by embracing a more positive balance in writing about

developments in Oldham. However, sales of newspapers did not increase (R7). There are a number of stories which could make a difference in projecting a good Oldham brand which include the metrolink which is not clear as to why it is linked to South Saddleworth; the relocation of the Oldham Athletic Football Club and to the four possible locations which are not agreed; the negative publicity generated by Phil Woolas's election accusations of cheating; the Oldham logo and its controversies about its suitability and its meaning; the location of supermarkets and implications to traffic in the town centre; the Junaid shooting in Chadderton which generated a lot of bad publicity; the Myra Hindley murders at Saddleworth Moors which does not seem to go away; no matter who is in charge at OMBC, it seems the place struggles for development (R7). R3 stated that: "Oldham is a damaged brand, which could benefit from a name change." R4 said that the outside image of Oldham is very negative.

R12 is of the view that Oldham is beautiful if one looks hard enough. On the other hand R14 sees the Oldham story as one of an established cotton town that has shaped itself into something confusing. The heritage of the place is beautiful as epitomized by historical buildings covered by neon signs, the moors and hills overlooking the town and the borough, gardens and flowers, and the green that surrounds the town. R12 goes further to suggest that the town centre is amazing to look at; where there is a lot of art decorations and wonderful architecture surrounded by green hills. If the gums and cigarettes that litter streets were picked up the place would be dazzling. R13 concurs with R12 by stating that, "We are not a cardboard town, and we have a history. You cannot buy that history; we have a heritage and a diverse community." That heritage is at the core of everything that makes Oldham tick. R13 further asserts, "A person or a town without a heritage has no soul." The storytellers largely concur that a place brand is not similar to a brand of a good or a service. The major problem

with the image of Oldham to its residents is a forced image that is resisted. The residents of the different townships were not in favour of a name which was borough wide to be the name of the main town in the borough.

The negative general portrayal of the Oldham brand is that it is a place immersed in poverty and racism. This is further compounded by the lack of something solid as a centre of attraction that stands out in Oldham; like the Tommyfield market in the heydays of Oldham. R16 sees positive signs for the future of the Oldham brand given that the community has become more tolerant to diversity. With Asians having started embracing the need for education, it would help improve the standing of the Oldham brand; as the general social aspirations are raised across communities in Oldham (R16). Ultimately the Oldham brand should be attractive to the extent that the respective stakeholders would want to buy into it. The Oldham brand has to be valuable to the people; personally, their future or for their children. Though most people have a short-term approach, this does not render the long-term irrelevant.

R22 feels that Oldham is 30 years late in its repositioning and redefinition of itself in the light of its past and future aspirations. The main sticking factor in coming up with some kind of identity are the riots. However, one big possibility is projecting the heritage of the town into the future. For example York has its theatre and shops and in every effective branding process there has to be something unique on offer (R11). R22 further comments that: "The problem of Oldham is that it is trying to be like any other place which it is not and never will be." The heritage on which a brand could be based might be a building. With a new brand Oldham could recapture the attraction of visitors into the town and the borough. Global attraction could be centred on a cotton spinning museum (R22). The need for a centre of

attraction is exemplified in the attractions associated with the unique identities of a number of towns and cities as; cotton spinning in Oldham, weaving in Bolton, steel in Sheffield and the cathedral in York. The main challenge for Oldham is to retain uniqueness in order to offer something different to visitors. R28 suggests that Oldham could be branded on the basis of its characteristics which are, "Oldham, a place in the country with so much green around it. Oldham could be sold as: 'A green place with a heritage'." However, R29 suggests that Oldham would need to build a heritage element into its policies. Some buildings are being left empty while purchasing some buildings that depreciate. The image of Oldham is a reflection of weak planning (R3). However, opportunities for the development of the Oldham borough could be centred on the M60 corridor and could utilize the green spaces in Oldham so that they can realize high industrial output.

Casting the mind into the future of Oldham, R26 believes that the story that matters is for the next 20 – 30 years. This calls on a focused plan as the scattergun approach does not work. Looking across the different areas of Oldham R26 further observes that some areas have potential that could be beneficially utilized like tourism. There are some really good hotels which could perform better by increasing the number of rooms available. The people of Oldham need to focus on transforming the borough and the town. R26 further suggests that Oldham could market itself as a "Can do" community where things happen and exploiting capabilities across various functional areas of society and industry. R26 also observes that Oldham needs to be attractive and protect the environment and that augurs well for branding and warns that brands cannot be created merely by advertising. There is need for decisiveness in developing the town centre, for example the science centre which is a beautiful building for a great purpose.

R26 suggests a priority list for the development of Oldham which includes: a) that the metro link comes to education centres; b) that investment is provided for the town centre; c) that Oldham is aggressively marketed as a scientific centre of excellence and might need to pay people to come to Oldham. The overall approach needs to be progressive and necessitates a consensus across the political divide. R20 presented a challenge that: "Someone needs to define what Oldham is going to be." R21 stated that: "Oldham is poorly branded or is a negative brand compared to Tameside and Bury. There is nothing positive in Oldham for the present or for the future and that there is no selling point. There is need to plan for the next twenty years." R22 concurs with R21 about the negatives in the brand and further stated that: "The story of riots sticks in people's minds, but Oldham seems to fail to uniquely define itself." Therefore, the picture Oldham presents is mixed and is relative to the storyteller or stakeholder. The symbolism, particularly the logo presents further complication to the identity and image of Oldham (see appendix 14). R29 points at what he sees as weaknesses in Oldham's failure to plan for conversation of its heritage which impacts the brand.

5.3.13 The Oldham Logo

There is no consistency on performance and people are not concerned about the logo. R8 says that the logo does not say much about Oldham. R3 suggested that the logo adopted in 2008 is inadequate and was the chamber logo in the 1990's, and was the Oldham Partnership logo in the aftermath of the 2001 riots, and that includes the colour. R3 worked for the Oldham Chamber and the identity of the chamber logo would be vivid in his mind. Some storytellers commented about the logo while others were not familiar with it. R8 said that: "The logo does not say much about Oldham." R14 said that: "I do not know the logo." The majority of the storytellers who commented about logo launched in 2008 were not in favour of it. R12 described the logo as similar to the logo for the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry.

Further commenting on the logo R12 said that: "Bluntly, the logo has nothing about Oldham in it even the colour. The logo could have included something that depicts Oldham like the hills or something prominent in the borough and the town." There are many partnerships that use the same turquoise blue ring who have a caption against the logo that says, *Proud to be part of Oldham team.* The storytellers suggested that this might imply they are not proud, given that if one is proud about something they would not necessarily have to say it (R12). The fact that the council, the town, the borough and the partnerships that are contracted to deliver certain services use the same logo creates confusion about what the logo stands for (R8; R11; R12; R23; R26).

R22 argues that: "The logo is not an issue as what matters is what the council does which could attract people. Some people feel that the logo is a mockery. It would appear the logo is branding the council and not the place. The logo looks like a "polo mint" and does not carry any meaning for the place and is not serious." Questions have been raised about the logo looking like a "toilet seat" and failing to communicate something that could attract people to Oldham. A cotton mill chimney might have been a better logo. R28 poses an important question about the logo in asking, "Why have we lost that history? Why change the owl for knowledge and learning?" R22 suggested that: "A cotton mill chimney could be a better logo projecting the heritage of Oldham." R29 said that: "There is need to build in a heritage element into the logo."

5.4 The Oldham historian's story of Oldham

The Oldham Archives Centre manager identified the Oldham historian to the researcher in this study. The historian's views are important to the extent that they cut across contributions from other storytellers. The other storytellers may not be well versed on the history and

dynamics of Oldham. The historian explained Oldham as having been redefined in 1974 through the delimitation process that made Saddleworth part of Oldham making it greener. In the past church groups and individuals would go up the moors which are a beautiful open space. However, in 1934 there was a murder and there is a tombstone with a long poem. More importantly in the recent past the Saddleworth moors, became largely associated with the murders of the 1960's often referred to as the moors murders. The historian was born a month and two days before the start of the second world war. Oldham was a grotty place after the second world war due the extensive smoke coming out of mills to cater for the war. People made efforts to make Oldham clean. The historian said that the Clean Air Act of 1957 was passed to clean the place. The slogan of the time was, "We must educate our children outside the smoke" (Oldham historian). The historian said that Oldham was all smoke because of the cotton mills. The historian's perspective is that "cotton" is the big story for Oldham. According to him cotton built Oldham to a point of global recognition and the collapse of the cotton industry sent Oldham into oblivion.

The cotton legacy still projects itself in the heritage that remains vividly reminiscent of the past through the various mills that remain scattered across the borough. Cotton brought job opportunities, facilitated immigration into Oldham and opened doors to the world as an exporter of both cotton products and machinery. His observation is that Oldham has the right weather conditions for cotton spinning, damp with good water supplies. In addition Oldham had a knowledgeable workforce on spinning and weaving. The historian mentions John Platt, who started with nothing and established himself as a household name in Oldham, as a demonstration of how cotton transformed lives. Cotton spinning machinery was being sold overseas since the 1840's. The historian stated that: "Cotton machines from Oldham found

their way to Mexico, India, Japan, Italy, France, Russia, Spain among other nations." Even in the 1950's people went into the cotton industry from grammar school.

The historian asserted that Oldham has always reinvented itself over time and is convinced that even to this day Oldham is reinventing itself. The historian made reference to the Hat Maker who funded the founding of Blue Coat High School in Oldham which has an excellent reputation. The historian made reference to Oldham Limited, when many companies were formed after the government introduced the Liability Act to encourage investment. Ferantis was made popular in the second world war through the production of overalls. The historian made reference to the growth of the Oldham population which was largely through waves of migration. In 1760 many people came to Oldham from Ireland, Scotland and Wales. This was confirmed by some of the storytellers who identified their origins from the respective places. People came to Oldham by different means, but mainly by canal. The historian is concerned that Oldham has lost its spirit of bravery and initiative. The decline started in the 1970's and led to the desolation of the migrants of the 1950's who had moved into Oldham specifically to work in the mills with no other skills. Many companies that depended on the cotton industry went into decline and collapsed (see section 3.8). The desperation faced by the communities continued to deteriorate culminating in the riots of 2001.

The historian feels that stories anchor identities of places and that Oldham's stories mean a lot for its heritage and its identity. The historian feels that there are many stories that make the story of Oldham, which include the delimitation exercise of 1974, the cotton story which he thinks is the main story, the immigration stories, the football stories, the bravery in the early beginnings, the role of Oldham during the industrial revolution. Even though the stories of Oldham give the place an identity the historian would argue that he does not see Oldham

as a brand. This can be understood given that this is not how historians would look at places, instead they see legacies in their discipline rather than selling a place or marketing a place. The historian said that: "People are trying to make Oldham beautiful. Oldham has always reinvented itself." There are many people who contributed to the prosperity of Oldham, among them Ferantis, John Platt, Mary Higgs and Sara, the hat makers, among others.

5.5 Summary of the Storytellers' Narratives of Oldham.

Oldham is a place with diverse attributes in respect of the terrain, the people, industry and its rich history with phases of prosperity and doom. Respondents R1 to R30 provided different perspectives of OMBC and Oldham town. The main stories presented included the cotton heritage, the immigration of Asians into Oldham in the 1950s and 60s, the decline of the cotton industry, the riots of 2001, and the regeneration programme to restore the place. The stories were corroborated by the historian who said that cotton is the big story for Oldham. The majority of the storytellers did not see Oldham as a brand, with others suggesting that Oldham was a brand in the past but not in this era.

Chapter Six

Questionnaire Responses and Focus Group Discussion

6.1 Introduction to the Questionnaire and Focus Group Discussion

In a discussion on the notion of the power of stories Gargiulo (2006: p. 5) points out that,

> Stories are fundamental to the way we learn and to the way we communicate. They are the most efficient way of storing, retrieving, and conveying information. Because hearing a story requires active participation by the listener, stories are the most profoundly social form of human interaction and communication.

The study employed triangulation in its approach to obtaining a balanced approach to the research; utilising in-depth interviews with 30 storytellers whose stories were corroborated by the Oldham historian (see section 5.1) and documented stories about Oldham (see section 3.3). The findings from the questionnaire and the focus group discussions are captured in this chapter.

The use of the three methods provides depth and helps cross-reference the different perspectives of the groups and consolidates the views (Leech and Onwuegbuzie, 2009). The purpose of the questionnaire and the focus group discussions is to follow-up on the storytellers' narrations in order to build a more complete picture of the dynamics of the stories about Oldham. The questionnaire was designed to confirm or contrast views on the stories that were identified through the in-depth interviews depending on the respondents' opinions. In the same vein the focus group discussion provided further discussion to explain the phenomenon of stories that underpin the Oldham brand.

6.2 Administering the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered using a convenience sampling approach. The questionnaire had nine questions centred on the background of the respondent and stories they considered central to the shaping of Oldham as a brand. One question clearly asked if

the respondents thought Oldham is a brand or not. The researcher identified people from different backgrounds from his own local contacts. By virtue of working in Oldham the researcher has access to people who were born in Oldham, have worked in Oldham for more than ten years having started in 2003. Those people contacted know a significant amount of information about the dynamics of Oldham town and the borough at large. Subsequently, the people contacted also know other people to whom they referred the researcher. Besides the people the researcher works with; there are many professionals and business people are interacted with, who are a valuable source of information. Using the post and email facilities 80 questionnaires were returned from a total sent out of 300 giving a response rate of 27%. The responses from the questionnaire are reported in this chapter as part of building the case for the storytelling approach in the development of a place brand. The use of triangulation in the study provides scope for completeness in the research as the different tools employed complement each other.

6.3 Summary of Findings from the Questionnaire

The findings from the questionnaire are summarised to provide insights into perceptions and opinions people hold about Oldham and its related dynamics. The collation of data was done manually in order to accommodate the opinions and views that are subjective and sometimes contradictory. Generally there are various stories which give a diverse range of perspectives about Oldham as a place and views about the image the different stories portray.

6.3.1 Profile of respondents

This section provides an overview of the profile of the questionnaire respondents and are based on questions 1, 2, 3 and 3.1 of the questionnaire. Respondents are from a diverse

background. The sample was drawn from a broad range of people cutting across the various community constituencies of Oldham.

6.3.2 Stories that give Oldham a good image

Question 4 presents a summary on the views of the respondents on the stories that they think make Oldham a good place. The respondents are meant to provide what they see as the stories that make Oldham a good brand; given that good stories make good brands (Fog et al., 2005). The summary of responses is as presented in *Table* 6.1.

Table 6.1 Stories that Make Oldham a good place

The Story	Frequency	Percentage
The University campus in Oldham	46	58%
The multi-cultural nature of the town and borough	43	54%
That the tram is coming to Oldham	41	51%
The beauty of Saddleworth	36	45%
The Oldham College	31	39%
The Coliseum/Oldham Theatre performances	29	36%
The cotton spinning dominance of Oldham	25	31%
The art gallery in Oldham	25	31%
The inventions in industry and manufacturing	24	30%
The historic buildings in Oldham	24	30%
The success of Oldham Athletic Football Club in its good days	21	26%
The great Tommyfield market	20	25%
The Oldham Sixth Form College	20	25%
The road network of Oldham	18	23%
The bravery to build the town on a hill	13	16%
Great places for shopping	12	15%

There was a significant number of responses to this question which suggests that people are interested in the stories that affect the image of the place and the borough at large. Various stories were considered by respondents as critical in shaping the good image of the Oldham brand. The main stories that the respondents feel are central to the good perception of Oldham as viewed by the respondents include, the University Campus Oldham (58%), a multicultural town (54%), the coming of the tram to Oldham (51%), the Oldham College (39%), the Oldham theatre/coliseum (36%), the historic dominance in cotton spinning (31%) among many other stories which did not register significantly high responses. Seven respondents (7.5%) make reference to Coldhurst Sports Club as providing a story that makes

Oldham a good place. There are various stories referred to by the respondents which include what QR20 said. QR20 identifies positives as Mahdlo Youth Centre, Integrated Care Centre, Colleges/UCO and Royal Oldham Hospital, which can be attributed to a good image for the town and the borough at large because they are places which are giving good services to the community.

6.3.3 Stories that make Oldham a bad place

In contrast to section 6.3.2 this section presents the respondents' views on what they consider to be the negatives in the stories that shape the Oldham brand.

Table 6.2 Stories that make Oldham a bad place

The Story	Frequency	Percentage
A town where there were riots in 2001	51	64%
A town where there is racism	45	56%
Crime in the town and the borough	38	48%
A ghost town without direction	31	39%
The decline of the Oldham Athletic Football Club	20	25%
That Oldham Athletic FC went down from the superior league	16	20%
The buildings in Oldham	15	19%
Mills that remind of a great past that cannot be revived.	13	16%
A cotton legacy that left many people in ill-health	13	16%
That the tram is coming to Oldham	12	15%

This question was answered by most of the respondents (64%). There are various stories which respondents felt have an adverse effect on the image of the town and borough at large. The highest responses were in respect of a town where there were riots registering 64%; a town where there is racism 56%; crime in the borough 48%; a ghost town without direction 39%; the decline of the Oldham Athletic Football Club 25%. All these factors received mention in the narrations by the storytellers including some of the stories that did not register high frequencies. These issues were also raised in the reports commissioned on Oldham and in the narrations by the storytellers in this study. Additional stories that give Oldham a bad image as identified by the respondents include a number of factors. QR20 says that "The

town hall has been left to ruin; Why? When Rochdale/Bury/Bolton have theirs well maintained. There is the shopping centre dearth; empty shops, no trains since 2009, with Metrolink a waste of time/money. No cinema/ bowling /entertainment for families. Yorkshire Street pub culture gives Oldham town a bad reputation." QR55 says that: "The old market of the 80's – 90's was good, but now it is rubbish. The history of its people makes it a good place." QR56 said that: "The road network is pathetic, with roads that are too narrow and many one-ways. Hope the tram will be good for all the people of Oldham. The fares should be remarkable to students."

6.4. The question of the Oldham brand

Questions 6, 7 and 8 focus on whether or not Oldham is a brand. Subsequently, the follow up questions 7 and 8 focus on the reasons why they would see Oldham as a brand or not a brand. Question 6 specifically asked "Is Oldham a brand". The responses are as represented below:

Table 6.3 Is Oldham a brand

	Yes Oldham is a brand	No Oldham is not a brand	Undecided	Total
Frequency	32	38	10	80
Percentage	40%	47.5%	12.5%	100%

The general picture portrayed by the respondents is that Oldham is not a brand which was indicated by 47.5% of all the respondents. From the sample 40% of the respondents see Oldham as a brand. On the other hand there a significant number of respondents who could not classify Oldham as a brand or not a brand (12.5%). It would appear there is a diverse range of views about Oldham being a brand or not a brand. The difference in perspectives is understandable as places are not considered as brands in common reference used in relation to places.

Question 7 sought to capture the reasons why some respondents would see Oldham as a brand. The reasons were given as follows:

Table 6.4 Reasons why Oldham is a brand

Oldham is a brand because	Frequency	Percentage
It has a diverse community	18	22.5%
It has a story behind it	14	17.5%
It has a good heritage	11	13.8%
It stands out as a unique place	2	2.5%
It has a clear identity	1	1.3%
Other reasons why Oldham is a brand	1	1.3%

The main reason why Oldham is seen as a brand is the diversity of the community as viewed by at least 18 respondents (equivalent to 22.5%) of the sample of respondents. The Oldham story is a reason for 14 respondents (equivalent to 17.5%) of the respondents and its heritage for 11 respondents (equivalent to 3.8%) of respondents. There was scope for any other reason why Oldham is seen as a brand to which only QR6 would suggest that "Oldham has no overriding theme or proposition."

Table 6.5 Reasons why Oldham is a not a brand

Oldham is not a brand because	Frequency	Percentage
Nothing good is ever said about it	21	26.3%
The council has not planned for it	21	26.3%
There is no consistency about Oldham	19	23.8%
All that is good is history	17	21.3%
The logo does not give it a good image	9	11.3%
Other reasons why Oldham is not a brand	8	10%
Ethnic diversity spoils its image	3	3.8%

A number of reasons received relatively low scores for reasons why respondents think Oldham is not a brand. Relatively high scores include that "Nothing good is ever said about it" and "The council has not planned for it" both chosen by 21respondents (26.3%); followed by "There is no consistency about Oldham" with 19 respondents (23.8%) and "All that is good is history" with 17 respondents (31.3%). Other reasons have not been substantial, such as "Ethnic diversity spoils the brand" with 3 respondents (3.8%) and "a combination of other reasons", with 8 respondents (10%). However, this question attracted more responses on the

additional reasons from those that have been suggested. QR4 identifies an additional reason that "Unlike other small towns Oldham seems to have too many negative factors, such as a lot of takeaways and high unemployment. I feel the University Campus Oldham is a great campus that benefits the town." QR7 gives the Coldhurst Cricket Club while QR9 mentions multiculturalism. QR41 says that, "Too many things need advertising. The Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council has let facilities like Tommyfield Market and the shopping centre decline. I feel this is due to greed (increasing rent). If they lowered the rent many shops will open creating more jobs and attracting more visitors to the town." QR47 says that, "It is too controversial to be a brand as it is diverse, thus covers areas like Westwood (poor area) stretching to Saddleworth (very rich)."

6.4.1 Questionnaire respondents' views on Oldham

The respondents to the questionnaire made further comments on Oldham in respect of the Oldham brand which are captured in this section. In reporting the respective comments the specific respondents are identified by the code QR (questionnaire respondent) and are numbered from QR1- QR80. A number of comments have been provided which give further insight into the stories that shape Oldham and its respective brand (see appendix 12). QR1 makes some critical comments about the broader ethos of branding and takes the   dynamics of Oldham into perspective by pointing at other scenarios as follows: "A lack of leadership over the years has meant Oldham has not been able to positively identify itself beyond its geographic boundaries. A brand needs to carry with it its core values and identities that can be extended across a range of channels beyond such boundaries. I would struggle to find or think of such values and apply them to Oldham and see little visible evidence that there is a concerted effort to do so by key decision makers in the borough. However, the arrival of the Metrolink may provide the impetus for a concerted effort to develop the borough and the

town centre, and in the process build upon the opportunities this event will present. Oldham must establish itself as distinct from other parts of Manchester and as a destination itself – rather than a convenient means of leaving the town."

QR2 acknowledges the good effects of Oldham being near to Manchester, Ashton and Rochdale a characteristic that would make travelling and connecting to surrounding areas easier; but QR3 sees Oldham as not visible enough to be classed as a brand. The university campus was identified by QR4 as a good feature which could help attract investment; though investment is lacking at the moment as said by QR5 and QR18. The contrasting features of the Oldham landscape makes the place beautiful according to QR6. QR10 is concerned that the council is not doing enough to develop the place. One drawback for Oldham is stated by QR20 who says: "Beautiful historic buildings left to decay, poor use of tax payers' money on wasteful projects, eg., metrolink, no actual investment in the town to encourage visitors, rent/rates/taxes too high for business, shops and shoppers, decline of Tommyfield Market. There is no entertainment complex in Oldham." QR21 observed that Oldham has an inward looking, insular place, and sends different signals about itself. QR32 said that "The higher education initiative has peaked. It may revive by offering lower fees."

Respondent QR34 comments that: "The University Campus Oldham and the tram are perhaps the good news Oldham has had for a while. As a business owner in Oldham, I hope the tram system brings about the traffic of people that will help the SME's to provide the necessary employment. It is reasonably affordable to live in Oldham but the lack of job opportunities may lead to skills developed through our education system to go and live somewhere else after they qualify." If the Oldham Council would act quickly to harness the situation it would help boost the prospects of the town and the borough at large. QR36 said that "Oldham,

despite being a nice place to live and study in, is not seen in a good light by others. It has an industrial image of having council estates and crime." QR37 would argue that "Oldham is a place with a diverse ethnic population and the ethnic diversity makes it stand out as a brand." QR39 stated that: "As a brand it has no consistency. As of now it is in decline and needs rejuvenation within its economy to survive." QR40 who does not live in Oldham felt that Oldham appears to have a bad reputation. QR42 said that Oldham is a nice place to live in with its multicultural community but some people behaving badly have given Oldham a bad reputation as a racist place. QR56 felt that there are many Asians in the town and attributes that to the negative image of the place.

QR66 thinks that Oldham is a poor brand because of its poor image. QR70 says that "Although I ticked the 'Yes' on whether or not Oldham is a brand, I think some of the reasons for 'No' needed ticking like; the logo does not give it a good image and All that is good is history. In years gone by the 'brand' would have been wonderful and one would not imagine it would have a negative image; sadly over the years Oldham has been on the decline socially and economically; but it is not yet dead and buried." QR79 provides a comment that sounds consistent with the general picture portrayed by Oldham: "A northern English town which has had its better days. Needs something positive to drum about."

6.5 **Summary of Findings from the Focus Group Discussion**

The eight participants to the focus group discussion were engaging and presented a diverse range of perspectives. The participants are identified by the codes (FGP1 to FGP8) representing focus group participants. FGP1 and FGP2 are Asian female youths, FGP 3 is an Asian male youth, FGP4 is an African female adult, FGP5 and FGP6 are two white adults and FGP7 is a female white youth and FGP8 is a white male youth.

There are common areas of agreement that were clear in the course of the focus group discussion:-

- Oldham as a place is symbolic of diversity in many respects; a) in its landscape there are hills, flat arable land and rivers that make up the borough where the town sits on a hill, b) the ethnic mix which mirror a confluence of nationalities is diverse and the same applies to the population stratification where the age groups are spread across the young, middle aged and old people, c) the economic disparities cut across the low end of poverty to some of the richest people at national level, d) residential areas that present rows of terraced houses in mainly Asian residences and plush mansions in the attractive Saddleworth township.

  The participants acknowledged the changing educational levels, where there are substantial proportions of people with very little education but there has been a significant shift in education levels as a result of the activities of The Oldham College, The Oldham Sixth Form, the University Campus Oldham, which are supported by a range of feeder schools across the borough.

- All the participants in the focus group concurred on the existence of racism across the borough largely epitomised in the lack of cohesion of the different ethnic groups in the borough. There was no clear agreement on the reason for the existence of racism. The Asian participants and the African female adult felt racism is institutional and that minorities suffer marginalisation in most situations. However, the white participants felt that the ethnic minority are the reason for economic degradation as they are reaping where they did not sow. The Asian participants and the female African participant felt that they were considered second class citizens while their

white counterparts were favoured by the system despite the legal position and claims made in public and the official corporate and public documentation addressing the same issues. The white participants felt that the system created discomfort as simple everyday issues tended to be manipulated for racism claims. The participants agreed that the issues of racism and misunderstanding of races were complicated to deal with.

- The participants agreed that the presence of mills in the borough was a reminder of the borough's successful past. The younger people had a faint appreciation of the cotton legacy. However, in the discussions on the cotton spinning legacy there was an appreciation that a number of mills remain unutilised suggesting a planning problem which amounted to failure to utilise capacity. The open discussion on the legacy of the cotton era provided pointers to a number of issues, among them the influx of the Asian community who were stranded when the borough's mills ceased the cotton spinning operations in 1970's. The two white adults FGP5 and FGP6 brought up the negative aspect of the legacy due to the health effects suffered by people who worked in cotton spinning factories.

- FGP8 suggested that Oldham seems not to accommodate the youth in its programmes as evidenced in the lack of recreational facilities particularly around the town centre. This view was mostly accepted by all the participants. Further discussion in respect of the limited recreational facilities for young people helped explore the consequences of the adverse situation. FGP4 observed that the lack of recreational facilities for young people there is a 'drinking menace' in Oldham. It was largely agreed by the participants that walking around Oldham town in the evening or nights was not safe as there were too many drunken people going up and down the streets. FGP6 argued that

the excessive drinking problem was probably due to lack of pre-occupation for young people.

- The participants to the focus group discussion expressed mixed feelings about the attractiveness of Oldham in that there are various great buildings in the town sitting alongside grotty structures in need of demolition. There was a general feeling that despite some really great things about Oldham, challenges still remain, the place is ugly as there are too many buildings along the road especially the one linking Oldham and Manchester that clearly cast a bad image on Oldham.

- The transport network in Oldham was agreed as largely reliable as there is a good bus network serviced by mainly the First Bus Company, National Express for long trips and the train services. The tram service has seen Oldham transport networks widen and attracting huge construction works was considered significant. Some of the participants feared that the tram might take away people from Oldham instead of bringing people. There was general concern about the attractiveness of Oldham as a tourist destination. There is no big attraction to the town and the borough. Participants questioned why the legacy of Oldham remains in the minds of people instead of making it available as an attraction to visitors. FGP3 questioned why there is no cotton museum of Oldham where the heritage could be paraded for educational and tourist purposes.

6.5.1 The Stories making Oldham

In response to a request to list the stories that have made Oldham there was quite a long list of events and stories that have made Oldham. The stories listed include historic developments and current developments in the town and the borough at large. The main story that was seen

as having shaped Oldham in the modern era is the story of the riots of 2001 which was also mentioned by the storytellers and the historian as defining Oldham today (see section 3.8). FGP3 said that everywhere he went the people would ask if people continue to attack each other in Oldham. In contrast to that submission FGP5 lamented the great times of the cotton era when Oldham was the focus of the world in its success as a cotton spinning centre (see section 3.8). The rise and fall of the Oldham Athletic Football featured as a metaphor of everything that Oldham stands for in that it has always been a case of unfulfilled potential and lost opportunities. The delimitation exercise to redefine the Oldham borough in 1974 that saw Saddleworth absorbed into Oldham was pointed by EPG7 to be a bad development, as that meant people who could not identify with the rest of the borough were incorporated into the borough. Participants highlighted that Failsworth was more inclined towards Manchester than to Oldham. The discussion concurred that this move has never worked.

6.5.2 Observations and Public Conversations

While the research design has been consciously formulated it is important to note that this being a phenomenological interpretive study by a researcher grounded in Oldham there is tacit knowledge and exposure that provides great insights into the dynamics of the place. To this day Oldham has been transformed physically with many new buildings appearing on the skyline of Oldham town. The road network has new tram lines as part of the Metrolink meant to improve transport across Greater Manchester (see section 5.4). There are various educational buildings that have been constructed which include the Northwest Science Centre, the University Campus Arts studios, thousands of residential homes (see section 5.4). There is an impetus to create many jobs by 2015 to improve the lives of young people. There is a huge expectation for the year 2015, and people are referring to it as the Year of Oldham (see section 5.4). The new story is about an Oldham that seeks to resurrect itself and recreate

the glorious past. Conversations on buses, at malls, in work places, colleges, and various other places, are about Oldham's transformation. The positive feelings and hope for a bright future are helping shift perceptions about Oldham as a place.

6.5.3 Analysis of Findings

From the various stories about Oldham a mixed picture is portrayed of several eras in the history of the place. The bravery of Oldham has been acknowledged in the history (see section 3.1). Oldham is today a place characterized by diversity in its landscape, population and industry (Cantle, 2006). This variety is typical of the history of the place. The cotton era and the high point for Oldham as the leading cotton centre in the world projects success (Ritchie, 2001; Law, 1999). However, the decline and collapse of the cotton era brought chaos and confrontation culminating in the race riots of 2001 (Ritchie, 2001). The riots have cast Oldham into a new era as a place to avoid as people feel that it is not safe. Cantle (2004) would state that Oldham was defined as a place of riots. Various stories told about Oldham are important as they form the broader picture of the place. Oldham has been through various phases in its history; going through village expansion, becoming a town with a global attraction, facing decline, riots in 2001 and regeneration to restore the momentum of the past. The different phases in the history of Oldham gave the place a different image or appeal which defined the brand at the respective phases; given that a place brand takes after the heritage (Hansen, 2010). The historian confirmed most of the stories identified by the storytellers, questionnaire respondents and focus group participants, adding that the main story is the cotton story and that Oldham is not a brand. Ritchie (2001) suggested that Oldham is a place with no vision and no plan. This assertion is consistent with the failure of Oldham to maintain the momentum in the aftermath of the cotton era. The Oldham brand followed the pattern of the successes or failures of the place in its past. One could argue that

the same pattern would follow the same trend in future. The rich heritage of Oldham is acknowledged in the study by the literature review, the findings, the storytellers' narrations, questionnaire responses and the focus group discussions.

6.5.3.1 The historical Developments

Oldham projected itself as the centre of the world in 1866 dominating cotton spinning. Oldham became the preferred brand. Prosperity was a major characteristic of the place. As a result Oldham's dominance of the industrial revolution is acknowledged. The Oldham story had cotton as its narrative arc, which is the anchor of the story, projecting success and prosperity attracting investment and world attention. The Oldham brand was characterised by cotton which defined the industrial patterns, professions, employment and economic performance. Names that resonate with the cotton heritage include John Platt dominating the manufacture of machines and the Ferrantis who built a reputation for making garments especially overalls during the second world war (see section 5.5). Even sport was affected by the collapse of the Oldham cotton industry with the Oldham Athletic Football team falling from the premier division to the fourth tier in this generation (R12; R23). The Oldham story meant a successful brand.

The town centre of Oldham remains the focus of the place. What started as a village on a hill has attracted developments over the years through determination to promote development where access was difficult because of the terrain (see Law, 1999). Oldham stands as a town and borough built on bravery following Aldhulne moving from Eccles to settle in the place. Oldham has grown through migration largely in 1760 with the Irish, Welsh and Scots coming to settle and in the 1950's with immigration of the Bangladeshis, Pakistanis, West Indians, Indians and prisoners of war in the aftermath of the second world war (see section 3.1). The

success of the cotton era in Oldham would face decline and deterioration creating desperation in the 1970's. R16 pointed out that migrants who settled in the 1950's became disillusioned in the 1970's with the second generation British Asians particularly desolate in their search for opportunities.

The situation would reach a crisis in 2001 with the riots causing a negative view of Oldham. Questions of cohesion were raised with counter accusations. Asians felt they were unfairly treated and suggested that segregation was due to the White flight as the Asians settled. Whites accused the Asians of failing to integrate in the community they had migrated into. The Oldham story of cotton dominance had ended leaving the legacy of massive structures spread across the borough, the cotton mills. Today most mills have been converted into business premises for a variety of industries which symbolically suggest a change of focus of the town and the borough. This would be tantamount to re-storying Oldham as a place brand.

6.5.3.2 Moving Forward

With the crisis of the riots Oldham was pushed into reflecting the way forward. The council and the central government worked together to rebuild Oldham (Cantle, 2006). The lost legacy was replaced by a document projecting a new story epitomised in the blue print for the future, the strategy, *Oldham Beyond*. The plan has been challenged by some quarters. The Oldham Partnership launched a new plan to "Get Oldham working again". The emphasis is on defining Oldham in terms of galvanizing the young people to participate in the programmes of the borough and making the place attractive. In 2008 the Oldham Partnership commissioned a consultant, HDMC to work on re-branding the place. The re-branding process put emphasis on the oneness of the borough and recommended a turquoise blue ring as a symbol of the borough (see sections 1.2 and 3.3). The new logo has been presented with

the names Oldham, Oldham Council, The Oldham Partnership and with partners it has the statement, "Proud to be part of Oldham". Challenges remain and the borough continues to unfold with a new vision to transform the place.

Chapter Seven

Discussion of Research Findings

7.1 Introduction to the Discussion of Findings

The researcher has observed the importance of storytelling throughout the study on the branding of a place, in this case Oldham. The place brand would be good if the reputation of that place speaks favourably to stakeholders and makes a promise (Vendelo,1998). Cotton and Griffiths (2007) would argue that the story helps people understand the world and hence brands can be better understood through stories. The study confirms that places are brands and they have several stakeholders to consider (see the works of: Silver and Hill, 2002; Ries and Ries, 2003; Chernatony and McDonald, 2003; Stromquist and Verhoeven, 2004; Hatch and Rubin, 2006; Gould and Skinner, 2007; Pryor and Grossbart, 2007; Booker and Burgess, 2008; Dinnie, et al., 2010; Kadembo, 2009 and 2010; Lichrou et al., 2010; Iglesias and Bonet, 2012; Klijn, 2012). Cantle (2006) puts emphasis on the need for community cohesion for the development of the Oldham brand across the town and the borough at large.

The researcher finds the submission by Daiute and Lightfoot (2004: p. x) relevant as they describe narrative analysis as "… a place holder for different ways of conceptualizing the storied nature of human development. …Narrative analysis is a mode of inquiry based in narrative as a root metaphor, a genre, a discourse." In this study the history of Oldham provides the picture and pattern of events in the place as it developed in its evolution. The discussion puts the objectives of the study into context and explores the related concepts and theories in the light of the findings.

7.2 Discussion of the Research Study and the Objectives

Objective a)   :   To illustrate the nature of stories in the dynamics of human the

phenomenon for the Oldham brand:

The storytelling approach is a tool for research that was effectively used in studying the

Oldham brand; it can be used to conduct the research in order to meet the objectives of the

study (Vickers, 2002; Lewis, 2011). This has meant the researcher's epistemological stance is

that of a phenomenological social constructionist with an interpretive perspective grounded

approach being an academic based in Oldham. The findings of the study have captured the

ethos of Oldham as a brand; and details of the place projecting the brand in a powerful way

(Denning, 2006; Boje, 2008; Anon, 2008a; Baker and Boyle, 2009; Flory and Iglesias, 2010).

The stories about Oldham create meaning in the way they are told, and their content, by the

storytellers and the researcher (Flory and Iglesias, 2010; Grace and O'Cass, 2002). Cappielo

(2004) suggested that solving a problem can be more effective going story by story; and from

the study it is clear that the Oldham story has various sub-stories, which need to be

considered in branding the place (brand nucleus, see appendix 15).

Over time the Oldham story has taken different meanings projecting different images like the

riots of 2001 and the "king cotton" story of 1866 (Hayes, 1997). These stories project a

different brand image at different phases of the history of Oldham; and meaning is dynamic

as the situation unfolds (Hatch and Rubin, 2006). Kar and Samantari (2011) assert the

significance of experiences of lived and told stories and this is consistent with the storytellers

and questionnaire respondents in the study of Oldham. The icon buildings in the form of mills

provide an identity for Oldham (Martin and Woodside, 2011). There are contrasts in the

submissions by storytellers, questionnaire respondents and focus group discussion

participants but the researcher had to find the strength of his voice; that is his story in the

study (Vickers, 2002). Chapter 3 and Chapter 5 capture the stories and developments that have shaped Oldham and given it an image. Most of the storytellers stated that Oldham changed from its previous past for a range of reasons and has lost its appeal. The findings demonstrate the extent to which stories project an image of an entity. R3 would state that: "Cotton spinning did very well during the days of the industrial revolution …and went into terminal decline after World War 2…riots coincided with a disappearing industry. Oldham is a failed manufacturing town with no plan, no vision, no brand." R13 pointed out that:

> Before 1950 Oldham had no race mix and does not compare to today. Now there are enclaves of Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities. With the infrastructure improving success will be guaranteed following the respective developments and proximity of the M60 motorway to Oldham, the metro link meant that much of Greater Manchester will be within easy access and put Oldham within 25 minutes of Manchester Airport and within 2 hours 6 minutes of London."

R22 argues that: "Oldham's problems are not unique. What is unique about Oldham is its industrial history which has shaped its present state. The Asian community could be easier to integrate." In respect of where Oldham is going and where it has come from R26 said that: "Oldham is a place trying to reinvent itself, but some people are stuck in the past. Oldham wants to look different from the facts. Oldham is a place with a technical inclination and is a hardworking community." The views expressed demonstrate how stories shape the image of a place, hence the critical importance of storytelling in the development of a brand. The portrayal of Oldham as a place is anchored in the stories about the place.

Objective b)   To determine the way stories are told to have any impact in shaping a
                brand:

The study has clearly demonstrated that people from Oldham live their stories as each storyteller contextualized their experience first to their street then to the town and the borough (Brown, 2009; Lewis, 2011); and this showed that organisations or places are living institutions with a spirit (Wheatley, 2007). The history of Oldham gives one an insight into the importance of the heritage of the place which provides an understanding of the brand

identity of the place (Brown, 2001; Law, 1999; Bednarki, 2001; Silver and Hill, 2002; Boje, 2008; Breda et al, 2008; Hansen, 2010; Hudson, 2011). The image of Oldham changed over time and that shifted the brand image or identity especially with the cotton era and the riots of 2001 as reported in specially commissioned reports on in the aftermath of the riots of 2001 (Ritchie, 2001; Cantle, 2001 and 2006; See appendix 11).

R12 stated that: "I am scared that Oldham is becoming a ghost town and many organisations are becoming less noticeable. The town is insular with no industry. Oldham is beautiful if you look close enough." R21 concurs with R12 in pointing out that: "Oldham signifies more of the past because its heritage is more than a nostalgic look to the past." In expressing the lost appeal Oldham had R23 said that: "Oldham town was doing very well until up to about eighteen months ago when big names like Woolworth, Principles, Mother Care, Ethel Austin, T J Hughes, among others pulled out and that meant Oldham took a backward step." A respondent to the questionnaire, QR9 said that: "It was good after World War 2, but no more." In commenting on the state of Oldham, a questionnaire respondent, QR22 said: "Oldham declined a lot in the last ten or so years due to poor planning. The shopping centre that once had a wide variety of shops is half closed and the shops that remain are low end and all similar to each other. Also, many of the old historical buildings have been neglected and are now derelict; giving Oldham a neglected and dilapidated look." Furthermore, R22 said that: "Oldham's problems are not unique. What is unique about Oldham is its industrial history which has shaped its present state. The Asian community could be easier to integrate."

The Oldham brand challenge projected in the story is mainly due to the lack of vision to sustain past successes and champion a new direction (Choudhury, 2001; Ritchie, 2001). The

Oldham story confirms the assertion that people are moved by stories given that storytellers are emotionally and spiritually connected to the Oldham stories (Kuper, 2005; Wilson, 2008). Many of the storytellers and questionnaire respondents agree that Oldham has a story built on a number of stories that contribute to its image (R3; R5; R10; R13; QR20; QR34). At the heart of the Oldham story is the Oldham town which is the epicenter of the place and the twists and turns the place has gone through in its long history (Bell and Jane, 2003; Burton, 1994).

The story of Oldham has important sub-stories which include the Lancashire cotton industry spinning and cotton machine manufacturing, economic booms and slumps, prosperity and poverty, industrial decline and subsequent search for renewal and new employment, that developed sitting on a hill symbolizing bravery (Bateson, 1985; Hayes, 1991; Burton, 1994; Law, 1999). It is important to note that the study demonstrated the abounding importance of storytelling across all human phenomenon (Daiute and Lightfoot, 2004; Lewis, 2011; Kadembo, 2012). DeLarge (2004) recommends actively engaging the story and storytellers for the story to have an impact; and this is essential in the development the of the Oldham brand.

Objective c)   To determine the extent to which places shape their identity through the specific stories that make-up their history:

The findings from the study show that the identity of Oldham is reflected in personal, cultural and structural attributes of the place (Thompson, 2011). The increasing focus on branding for Oldham is consistent with the widespread use of branding in various areas and that includes place branding (Moors, 2007). Mick (1986) argues that the consumer world is a web of signs, symbols and meaning in a cultural context; and that holds for the stakeholders of Oldham as a

place; and that effective branding depends on the meaning created by the branding process (Burnett and Hutton, 2007). It is clear from the literature that brands give meaning to a place (Klijn et al., 2012). Lindstrom (2008) sees branding as the new religion given its pull to a given phenomenon; and the realisation of a promise made by an organisation (Papadatos, 2006; Burman and Zeplin, 2006; Elliot and Perry, 2007; Hamish and Pringle, 2008). The brand is the core of a business given that people buy brands which add value and not just goods and services (Ries and Ries, 2003; Chernatony and McDonald, 2003; Knox, 2004; Kapferer, 2008).

The study has confirmed important assertions by a number of authors on the importance of the storytelling approach; branding is storytelling (Keenan, 2000; Fog et al. (2002); Cordiner, 2009). From this study it is clear that the Oldham brand has gone through different phases of development and shaping of its identity. The evolution portrays different images at different times in its history. The main issue is the identity of tangible and intangible characteristics of an entity (Green, 2005; Burman and Zeplin, 2006); and its own attractions and people's perceptions (Sobral, et al., 2007; Sevin, 2011).

The study brings out the strategic importance of place branding (Hankinson, 2004, 2005; Kavaratis, 2005; Melawar and Karaosmnoglu, 2006; Wanarby, 2008). Organisational leaders have a major role of shaping the brand and integrating the organisations's stories (Carriger, 2010; Marshall and Adamic, 2010; Mirza, 2012); and the leadership plays a leading role in shaping the brand (Rainisto, 2004). Oldham's successes and failures at any point in its history could be attributed to its leadership; largely the local authority represented by the OMBC. Barker and Boyle (2009) emphatically argue that people want to hear a powerful story of a brand and this holds for Oldham; and the respective stories position the place brand

(Kadembo, 2010).   Anon (2008) points out the importance of storytelling in the communication of humanity as long as speech has existed as the core of human communication. The study concurs with Boje (2008) who points out the big corporate giants are storytelling organisations; hence, to be a successful brand Oldham needs a powerful story. Denning (2006) would argue that the brand is the story of who the organisation is, or the identity story. Elliot and Perry (2007) highlight the powerful influence of the story in branding; great organisational brands have great stories (Cordiner, 2009). Cargiulo (2006) points at the story as the centre of brand development; an assertion that resonates with the images Oldham has taken in its evolution over time. The study has also shown that brands are mental perspectives of goods, people, places, services, ideas or a combination held by the stakeholders (Fog et al, 2002; Graeff and Harmon, 2002; Klijn et al., 2012). The different stories about Oldham provide a variety of its industrial setting, social, historic patterns and events, educational and other related phenomenon.

In crafting the Oldham story it is necessary to uphold some really important factors; the notion that there are three parts to the story; that is the story, the storyteller and the listener (Perrow, 2007). The researcher would point out that the storytellers in the case of Oldham come from a diverse range of backgrounds, ethnic, age, profession, place of residence, etc. It would therefore follow that the storytelling approach is complex in nature and demands thorough scrutiny of the multiple stories that have been told or documented about Oldham. In the study by Cantle (2006) it is said that Oldham is defined by the riots of 2001. R21 argues along the same lines in saying that: "Oldham signifies more of the past because its heritage is more than a nostalgic look to the past." This view suggests that Oldham is shaped by the stories that define it.

Objective d) The research seeks to examine the degree to which the stories that make

Oldham's history is reflected in the unfolding re-branding:

The study has demonstrated that place branding is complex and diverse in nature; and that place branding has become critical as places compete against other places (Gertner, 2004; Kotler, 2004; Zenker and Martin, 2011). Hankinson (2005) suggests eight dimensions essential for place branding, which include physical; environment, economic activity, business tourism facilities, accessibility, social facilities, and the strength of the reputation, people characteristics and destination size as influencing the branding of a town or a destination; and these are relevant to the branding of Oldham. The elements impacting the brand embrace both internal and external factors of the place (Coupland and Brown, 2004; Sevin, 2011). The research confirms that, a place is marketed and branded just like everything that has value (Julier, 2004; Caldwell and Freire, 2004; Gibson, 2005). In branding a place like a borough or a region the city or town centre is the epicentre (Bell and Jayne, 2003; Hankinson, 2005); and the study found this consistent in the case of the Oldham brand. The town houses the council offices and most big organisations are around the town. In the branding of a place emphasis is placed on positive aspects but there is merit in considering the negatives (Medway and Warnaby, 2008).

The dynamics of the branding of Oldham as a place are acknowledged by Halsall (2010) as having taken different images over time in a study on community segregation; and that the place brand ensures that the brand stands out in the communication clutter of places (Johansson, 2012). HDMC (2008)'s recommendation of a logo in its re-branding project does not automatically make the polo-like image a brand. The brand is the fulfilled promise made by an organisation or a place like Oldham or the Oldham Council; which necessitates an integration of economic and political factors (Morgan, 2004). It is clear from the study that a

persuasive story told and lived by employees, management and customers makes a good brand, not merely parading the wishes of leadership. In 1866 Oldham reached the pinnacle of world dominance in cotton spinning and cotton machine manufacturing, which gave the place a global appeal with a great reputation or brand image. However, in the intervening years deterioration set in and Oldham witnessed economic degradation culminating in the riots of 2001 which gave the place a bad reputation, bad brand image and subsequently a poor image (Ritchie, 2001; Cantle, 2006; Stacey, 2013).

Effective place branding necessitates the different elements to fit like a jigsaw puzzle (Supphellen, 2004); and that is the challenge that Oldham faces in bringing together the perspectives and functionalities of stakeholders and the various sub-stories of Oldham. The study clearly showed that at different phases of its history Oldham portrayed different brand identities; hence the assertion that place branding is dynamic (Van Ham, 2004). While all efforts about place branding aim at creating a positive image; it is also argued that it is about making the place better trying to deal with what he termed a "wicked-problem" (Hildreth, 2010); as it is complex to solve with many factors involved. The various reports on Oldham have demonstrated that Oldham's standing is a reflection of what transpired in the past (Bateson, 1985; Hayes; 1997; Law, 1999; Ritchie, 2001; Cantle, 2006); which its stories.

Objective e)   To illustrate Oldham's branding experience compared to Bradford's experience:

Oldham and Bradford, both share in the spinning business. Oldham's focus and heritage was on cotton that was imported from the developing world, while Bradford's spinning industry was driven by wool. The two places are referred to as mill towns and have attracted a significant proportion of the Asian community who came to work in the spinning factories.

Those developments meant that over time the two places would experience industrial decline and race riots that would lead to regeneration. However, Bradford focused on the long term and harnessed its full potential, unlike Oldham which has suffered from poor planning, which has undermined the progress of the place and adversely impacted the Oldham brand.

R9 concurs with the Ritchie report of 2001 which highlights the lack of vision and planning as the reason for the failure to progress for Oldham. The main difference between Oldham and Bradford, is that where Bradford has conserved and profited its heritage, Oldham has neglected it. R28 would point out that: "Oldham town is totally different from what it used to be when I was a child. The community aspect of life is dead and there is little interaction. There has been a significant cultural transformation." R24 said that: "Oldham used to be a safe place but now with prostitution and drugs on the rise it is bad for the town." There are significant differences between Oldham and Bradford (see appendix 5).

Objective f)　　The study determines the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the re-branding and repositioning of the Oldham brand:

Oldham was largely a White community till the 1950's and 60's when the West Indies and the Asians migrated into Oldham to take up jobs in road construction and cotton factories (see 5.3.3). The study captures different perspectives on the notion of the re-branding of the Oldham brand (see appendix 12; section 3.3). There are as many views and perspectives as are stakeholder groups and places of residence. R5 and R6 suggested that Oldham is a place with a tarnished image because of riots which experienced industry decline and unemployment. R8 acknowledges the diversity of Oldham's society, culture and landscape which cut across ethnicity, age, education, race, etc., and that is evident even in the residential areas. The Oldham borough has seven townships which have their own unique

characteristics that they project, giving further diversity to the place. R17 and R18 said that Oldham could be described as a place on a hill and every road is in a valley. R26 would argue that "To most people the Oldham brand represents their street." This view which is largely consistent with how people view places provides a good insight into the diversity of perspectives people hold about Oldham. The history of Oldham presented in chapter 3 provides insights into the diversity of the place. In view of the aforesaid, therefore the view taken to portray Oldham as a place with certain characteristics cannot be exhaustive given the range of such perspectives.

Objective g)   To examine stakeholder expectations regarding the image of Oldham and the

Factors that create the respective views:

The cotton story and the riots story stand out when reference is made to the story of Oldham. These two stories present the best that Oldham offered and the worst that ever happened in Oldham. While there are various stories which form the Oldham story these two stand out. The cotton story put Oldham on the global map as a leading commercial centre for cotton spinning and cotton machine making; in contrast the riots of 2001 presented Oldham as a place torn by race confrontation. The two scenarios presented by the story point at situations that could facility the development of a place or lead to chaos and dilapidation. Prosperity in Oldham attracted more people to the place, investment, tourism, among other groups and changed the ethnic mix of Oldham. However, when the cotton industry collapsed and there was no substitution for it; unemployment, economic dilapidation and civil strife set in, culminating in the riots of 2001. The instability saw many people relocating from Oldham as they did not feel safe in the place.

The Oldham community has many expectations about what could be done in the place to give it a better image. From the submissions by the different stakeholders, there appears to be biases on what they desire relative to their background. On the questionnaire responses the stories that give Oldham a good image are dominated by the presence of a university campus (54%) the multicultural nature of the town and the borough with a 54% response. QR4 said that the university is a great idea in improving the image of Oldham. These perspectives suggest that society values education, prosperity and diversity. But at the same time the multicultural nature of the borough is what resulted in the race riots of 2001. QR37 says that: "Oldham is a place with a diverse ethnic population and the ethnic diversity makes it stand out as a brand."

Expressing concerns about the state of Oldham there are some strong sentiments that are echoed about the place. QR1 commented that Oldham needs to utilise the introduction of the metrolink transport network to position itself as a better place. This would help deal with Oldham's lack of visibility (QR3). QR18 said that the town needs proper investment and not just pound shops and pawn brokers. QR20 mentioned the neglect of beautiful buildings across the borough, and instead putting money into projects that do not facilitate in creating a better image of the Oldham brand. QR 21 said that: "I find Oldham an inward, insular town. It always feels disjointed and out of step. There are some beautiful and interesting places, in and around the town. No one seems proud of them. It has no clear brand." QR22 referred to the decline in the last ten years and the loss of business in Oldham town. QR23 observed that: "Oldham seems a nice place to work in, given its general facilities and intermixing of communities. However, one cannot help but notice the economic decline and lack of opportunities for the town, and for the town's people. Oldham reminds one of the lower socio-economic indicators associated with some of our towns and cities." QR39 said that:

"As a brand it has no consistency. As of now it is in decline and needs rejuvenation within its economy to revive."

Objective h) To create an identity matrix for Oldham in the light of its diversity based on the conceptual framework:

There are several factors that need to be considered when compiling an identity matrix for a place. The storytelling approach provides an array of historic experiences for different stakeholder groups and developments that have contributed to the shaping of Oldham as a place and the dynamics of the image portrayed by the place. The various stories and features of Oldham combine to form the brand nucleus or the identity matrix of the place (see appendix 15). The brand nucleus demonstrates that a brand is an amalgam of stories which have different effects on the place. In the case of the Oldham brand the various stories relate to different phases of the history of Oldham and have different effects on the image of the place. Balmer and Greyser (2002) present a model for building a brand image called the AC2ID which is an acronym for actual identity, communicated identity, conceived identity, ideal identity and desired identity (see appendix 5). The identity of Oldham can take different patterns depending on the perspective taken by the party looking at the place and that is consistent with the brand nucleus. The findings in the study provide insights on the image that Oldham portrays to different stakeholders.

In respect of the different stories told by the storytellers there are various perspectives given on how Oldham can be identified. The various subheadings on the main stories shaping Oldham provide an insight into how different stakeholders view the place. Many stories are about the cotton legacy, immigration into Oldham, the redrawing of Oldham's boundaries, the multicultural community of Oldham, the educational developments, the people of

Oldham, attractions to Oldham, the townships of Oldham, the riots of Oldham, the regeneration of Oldham, perceptions of the Oldham brand, the Oldham logo and the historian's perspective of the place form a wide perspective of possible images that are attributed to the place.

Objective i)   To develop a model or framework to better conceptualize the re-branding and repositioning of Oldham with a view to aiding conceptualisation and practice in place branding:

The various stories that have been captured in respect of Oldham have shown a mixed picture of bravery, prosperity and dilapidation and doom for the place. Ritchie (2001) in an analytical study in the aftermath of the riots of 2001 underpins a critical element of Oldham that his team felt was the main cause of the crisis. The conclusion was that Oldham was a place without a plan and without a vision. The crisis that gripped Oldham in 2001 is partly a reflection of its failure to take its great years forward after the boom years of cotton spinning. With many immigrants settling in Oldham as workers in the cotton spinning mills no one envisaged the consequences of the end of that era. The authorities failed to devise a plan to harness the situation in the late eighties as many of the cotton mills closed and the various industries that depended on the cotton industry could not continue.

The labour force, especially the Asian community had no transferable skills found themselves unemployed with no prospects for other employment. The desperate financial position of the former cotton workforce coupled with large families who felt discriminated created racial hatred. The Asian community who had co-existed in relative peace with the indigenous white community suffered the economic doom. There were accusations across the racial divide culminating in the 2001 race riots. The Asian community felt discriminated while the white

community felt that the presence of Asians was the reason for the economic strain Oldham suffered. While the negative developments epitomised in riots gave a bad image of a place that appeared to be tearing itself apart, the attention drawn to Oldham prompted European funding, central government support and saw the local government of Oldham initiating processes to regenerate the economy and social cohesion.

The study has provided the basis and detail for conceptualising the Oldham historical developments and the images Oldham portrayed in its diverse history. The model for conceptualising the Oldham brand is provided in the brand matrix (*Figure 8*.1) which encapsulates the diversity of the stories that project the image of the place. The brand nucleus conforms to the proposed the *Adaptive Story Branding Conceptual Framework (Figure* 7.1*)* which recognises the power of adapting stories to different audiences in order to make an impact.

Objective j) To illustrate the way forward for the Oldham brand in the light of future

challenges and the prevailing circumstances:

The future of Oldham remains a concern for the different stakeholders given the impact developments in Oldham have on the welfare of groups of people and business prospects for organisations. The desire of all the stakeholders is to see the place prosper so that their situation could be better. If the prospects of Oldham are to improve there is need to harness the good things from the past and build on them. There are opportunities that have been lost to Oldham because of the place's failure to hold onto the good things already established in the town and the borough.

From its past Oldham' spirit of hardworking has not been sustained. The identity of Oldham as the economic hub of England has been lost. Oldham prospered with a town on a hill as a symbol of bravery. The global dominance Oldham enjoyed with cotton machine making and spinning has been completely lost from the heritage of the place. There is nothing that provides a vivid reminder of that successful past other than the cotton mills that stretch on the skyline of borough which are deteriorating or have been converted to other uses. There is no museum of that heritage which could be an envy of the world given the legacy of the cotton era. This is one of the factors that differentiate Oldham from Bradford which shares in the spinning industry. At the heart of Bradford is now the City of Bradford while Oldham still has a town at its epicentre.

Various recommendations are made to capture elements of the past while harnessing the current dynamics. The main thrust of the recommendations is to take into cognisance the challenges of developing a place brand and to harness the stories that will give Oldham a better image. It is largely about linking the good stories on the brand nucleus and integrating them into a strong brand that can help galvanize development of the town and the borough. In making the respective recommendations the researcher also puts emphasis on the need for thorough planning and implementation of the plans. The researcher is aware of the idealistic nature of the plan of the Oldham borough, *Oldham Beyond*. Recommendations made take into account what will give Oldham the best prospects for the future.

7.3 Storytelling and the Oldham Brand

The researcher would argue that submissions by various authors about the central importance of storytelling in human understanding are consistent with the Oldham story. Oldham communicates as a brand through its story; places are multifunctional and that they

communicate (Nielson, 2004; Hankinson, 2005; Harry and Hansen, 2007). The research has demonstrated that the Oldham story defines the Oldham brand; at the heart of a strong brand is a story (Ries and Ries, 2003; Dominiak, 2004; Srivasan, 2005; Denning, 2006; Cotton and Griffiths, 2007; Boje, 2008; Versi, 2009; Kadembo, 2012; Kadembo, 2013). The storytellers in the study, the questionnaire respondents, the focus group participants and the historian of Oldham all concur that stories define the identity and image of Oldham. Several stories were identified by the participants to the study and they were mostly agreeing on the specific impact of the stories; given that stories are layers that build the place image (Green, 2005).

The historian suggested that the main story of Oldham is the cotton story that shaped the success era that peaked in 1866 and subsequent economic downturn leading to riots. The riots of 2001 presented an ugly image of Oldham portraying a poor brand, hence giving Oldham a new story; and that shows the effect of the changing story on the brand (Tsai, 2006). The riots story shifted the image of the place and created a new challenge for the restoration of the positive image and appeal of the town and the borough at large. Papadatos (2006) suggested that in a story there is a crisis, help is provided in the process and the goal is achieved and the purpose is met. These features are noticeable in the Oldham story. Successful branding where the stakeholders are happy help create evangelists in the form of satisfied stakeholders or customers (Denning, 2007).

The efforts of HDMC (2008) in crafting a new brand were a token in changing perceptions and shaping a new brand. One could argue that what is documented or designed does not translate naturally into a good experience unless it resonates with all related actions and experiences across Oldham. Even to this day people are confused about the logo which appears to brand the council and not the place as the words often alternate; conforming to the

common experience of places being under-branded (Morgan, 2004). In branding Oldham it is important to determine the key characteristics of the place and effectively communicate them (Hansen, 2010).

In the overall synthesis of the study the story has been confirmed as an important tool for communication (Thompson, 2006); and equally important is the story's impact on building a brand (Sullivan, 2004; Boyle and Baker, 2009; Chiu et al., 2012). Fog et al. (2002) assert that the aim is branding and storytelling is the means to realise it. In this case the various stories identified are the means to branding Oldham. Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) highlight the key characteristics of the brand persona for a place which include the courage, the decisiveness, the determination, the work ethic, the honesty, the flexibility, the responsibility, and the curiosity attributed to the place. Smith and Wintrob (2013) urge the use of storytelling in branding as it yields results.

From this set of characteristics there are elements that are consistent with the Oldham brand. Aitken and Campelo (2011) see place brands developing from the interaction of the 4Rs which are rights, roles, responsibilities and relationships; and they are relevant in the development of the Oldham brand. In applying the storytelling approach in the development of the Oldham brand, consideration has been given to the *Purpose*, the *Allusion*, the *People* and the *Appeal* (PAPA) for a greater impact of the story (Marshall and Adamic, 2010).

In the unfolding branding story of Oldham the study realised the importance of the Oldham Partnership and the Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council in shaping the brand; as the partnerships enhance the place brand (Mak, 2011; Hankinson, 2001; 2004; 2007). While Oldham engaged a consultant in 2008 to re-brand the place, the process of re-branding continues to unfold as the dynamics of the place are shifting. The brand identity changes with

the story. HDMC (2008) centred the brand identity on a number of positives projecting the potential of the place and the hardworking spirit of Oldham while making efforts to reduce the effects of the negatives due to the seeming lack of vision, a poor image, retarded economic activities, the effects of the riots of 2001 and lack of community cohesion.

The story of the place has shaped the Oldham brand over time, embracing the peak of prosperity in 1866 as the global leading cotton spinning centre. As the economic downturn took root the economic hub of Oldham waned and gave way to instability within the manufacturing and commercial sectors leading to community instability culminating in race riots in 2001 (Ritchie, 2001). Therefore, the Oldham story presents a mixed picture of success and failure.

The storytelling approach has been confirmed in the study as a powerful tool for developing a brand; given that the story is at the centre of human understanding (Gargiulo, 2005; Lewin, 2011; Kadembo, 2012). Boge (2008) asserted that the story is the brand or every entity is known by its story and in this study Oldham is known by its story. There are many sub-stories that make the Oldham story. For effective story branding the process includes how stories are identified, establishing themes and patterns, selecting the story to be developed and enhanced then putting together memorable stories (Silverman, 2007). In the case of the rebranding of Oldham facilitated by HDMC (2008) the process of storying the brand was not robust (Kadembo, 2011).

The Oldham story in the cotton era provides the "story of 'the good old days' (Reissner, 2011). Rhodes and Brown (2005) point out that good stories stir up people like Oldham's cotton story and the successful phase of the Oldham Athletic Football Club. Through the

various stories told in dialogue meaning was shared with the storyteller and that there are contrasting approaches (Humphreys and Brown, 2002). By listening to stories about the place it became clearer to the researcher what the Oldham brand stands for, hence confirming that, "branding is synonymous with storytelling" (Gresh, 1998). Keenan (2000) argued that the story brand will develop from the organisation's experience and mission and this would conform to *Oldham Beyond,* the strategic blue print for Oldham which considered the past and projected a progressive future. The Oldham story if crafted in an appealing manner would enhance the brand and make it more attractive; as strategic storytelling ensures that a brand lead against its competition (Barker and Boyle, 2009).

7.4 Result of the Discussion

Subsequent to the discussion the researcher has observed a pattern of storytelling in trying to persuade stakeholders. The researcher proposes a theory for story-based branding. The author contends that in the light of the study and the subsequent discussion a new theory can be put forward on the application of storytelling or story selling in branding. The author makes a claim to the *Adaptive Story Branding Conceptual Framework* in the application of storytelling or the narrative in branding.

7.4.1 The Adaptive Story Branding Conceptual Framework

Any entity is bound to have a number of stories attributed to its past, its present and future paradigms emanating from its activities and consequences of its nature, natural and unnatural evolutions and revolutions, which in turn appeal to different stakeholders. Therefore, the storytelling/narrative application would employ the different stories to maximize the impact on the identified stakeholders, among others, the right story for the right stakeholder; hence stories make sense to the extent that they are adapted to the listener. In promoting or

marketing a place this could be likened to a book where pages are dedicated to marketing or promoting to particular stakeholders or segments. In the case of marketing a place there is a different page for the resident, for the investor, for the tourist, for the student, for the youth, for the retired, for the different township representatives, income groups, races, cultural/religious group, employee groups, among others. There are as many pages as there are stakeholders who have an ear for the story. The idea is to adapt the story to the specific stakeholder group or segment. In applying the framework to the study conducted, it is clear that Oldham has different messages to the student coming to study, the resident of the town or borough, the investor, the tourist, the shopper, central government departments, the media, employees, among others. This can be likened to the application of one case study to different disciplines in facilitating learning and understanding. The emphasis on the contents of the case change depending on the factors under consideration.

While the story remains largely the same, the emphasis shifts with the stakeholder as the page is flipped or as the page is adapted to make the most impact in communicating the story to the respective stakeholder group. The idea is to fit the story to the perspective of stakeholder group given the listener's interest in the place and their tastes to make the greatest impact. The same listener could find different stories of the same place appealing where they have multiple interests. The person who moves to Oldham to work would want to know about the accommodation in Oldham and state of crime in the different townships and the general appeal of the identified places of residence. The theory proposed is named *The Adaptive Story Branding Conceptual Framework* is presented in *figure 7.1.*

The development of a brand for a place mirrors the state of planning, developments in industry, the level of industrialization of the town and the borough at large, the aptitude of the

residents and investors as well as the tourist impressions created from experiencing the town or place. Over time as the main story changes, so would the adapted story in order to remain contemporary in the light of the dynamics of the environment and the changing story.

Figure 7.1 **The Adaptive Story Branding Conceptual Framework**
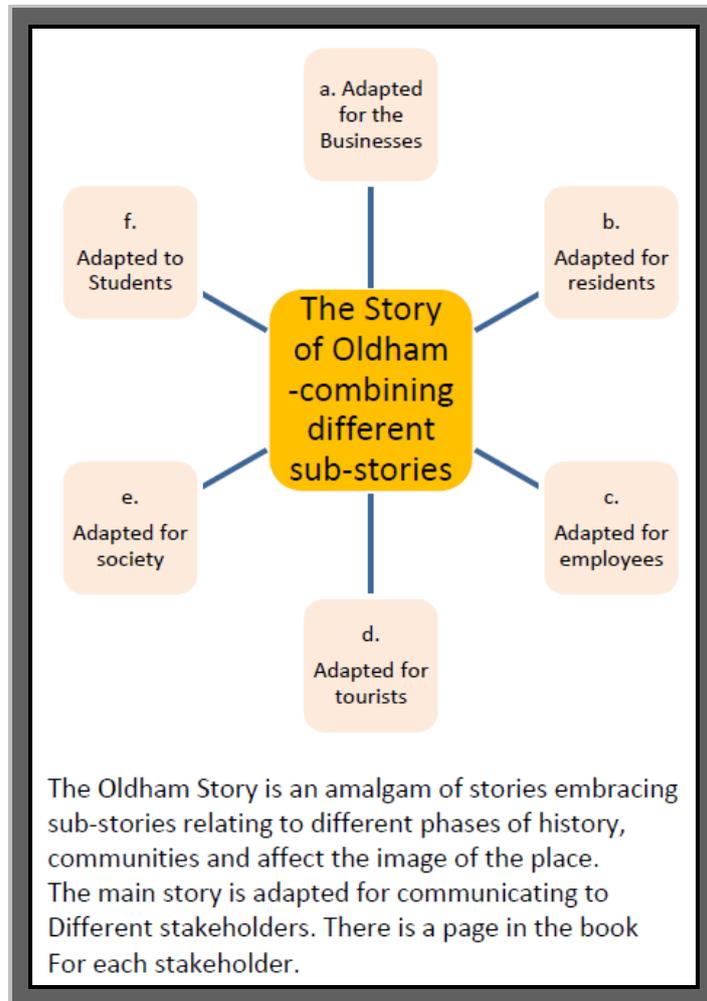
The author makes further observations that enrich the body of knowledge in marketing and branding in particular; that the story/narration is comprised of some key elements as observed below:

- That the story is a mirror of the storyteller, that is that the story reflects or encapsulates the storyteller's profession, self-concept and his/her background in that the language or style cannot be different from the storyteller nor could the story be outside their mental map and this ties in with the assertions by

Rhodes and Brown (2005) who state that stories are subjective to the storyteller and that the stories are subjective and inter-subjective accounts of experience.

- The story is shaped in the paradigm in terms of the chronology or simply the events or issues of the times. This is the reason why famines, wars, fashion, good times or booming times make a good reference to a story. This again confirms the work of Rhodes and Brown (2005) who argue that the story/narrative is time based as it chronicles events over periods thus mirroring organizations as dynamic.

- Oldham is changing both in shape and events unfolding. Hence, the brand image or identity does not remain static as the environment unfolds and usher in a new paradigm but that image or identity unfolds in the shadow of the unfolding times.

- A story is both fact and fiction, present and futuristic and can be used for both constructive and destructive purposes as they can be used to justify organisational changes which might not have been legitimate (Rhodes and Brown, 2005; Lamsa and Sintonen, 2006). Therefore, a story can make a difference by the way that it is presented and the source would be the message.

- The development of a place brand is a hybrid process embracing multitudes of factors cutting across a diversity of stakeholders associated with the place. While reference is made to a single brand of a place, the reality is that a place brand is an average concept in that a place, as in the case of a town and or a borough, is a brand of many shades. The place brand is defined by residents in a street whose identity is with the vicinity of that street, an area where there might be a concentration of people of a certain ethnic background, the

structures in the place, the character of people in the place, the plan of the place, central government initiatives, local authority services and PR efforts, the kind of shops operating in the town, landscape, infrastructure, cost of living, events-past and present which all boil down to a place being branded by its heritage something that Hansen (2010) will concur with.

- The storytelling approach plays a key role in human patterns of thinking because memory is story-based and therefore our thought process and reflection is story-based. Anything we see we only know and understand if it has a representation in our memory or put more scientifically if it falls within our area of experience or perceptual field. Therefore the mirror of our brand is as good as our experience of what we hear or see about the brand reflected in our minds be it positive or negative, good or bad. In this regard therefore my investigation of the Oldham brand carries very little meaning if one cannot fathom the nature, location or compare to something familiar. To the extent that reference is made to ethnic and cultural diversity in Oldham some people who were respondents to the study could not fathom such a scenario as it amounts to the people missing out simply because the history is not their story, memory or perceptual field.

The learning experience of the researcher has been phenomenal, moving from understanding stories as mere narrations of the past or news to the realisation of stories as instruments for human functionalities and thought processes. Specifically, the researcher gained substantially in the application of storytelling in branding. The researcher is now confident with the phenomenon and is hoping to grow into a global story branding consultant and an academic of high standing.

Chapter Eight

Conclusions and Recommendations on developing the Oldham Brand

8.1   Conclusions

In the light of the research conducted into the storytelling approach in the development the Oldham brand a number of conclusions are made on various aspects of the phenomenon. Broadly, the use of storytelling helped the researcher make sense of the phenomenon (Delarge, 2004). The researcher has not only studied, but has learnt how to apply storytelling to the branding process and is poised to raise his consultancy profile. The researcher will apply the knowledge gained at work within and without and contribute to the body of knowledge as part of action research (Zubber-Skerritt and Perry, 2002). In reaching the conclusions, consideration has been given to a number of elements that underpin the dynamics of a place and the respective findings and analysis of the data provided by the different instruments employed in gathering the data. The author observed that a story is shaped by a number of instruments as follows:

A Story   =   Thoughts + Plans + Actions + Results + Consequences + Legacies

                   =   A Brand

While alluding to the importance of storytelling, the researcher would also argue that Oldham has multiple stories that have cast different images of branding at different phases of its history. However, the challenge for branding is complex given that it would take a strong story to make an impact on the stakeholders (Anholt, 2010). Ultimately branding is about the promise, and if that promise is not met, frustration ensues, or cognitive dissonance sets in (Burmann and Zeplin, 2005). It is important that in examining the Oldham brand consideration is given to the chronotopes, that is time and space considerations, and have a broader perspective of the phenomenon of storytelling (Perrino, 2011). Every entity has a

history which impacts on its marketing (Boje, 2008; Blomba¨ck and Brunninge, 2009); hence the history of the place would be relevant to the marketing and branding of Oldham.

Based on the objectives set out for the study the researcher concludes that:-

a) To illustrate the nature of stories in the dynamics of human the phenomenon for the Oldham brand:

The study has demonstrated that stories are at the centre of humanity and that our understanding is anchored in stories. It therefore follows that marketing and branding processes would be better executed through the use of storytelling. There are many perspectives in storytelling. It would follow that effective storytelling is aligned to organisational objectives and should adjust in accordance with the changing dynamics.

b) To determine the extent to which places shape their identity through the specific stories that make-up their history:

In examining the stories about Oldham it is clear that the story of the different phases in the history of the town and the borough project the image and identity of the town which in turn project the place brand. It can be categorically stated that a place being an entity is known by its story and the same applies to Oldham.

c) To determine the extent to which places shape their identity through the specific stories that make-up their history:

All current efforts in re-branding and repositioning Oldham refer to "the good old days" and the patches of poor performances across the town and the borough. The idea is to reignite the good stories to erase the bad story of Oldham.

d) The research seeks to examine the degree to which the stories that make Oldham's history are reflected in the unfolding re-branding:

Bradford has a similar spinning history like Oldham but instead of cotton they dealt with wool. Unlike Oldham, Bradford has been driven by a clear vision in harnessing energies, resources and building community cohesion. Bradford has a cathedral at the heart of the city whereas Oldham has a town as its epicentre and that shows the gap in development of the two places despite sharing a similar background. Furthermore Bradford can boast of a booming University whereas Oldham has a small university campus under the Oldham College to provide higher education.

e) To illustrate Oldham's branding experience compared to Bradford's experience:

The study has demonstrated that in Oldham there are diverse perceptions of the place depending on the stakeholder group. This can be personal as the perspective can be down to the street or the house where one lives. It became clear that stakeholder management is at the heart of place branding.

f) The study determines the perceptions of stakeholders regarding the re-branding and repositioning of the Oldham brand:

Stakeholder expectations are diverse but there appears to be a convergence in the aspirations. All stakeholders desire a place that appeals and that they can be proud to be associated with. Oldham has a rich heritage characterised by a diverse community, landscape, industry and history; with an equally diverse stakeholder base.

g) To examine stakeholder expectations regarding the image of Oldham and the factors that create the respective views:

Oldham's identity is underpinned in the brand nucleus which brings together the various elements or stories/entities that provide an image or identity of the Oldham brand. While the narrative arc is anchored on bravery, hard work and prosperity, it is important to note that the dynamics shift with the paradigm over time.

h) To create an identity matrix for Oldham in the light of its diversity based on the conceptual framework:

The researcher proposes a conceptual framework referred to as *The Adaptive Story Branding Conceptual Framework* (see section 7.4) which postulates that every story can only make an impact to a stakeholder group if it is adapted for the particular group; hence there is a different page for communicating to respective stakeholder groups. That process of adaptation would result in more effective communication as people understand stories better.

i) To develop a model or framework to better conceptualize the re-branding and repositioning of Oldham with a view to aiding conceptualisation and practice in place branding, and

The proposed *Adaptive story branding conceptual framework* provides a framework for developing a place brand through the use of storytelling. The development of a framework should follow a thorough examination of the essential elements of the phenomenon, which the author has also carried out (see sections 2.4.2 and 3.3).

j) To illustrate the way forward for the Oldham brand in the light of future challenges and the prevailing circumstances:

The researcher makes recommendations on developing the Oldham brand by working on harmony, having a clear vision, harnessing the heritage as an attraction, attracting more investment and re-positioning Oldham relative to the major cities in the Northwest and West

Yorkshire, which are regions in England. The road network and the regional airports are conveniently positioned and they have a positive effect on the branding of Oldham.

8.1.1 The storytelling approach or narrative as a basis for knowledge and perceptual development

Yesterday is a story, so is today and tomorrow. There is the lived story, the current story and the story of the future (Kadembo, 2012). The human mind is a web of stories which forms the mirror of reflection, learning and understanding (Lewis, 2011). One could argue that what people know is their lived story, that which is happening today is the unfolding story and their future hopes and expectations form the aspirational story. Every story that one knows forms the basis for their understanding new stories and also influencing others (Kadembo, 2012). Therefore, in considering a place and trying to understand its dynamics the web of stories influence our knowledge and relate to the lived stories and project into the future and in that maze an image is shaped for any given phenomenon (Gresh, 1998; Hankinson, 2001, 2004, 2010). This essentially is what Oldham's brand is about, that is a web of stories that reflect the history of Oldham; whether the good, the bad, or the ugly story. The current patterns across a plethora of elements and stakeholders as well as the strategic plans and related stories about the future portrayal of Oldham are put into context. Kostera and Obloj (2010) suggest that strategists can be perceived as storytellers who tell the story of the future.

8.1.2 The Conceptualisation of the Oldham brand

Generally, place branding is virtually an average concept. A place has multiple stakeholders to it and the perspective taken by each of the stakeholders at both group and individual levels is relative. Therefore following a precise focused approach there would be as many brand perspectives of Oldham as the number of people who make up the Oldham population. In the course of the investigation storytellers expressed their views of Oldham in respect of the

street they live in or the ethnic community they belong to or their profession or role they play in Oldham. In this regard it can be concluded that the Oldham brand is relative to the stakeholder group if not the individual. The researcher takes the absolutist view, that places, just like products can be branded (Gudjonson, 2005). However, Balakrishnan (2008) would differ that places cannot be branded like products as they are complex.

8.1.3 The ethnic diversity factor of Oldham

Oldham prides itself in ethnic diversity and that presents a mixed view of the town; in one respect that presents a rich cultural heritage but from another perspective, a segregated community simmering with hatred against each other. Following the riots of the 1970's and 2001 the ethnic diversity of the people denotes an ugly patch to the town and the borough as the tag of a divided community runs deep and the scars left in the aftermath of a place tearing itself apart are a constant reminder of the ills of the Oldham brand (Ritchie, 2001; Cantle, 2006).

8.2   Recommendations

Before focusing in on the recommendations, the study takes note of the submission by Boje and Smith (2006: p. 309) who argue that,

> Given that we review discourse as referring to domains including storytelling, images, metaphors, and tropes that together produce a particular version of the world, there appears to be an obvious leaning towards the linguistic. Thus seeking to re-story an established narrative identity, it is important to begin with other aspects of discourse, to associations, to metaphors, tropes and images. If these are aligned, it is likely that the visual element of the narrated identity will correspond.

In arguing the above there appears to be an understanding on the part of Boje and Smith (2006) that the picture of the world painted by a phenomenon should be understood in the first instance before one could re-story the established narrative identity. In the light of the study of Oldham the researcher would see this perspective as necessitating understanding the

history of Oldham before attempting to re-story for a better brand. The researcher recommends an Oldham brand epitomized in the statement:

A place connected to its roots of bravery, hard work, sitting on a hill, a place that celebrates diversity, engages people from different backgrounds and sharing in the symbolism. A place that works on re-storying its past with a new narrative arc, moving from manufacturing to service industries and driven by investment into youth skills development. A place whose story line is: Our future is in what we plan it to be, our hard work, bravery and the legacy we pass on to future generations. The slogan for Oldham could be:

"**Oldham means being at the centre of great things.**"

With a town centre on a rock we are brave
We were there in the industrial revolution!
Became the global centre for cotton spinning
Even as we faced challenges we are regenerated!
We embrace diversity and cherish our potential
Our future is great as we advance to realise greatness.

The researcher makes a number of recommendations for the Oldham brand to improve:-

Recommendation 1

Given the skills deficiency Oldham has faced in the past it is important to improve in that respect. It is recommended that Oldham continues to focus on the youth programmes for skills development and job creation so that a new story of progressive prosperous Oldhamers starts taking shape.

Recommendation 2

The old structures neglected in Oldham portray a poor image of the place. It is recommended that old dilapidated structures across the borough and in the town are demolished or renovated where possible and where appropriate new structures are erected and this would cast a positive image to those visiting Oldham, the residents and those doing business in Oldham.

Recommendation 3

Many commentators among them the historian, Ritchie (2001), Cantle (2006) and Halsal (2010) among others have highlighted segregation of communities in Oldham which adversely impact the development of the town and the borough. It is recommended that Oldham create more interactive forums to enhance cohesion across the borough for cooperation in development through more embracing entertainment, recognition and open spaces for relaxing.

Recommendation 4

In view of the poor history of Oldham's education provision it is important to shift the status core. It is recommended to improve the education provision and aspire to establish university status in a reasonably short period in order to attract further investment and funding for Higher Education like most universities that have benefited from being university towns.

Recommendation 5

In the study it became clear that Oldham's best is in the past. The study recommends that Oldham exploits the nostalgia from the heritage of cotton by opening the cotton heritage museum in Oldham to boost tourism and tie that to other attractions in the northwest of England. The museum attraction could provide a global attraction as a showcase of the once "king cotton" heritage attracting tourism, research and investment. Houses and inventions of prominent people from Oldham could form part of the attractions in the heritage of Oldham that could be promoted to boost tourism.

Recommendation 6

Oldham has offered very little for tourism. It is recommended that sustained efforts are made to promote Oldham as a place with a unique heritage as a historic centre for cotton spinning with diverse attractions in the heart of the Northwest. The excellent transport networks and proximity to major cities make Oldham attractive as a

destination, a place of residence, a place for doing business and for tourism. Oldham could be promoted saying that by coming to Oldham one would have a gateway to major UK centres as the cities of Manchester, Liverpool and Leeds. Oldham is also within easy reach of Birmingham and London, and to Scotland. Furthermore, by sitting on the M62 motorway, Oldham that connects the M6 to the west and M1 to the east the place is within easy access of the whole of the United Kingdom. Besides the road network, the railway and tram lines cut through the borough and the town providing further proximity to the major centres and the airport is within 20 miles and about thirty minutes' drive.

The recommendations made, assume the integrative role of OMBC and the Oldham Partnership remains pivotal in continuing to bring together leaders and progressive organisations across the borough in advancing the cause for Oldham. The leadership of any entity is critical in shaping the brand (Mirza, 2012); and Oldham is not an exception.

8.2.1 The Researcher's Contribution to Knowledge

The researcher developed a model on the role of stories in the development of place marketing and branding related to how such stories may be made or portrayed so that they can contribute to effective place branding. Through consideration of the stories associated with Oldham one could put together an integrated story of Oldham as illustrated in *Figure* 8.1 based on the brand nucleus. These stories are consistent with the findings from the storytellers, questionnaires and the focus group discussion as summarized in chapter 5 and 6. The matrix shows a degree of integration of the different stories compounding into the common story for Oldham. The different stories, therefore, provide the inputs into the bigger picture of the Oldham story which in turn projects the image of Oldham. This perspective is

consistent with the argument that a place brand is an amalgam of perceptions of multiple stakeholders.

Figure 8.1 The Oldham Brand Matrix
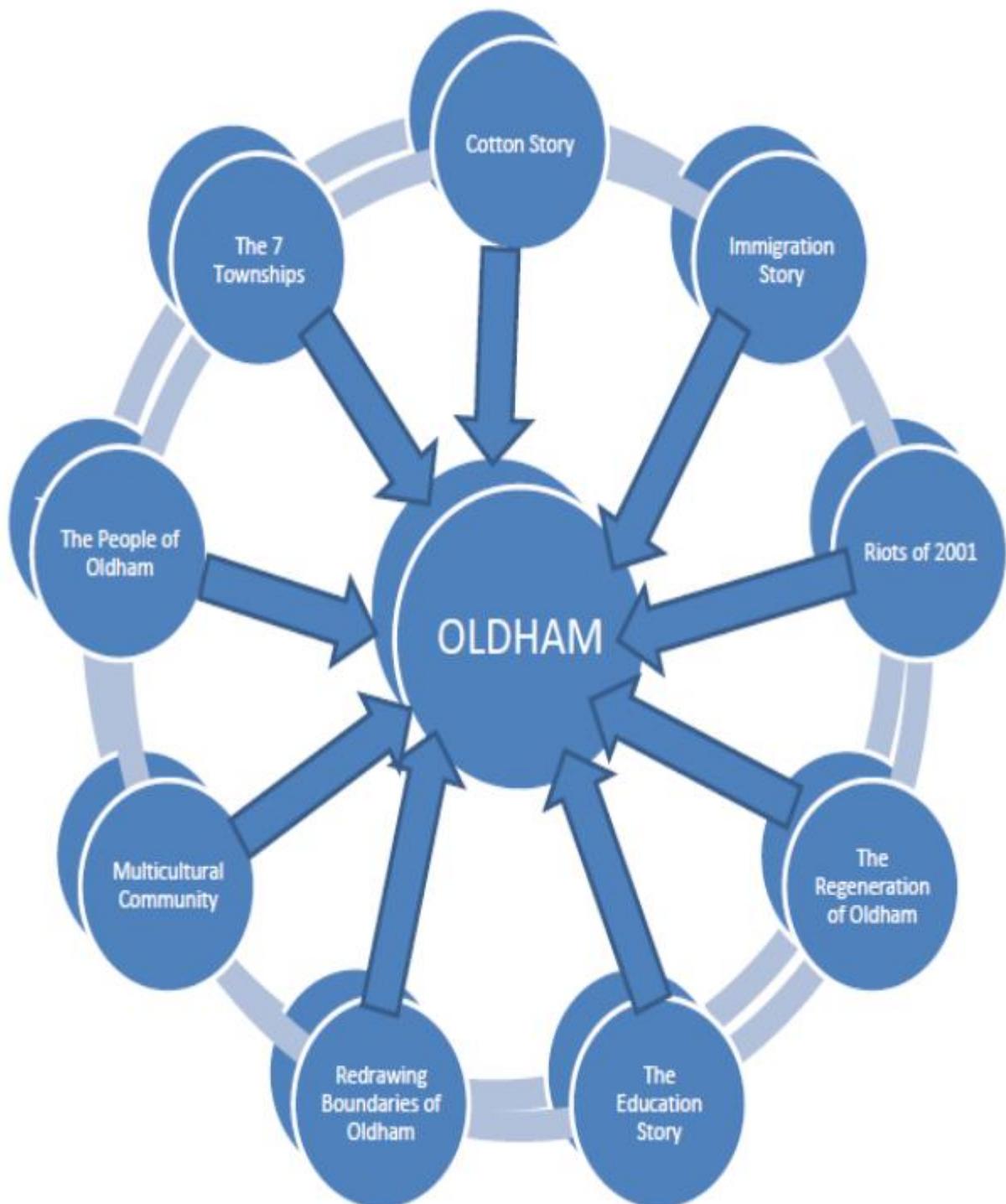
The researcher has widened the scope for debate and discussion by both academics and practitioners on the phenomenon of storytelling and this will encourage further interest and

studies on the area. The researcher sees scope for management consultancy based on the applications of storytelling in branding. The knowledge gained from the study helps in advancing the researcher's profile as both an academic and independent consultant. This would enable the researcher to publish his work and incorporate further research into the phenomenon of story branding and also provide consultancy in areas of storytelling and brand development. If the ideas put forward could be followed up the whole process would lead to the improvement of Oldham's branding process.

Ultimately, the researcher would like to gain the relevant expertise to establish himself as an expert in the area of storytelling for branding with a global appeal. In this regard with more research following his work, it would be ideal to widen the discourse in the light of the unfolding technological advancement and the general marketing and branding trends. If successfully executed, the study would significantly shift the framework of knowledge and thought process in storytelling and branding in the wider context of marketing.

8.2.2 Barriers to implementing proposals

The realisation that effective storytelling for branding tends to be subjective and may be complex in implementing is important to put into perspective. That characteristics of storytelling presents a serious barrier to the effective implementation of the storytelling approach in branding as the decision-makers may not have adequate knowledge about the phenomenon nor resources to implement if acceptable. The recommendations put forward could be constrained by lack of understanding of storytelling instrumentality on the part of the decision makers. The main question faced in utilizing the storytelling approach is about the type of story presented by Oldham. There are dominant stories, the doppleganger effects of the dominant stories, the underdog stories, the springboard stories, etc. It is not obvious

what the most effective approach to the story of Oldham would be. It is therefore imperative to conduct extensive research before deciding on the narrative arc of the storytelling approach for a given phenomenon or entity. In terms of implementing the development of the Oldham brand there are complications in understanding the use of storytelling on the part of the leadership of Oldham town and the wider borough. The application of the storytelling approach as a tool for management and marketing might be resisted as it is not a conventional tool for management and marketing practice.

The Oldham Partnership commissioned the project on the re-branding of Oldham and yielded a logo with little bearing on the heritage of the place. Subsequently the logo was adopted by the leadership but with little acceptance by the stakeholders and that has curtailed the use of other potential tools. The use and impact of the storytelling approach to branding may not be appreciated by the leadership of Oldham town and the wider borough. Some of the leaders may be emotionally attached to stories and that could further impact on the storytelling approach for the Oldham borough. There may be limited resources to conduct another re-branding process and that may also adversely impact on the possibility of utilizing the storytelling approach. The financial limitations also affect the capacity to change the infrastructure like in the case of some of the residential neighbourhood, buildings in town and at the township centres. The idea of an Oldham museum while sounding noble could be limited by the difficulty of accessing essential materials that are scattered throughout the world and could be financially prohibitive. To the extent that Oldham has not changed significantly despite its rich heritage suggests inertia on the part of the decision-makers and that they might not cope with the fast changing storylines for a place.

8.3 Limitations and scope for future research

This research was limited in scope to make it doable; and the resources to comprehensively and exhaustively examine the issues were also limited. While the study sought to generalize the stories different stakeholders see as critical to Oldham there is a possibility that different story patterns could emerge from different stakeholder groupings which this study did not focus on. The sample of thirty storytellers could be bigger, which could help capture more stories about Oldham. Further investigation into each of the key stories in depth could provide more insights on the impact of the respective stories.

While this study identified a number of stories and their impact on the Oldham brand it would benefit the body of knowledge in place branding if a comparative study of Oldham and similar places could be conducted to test the findings of this study. While comparing with Bradford provided some insights; the data on Bradford was not comprehensive since that was not the main focus of the study. The comparative study could look at differences in heritage and patterns for development for different places and examine the impact of the respective patterns. The researcher is of the view that a more concerted effort in story branding could benefit from the experiences of research on story branding with goods and services. This would provide a more embracing approach cutting across the plethora of marketing applications.

It would be ideal to investigate further the differences in the way stories for branding goods and services could differ from how stories for branding a place could be told. There are cultural differences in the symbolism that is employed in storytelling and future research could enrich the notion of place story-based branding through comparing cultures in storytelling. In the shaping of values and meaning in brand development especially for places

it would be ideal to establish the stories of origin and the spirit of the place as Oldham has bravery and hard work as its core.

Since this study recommends the *Adaptive Story Branding Conceptual Framework* which emphasizes the importance of adapting the story to the purpose of communicating to a particular target audience there is need to further investigate the phenomenon. Further research to test the theory would benefit the body of knowledge in story-branding. Relevant studies could confirm, refine or refute the theory proposed in this study.

Despite the limitations in the study, the researcher gained significant knowledge about the power of storytelling and its impact on branding in general and more specifically to place branding. The researcher appreciates the fact that all entities are storytellers and that to change a brand is to change a story. Brands have been found to be a combination of stories which are sometimes conflicting and tend to be subjective and their effect depends on both the storyteller and the listener. The researcher understands the versatility of stories in shaping perceptions and aiding comprehension across disciplines and functions. The researcher discovered that storytelling forms the core of human understanding and that the story is at the core of humanity since every phenomenon is underpinned by a story. This makes storytelling a key tenet in communication, culture, teaching, socialization and various other applications. It also became clear to the researcher that storytelling is not just a matter of informing, but could be used in persuading and selling to a targeted audience. Storytelling is effective in branding as people buy brands which are imbedded in stories; hence good stories would make it easier to sell.

In the light of the knowledge gained the researcher would seek to establish a story-branding consultancy which would provide an opportunity to apply the knowledge gained. The

researcher has experience of consultancy and has a passionate interest in establishing himself as a household figure in the area. The researcher would consider further research into aspects of story branding where limitations have been identified. The researcher would expand the notion of storytelling to religion; an area where the researcher holds a passion as a practicing christian. Consideration for further research and application would be given to applications of storytelling in marketing communications, leadership, personal effectiveness, change management, personal effectiveness among other possible areas.

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The Storyteller Descriptor Profiles

Respondent No.	Name	Profile
Respondent 1	R1 Ethnicity: White British Age : 36 years Sex : Female	Born and bred Oldhamer. A 36 year old regeneration planning officer who is well acquainted with town planning dynamics. She played an important part in the development of policies and plans in the regeneration process of Oldham as a town and broadly for the borough at large. She is a white resident of Oldham.
Respondent 2	R2 Ethnicity: White British Age : 45 years Sex : Female	A born and bred Oldhamer. A 45 year old marketing officer with the Oldham regeneration unit. She is an experienced local government officer with a lot of insight into the dynamics of Oldham. She is a white resident of Oldham.
Respondent 3	R3 Ethnicity: White British Age : 67 years Sex : Male	Moved to Oldham in his early career. A career chamber of commerce and business development officer who came to Oldham in 1980 worked closely with the council and the private sector. A white man of 67 years of age with a wealth of knowledge and insight into the dynamics of Oldham who lives in Saddleworth.
Respondent 4	R4 Ethnicity: White British Age : 40 years Sex : Male	A 40 year old white current officer of the Oldham Council who came into Oldham taking up an executive position in the council in 2009. He lives in Saddleworth and has strong views about Oldham as a place.
Respondent 5	R5 Ethnicity: White British Age : 67 years Sex : Male	Was born in Oldham. A 67 year technocrat who has been involved with Oldham's education establishment in a number of capacities. He worked as a teacher and ultimately deputy head of the Oldham Sixth Form. He later became a director of the Oldham Business Management School which paved the way for the establishment of University Campus Oldham. He is a white resident of Saddleworth.

Respondent 6	R6 Ethnicity: Afro-Carribean British Age : 72 years Sex : Male	A 72 year old Afro Carribean who championed equality and diversity in various government departments. He was at the helm of Positive Action Northwest a company funded by Northwest Development Agency and based in Oldham over 10 years.
Respondent 7	R7 Ethnicity: White British Age : 43 years Sex : Male	Moved to Oldham relatively recently. A 43 year old white editor of the main local newspaper of Oldham who came to Oldham in 2001 and has been working in Oldham for 10 years. He has become aware of the dynamics of the town through both the press and a range of activities that his newspaper is involved with in the town and borough at large.
Respondent 8	R8 Ethnicity: British Pakistani Age : 42 years Sex : Female	A 42 year old woman of Asian descent who has worked with a number of organizations focusing on equality and diversity. She is a second generation Asian born and educated in Oldham. She has also worked in the Oldham and continues to work there. She is quite familiar with the dynamics of Oldham.
Respondent 9	R9 Ethnicity: White British Age : 57 years Sex : Female	A born and bred Oldhamer. A resident of Saddleworth, born and bred in Oldham. She has been serving in the further and higher education fraternity of Oldham and has been an active participant in chamber activities of the Oldham community.
Respondent 10	R10 Ethnicity: White British Age : 38 years Sex : Male	A seasoned technocrat in the area of community developed. He has worked in the local government for a number of years. Has served in the Oldham Council for ten years and shows a lot of insight in the dynamics of the Oldham Community and its diversity. He has a lot of statistical depth on the different elements of the community of Oldham.
Respondent 11	R11 Ethnicity: White British Age : 63 years Sex : Male	A technical theatre expert specializing in sound, stage management and lighting. He has been resident in Oldham for the last 23 years. He feels that as he nears retirement he will move away from Oldham and settle somewhere else.

Respondent 12	R12 Ethnicity: White British Age : 37 years Sex : Female	A resident of Oldham who moved from Manchester at a young age and has faith in Oldham. Has worked with the Oldham theatre (The Colliseum) for 14 years. She feels there is a rich cultural heritage in Oldham that is ebbing away as the town is becoming a ghost town.
Respondent 13	R13 Ethnicity: British Pakistani Age : 43 years Sex : Male	Born and bred Oldhamer. A long serving member of several public organizations of boards of the Coliseum, The Oldham College, a school and many other organizations. He works for a youth support organization and has various contacts within the borough from different backgrounds. He has faith in both the history of Oldham and its future.
Respondent 14	R14 Ethnicity: White British Age : 68 years Sex : Male	A born and bred Oldham resident who is an academic and a religious minister. He has worked in Oldham all his professional working life. He sees his work as 50% religious minister and 50% as an HE academic . Historically he served 23 years as a deacon and 22 years as religious minster. He started teaching in FE/HE institutions since 1969.
Respondent 15	R15 Ethnicity: British Bengali Age : 27 years Sex : Male	A student of University Campus Oldham born in Oldham and moved to Bangladesh for ten years before returning at the age of 16 years. Upon returning to England he stayed in the South of England. He later returned to Oldham where he has lived for the last 11 years.
Respondent 16	R16 Ethnicity: British Bengali Age : 42 years Sex : Male	A taxi driver who migrated to Bangladesh at the age of 10 and then went into school after a few months of learning English. Coming to England was a big step and to him the white community and snow symbolized beauty and purity. Had to walk to school which was hard. He left Oldham briefly in search of opportunities and subsequently came back. In due course he enrolled to study at university a development he believes would help him and his family in facing future challenges.

Respondent 17	R17 Ethnicity: White British Age : 62 years Sex : Male	A businessman trading in Middleton, born in Manchester. He takes a lot of interest in places and geography. He has never lived in Oldham but feels comfortable to articulate the dynamics of the place.
Respondent 18	R18 Ethnicity: White British Age : 54 years Sex : Male	A businessman based in Middleton with an understanding of the dynamics of Oldham. He lives in Littleborough following his mum's decision to go to the country side where it is safe and relaxed. He enjoys it.
Respondent 19	R19 Ethnicity: White British Age : 54 years Sex : Female	A born and bred Oldham woman with a good academic background who has a good knowledge and experience as a place. She was educated in Oldham for her primary and secondary education and is engaged in teaching at Higher Education level in Oldham.
Respondent 20	R20 Ethnicity: White British Age : 64 years Sex : Male	Born in London and worked in mainstream television and well travelled and has a lot of insight into the dynamics of places. He moved to Oldham 21 years ago and settled in the affluent township of Saddleworth. For fifteen years he felt he had nothing to do with Oldham until he started a community based project. He has made a significant contribution in confidence building for the youth of Oldham.
Respondent 21	R21 Ethnicity: White British Age : 35 years Sex : Female	Has a family heritage that stretches some 100 – 200 years in Oldham. Is an academic who has lived in Oldham much of her life except for 3 years of higher education. Grew up in an area where most whites moved out and Asians are now predominant. Went to schools where there was a race mix and has been exposed to many cultures and different religions.
Respondent 22	R22 Ethnicity: White British Age : 47 years Sex : Male	A technocrat in the area of local archives who was born in north London. He has worked in many places and is quite familiar with the dynamics of many places. He feels that Oldham is not different from many places he is familiar with in respect of the problems it has to deal with but says Oldham is unique in its heritage.

Respondent 23	R23 Ethnicity: White British Age : 41 years Sex : Male	A library and information manager who is a born and bred Oldhamer. He is well acquainted with the dynamics of Oldham over the years.
Respondent 24	R24 Ethnicity: Asian Age : 39 years Sex : Male	A taxi driver who was born in Bangladesh who came to Oldham at the age of 10 years. He worked in catering for 7 -8 years in catering. Feels that selling to Asians is not an easy task as they would always want to negotiate.
Respondent 25	R25 Ethnicity: British Bengali Age : 17 years Sex : Male	A born and bred Oldhamer, and a third generation Asian with an open mind in approaching relationships.
Respondent 26	R26 Ethnicity: White British Age : 63 years Sex : Female	A local government councilor in Oldham. She came to Oldham at an advanced age of 18 years. She worked in IT within a bank and in the civil service before joining the local government.
Respondent 27	R27 Ethnicity: White British Age : 58 years Sex : Female	A 58 year old who has lived in Oldham since she was born. She worked in a bakery as a supervisor for 18 years and has been in security for a number of years.
Respondent 28	R28 Ethnicity: White British Age : 62 years Sex : Male	A born and bred Oldhamer who started as a teacher in Oldham and moved on to a number of schools. He remains passionate about Oldham. He lives in Oldham and is heading a school in Middleton some 4 miles away.
Respondent 29	R29 Ethnicity: White British Age : 68 years Sex : Male	Was born in Oldham and was brought up in Saddleworth. He is a well travelled former business executive who spent part of his professional life in the United States before returning to Oldham. He has been serving Saddleworth North as an elected councilor since 2004.
Respondent 30	R30 Ethnicity: Asian Age : 32 years Sex : Male	He came from Pakistan at the age of 5 years to live with his father who had migrated. He was educated in Oldham and has lived and worked in Oldham.

Appendix 2
Identification of Dominant Stories in the Oldham Brand

Respondents		A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L
	1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	3	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	4	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	5	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓
	6	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
	7	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	8	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
	10	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	11	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	12	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	23	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	15	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	16	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
	17	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	18	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓
	19	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	20	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	21	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	22	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	23	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	24	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x	✓	✓	✓
	25	X	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	x
	26	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	27	✓	✓	x	✓	x	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	28	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	29	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	30	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Key :
A - The Cotton Story
B - The Immigration into Oldham
C - The Re-drawing of Oldham Boundaries
D - The Multiracial Community of Oldham
E - The Education Story of Oldham
F - The people of Oldham
G - Attractions of Oldham
H - The Townships around Oldham
I - The Riots in Oldham
J - The Regeneration of Oldham
K - Perceptions of the Oldham brand
L - The Oldham Logo
✓ Yes, Storyteller identified the story
x - No, Storyteller did not identify the story

Appendix 3

Introductory letter for the questionnaire

26 February 2012

Dear Respondent

My name is Ernest Kadembo and I am a senior lecturer at the University of Huddersfield and I am conducting a research on "The storytelling/narrative approach in the development of a town brand: An analytical study of Oldham" which goes towards my PhD. The study seeks to establish the stories that have shaped the Oldham brand as we know it today and the related changes in the stories over time.

I am requesting your indulgence in completing the attached questionnaire. I would appreciate it if you could please answer the questions as appropriately as possible.

Yours Sincerely

Ernest Kadembo

Appendix 4

The Questionnaire

**The Storytelling/Narrative approach in the development of the Oldham town brand
As part of the stated research you are requested to complete the following questions. It would be appreciated if you could complete this questionnaire in a thorough manner so that any views you have could be captured in this study.**

---

1. **Which statements would apply to you? (Please tick(√) as appropriate).**

   a. **My sex is male**   [   ] **My sex is female**   [   ]
   b. **I am Asian**   [   ] **I am White**   [   ]
   c. **I am Western European**   [   ] **I am African**   [   ]
   d. **I am Afro-Caribbean**   [   ] **I am eastern European**[   ]

   Other (please state)   _____

   2. My age is (Please tick as appropriate.)
   **Under 20 years   [   ]   21-30 yrs   [   ]   31-40 yrs   [   ]
        41-50yrs   [   ]   51 – 60yrs   [   ]   Over 60 yrs   [   ]**

    3. Which statements would apply to you? (Please tick(√)   as appropriate).

   a. **I was born in Oldham and have always lived there   [   ]**
   (If yes go to question 3.1, if no see 1 b. – 1 f.)
   I live in Oldham   [   ]
   b. **I came to Oldham before I was 10 years Old   [   ]**
   c. **I came to Oldham between 11 and 20 years of age   [   ]**
   d. **I came to Oldham between   21 and 30 years of age   [   ]**
   e. **I came to Oldham when I was 31 years or more   [   ]**

   3.1 Which statements would apply to you? (Please tick (√) as appropriate).
   My status is: **A student at College in Oldham   [   ]**
                                  A student at University in Oldham   [   ]
                                  A retired professional living in Oldham   [   ]
                       A housewife living in Oldham   [   ]
                                  A blue-collar worker working in Oldham [   ]
                                  Unemployed and living in Oldham   [   ]
                                  A professional working in Oldham   [   ]
                       Self employed living in Oldham   [   ]
                                  Retired living in Oldham   [   ]
                                  Businessman or businesswoman in Oldham[   ]
                                  A tourist visiting Oldham   [   ]
                                  Other _____
                                          _____
                                          _____
                                          _____

4. Please tick (√) if you agree with the statements below
   a. The stories that make Oldham a good place are:-

   The cotton spinning dominance of Oldham   [   ]
   The inventions in industry and manufacturing   [   ]
   The bravery to build the town on a hill   [   ]
   The multi-cultural nature of the town and borough   [   ]
   The Coliseum/Oldham Theatre performances   [   ]
   Great places for shopping   [   ]
   The success of Oldham Athletic Football Club in its good days   [   ]
   The great Tommyfield market   [   ]
   The road network of Oldham   [   ]
   The university campus in Oldham   [   ]
   The Oldham Sixth Form College   [   ]
   The art gallery in Oldham   [   ]
   The Oldham College   [   ]
   The beauty of Saddleworth   [   ]
   The historic buildings in Oldham   [   ]
   That the tram is coming to Oldham   [   ]
   Other (please state)_____

               _____
               _____
               _____
               _____
               _____

   b. Please tick (√) if you agree with the statements below
   The stories that give Oldham a bad name are:-

   Mills that remind a great past that cannot be revived.   [
   ]

   A cotton legacy that left many people in ill-health   [
   ]

   A ghost town without direction   [   ]
   A town where there were riots in 2001   [   ]
   A town where there is racism   [   ]
   The decline of the Oldham Athletic Football Club   [
   ]

   Crime in the town and the borough   [   ]
   That the tram is coming to Oldham   [   ]
   That Oldham Athletic FC went down from the superior league   [   ]
   The buildings in Oldham   [   ]
   Other   _____

                    _____
                    _____

5. Is Oldham a brand? (Please tick as appropriate)   Yes [   ]   No [   ]
If yes, go to Question 7 and if no, go to question 8.

6. **Oldham is a brand because (Please tick as appropriate)**
   a. **It has a good heritage**   [   ]
   b. **It stands out as a unique place**   [   ]
   c. **It has a diverse community**   [   ]
   d. **It has a clear identity**   [   ]
   e. **It has a story behind it**   [   ]
   f. **Other**   _____
                         _____

7. **Oldham is not a brand because (Please tick as appropriate)**
   a. **Nothing good is ever said about it**   [   ]
   b. **There is no consistency about Oldham**   [   ]
   c. **Ethnic diversity spoils its image**   [   ]
   d. **The council has not planned for it**   [   ]
   e. **The logo does not give it a good image**   [   ]
   f. **All that is good is history**   [   ]
   g. **Other**   _____
                         _____
                         _____
                         _____

8. **Please make any comments about Oldham as place and as a brand :-**

   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

9. **In case of follow-up please provide:-**

Name:_____ **Contact**
phone:_____
Address:

_____
_____
_____

Please return to Ernest Kadembo, Senior lecturer, University Campus Oldham, Cromwell, Oldham, OL1 1BB
You may email: ernest.kadembo@oldham.ac.uk

Thank you for your time and efforts.

Building brand image and ownership by using the AC2ID framework for the Oldham Borough Council

_____

Actual identity	The actual identity constitutes the current attributes of the corporation. It is shaped by a number of elements, including corporate ownership, the leadership style of management, organisational structure, business activities and markets covered, the range and quality of products and services offered, and overall business performance. Also encompassed is the set of values held by management and employees.

A townin transition whose identity is enmeshed in what was a flourishing textile spinning city that has a diverse ethnic population in the shadows of its more illustrious neighbour, the City of Manchester. |
| **Communicated identity** | The communicated identity is most clearly revealed through "controllable" corporate communications. This typically encompasses advertising sponsorship, and public relations. In addition, it derives from "non-controllable" communication, e.g. word-of-mouth, media commentary and the like.

A borough suffering from the scars of racial hatred that has refocused its efforts towards a new era of high aspirations and massive renewal of its neighbourhood and old mills and become more attractive for business and residence. |
| **Conceived identity** | The conceived identity refers to perceptual concepts – corporate image, corporate reputation, and corporate branding. These are the perceptions of the company – its multi-attribute and overall corporate image and reputation – held by relevant stakeholders. Management must make a judgement as to which groups' perceptions are most important.

Oldham shall integrate its diverse ethnic community and become a vibrant city for living, tourism and business. Oldham is primarily concerned with its communities whose confrontations created a new momentum for changing the borough's economic and social standing in years to come. |
| **Ideal identity** | The ideal identity is the optimum positioning of the organization in its market (or markets) in a given time frame. This is normally based on current knowledge from the strategic planners and others about the organization's capabilities and prospects in the context of general business and competitive environment. The specifics of a given entity's ideal identity are subject to fluctuation based on external factors – e.g. the nuclear power industry after Chernobyl; and industries (such as travel, transport equipment, and security systems) |

affected negatively and positively by the 11 September World Trade Centre catastrophe.

Oldham shall be a place of opportunities, social harmony and economic prosperity by the year 2020 attracting new business and offering a good workforce.

Desired identity

The desired identity lives in the hearts and minds of corporate leaders. It is their vision for the organization. Although this identity type is often misguidedly assumed to be virtually identical to the ideal identity, they typically come from different sources. Whereas the ideal identity normally emerges after a period of research and analysis, the desired identity may have more to do with a vision informed by a CEO's personality and ego than with a rational assessment of the organisations actual identity in a particular timeframe.

The community of Oldham should work together and allow for people to cooperate in issues of common interest and still make contribution to the common interest in their diverse background in ethnicity and culture.

_____
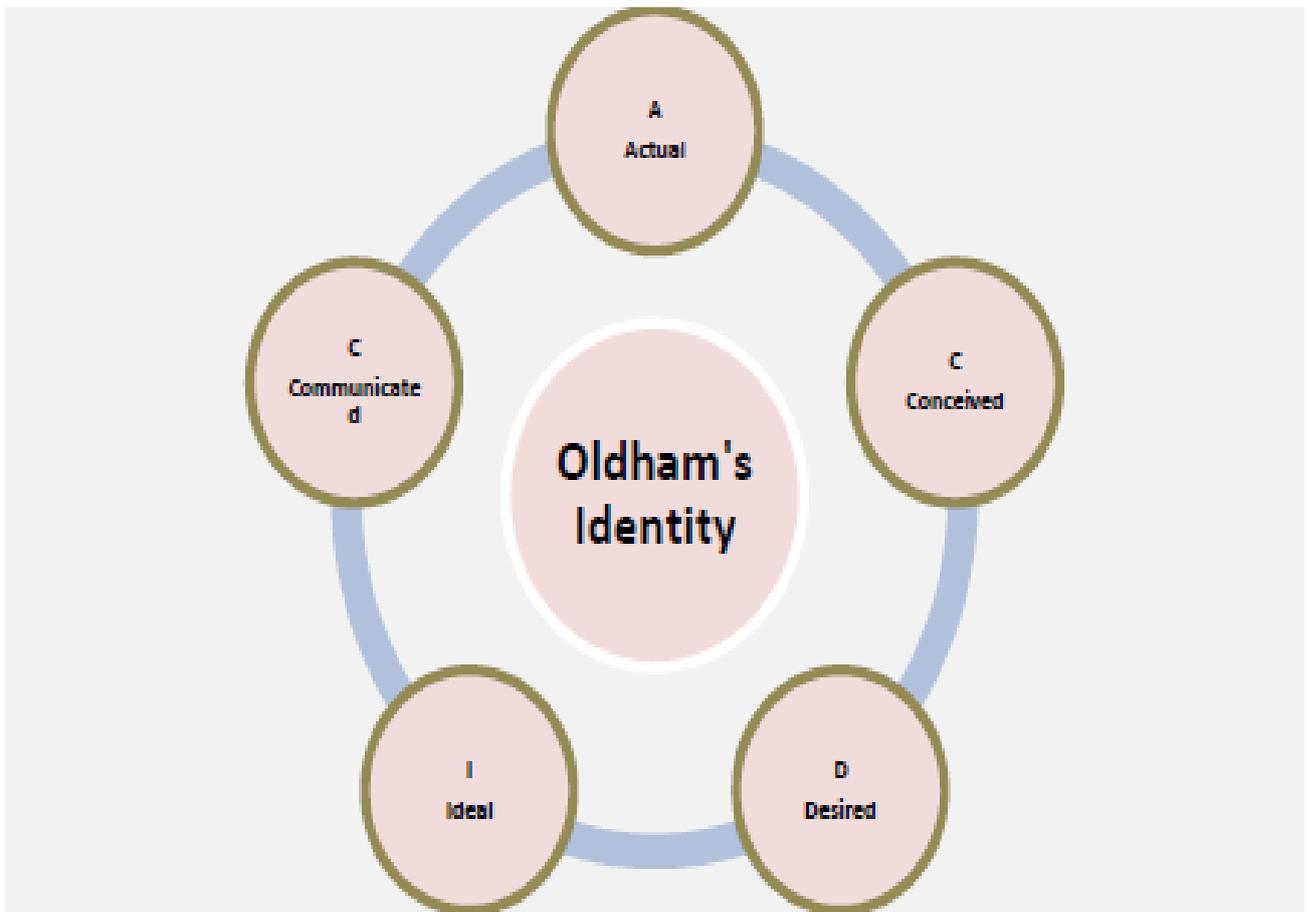
Adapted from Balmer and Greyser (2002)

Appendix 6

An extract of the code of conduct from Marketing Research Society
Source : http://www.mrs.org.uk/standards/codeconduct.htm , accessed 11.10.09

THE PURPOSE OF THE 'CODE OF CONDUCT'

This edition of the Code of Conduct was agreed by the Market Research Society to be operative from July 1999. It is a fully revised version of a self-regulatory code which has been in existence since 1954. This Code is based upon and fully compatible with the ICC/ESOMAR International Code of Marketing and Social Research Practice. The Code of Conduct is designed to support all those engaged in marketing or social research in maintaining professional standards. It applies to all members of The Market Research Society, whether they are engaged in consumer, business to business, social, opinion or any other type of confidential survey research. It applies to all quantitative and qualitative methods for data gathering. Assurance that research is conducted in an ethical manner is needed to create confidence in, and to encourage co-operation among the business community, the general public, regulators and others.

The Code of Conduct does not take precedence over national law. Members responsible for international research shall take its provisions as a minimum requirement and fulfil any other responsibilities set down in law or by nationally agreed standards.

RELATIONSHIP WITH DATA PROTECTION LEGISLATION

Adherence to the Code of Conduct and the database Guidelines will help to ensure that research is conducted in accordance with the principles of data protection legislation. In the UK this is encompassed by the Data Protection Act 1998.

Data Protection Definitions

Personal Data means data which relates to a living individual who can be identified
- from the data, or
- from the data and other information in the possession of, or likely to come into the possession of, the data controller and includes any expression of opinion about the individual and any indication of the intentions of the data controller or any other person in respect of the individual.

Processing means obtaining, recording or holding the information or data or carrying out any operation or set of operations on the information or data, including
- organisation, adaptation or alteration
- retrieval, consultation or use
- disclosure by transmission, dissemination or otherwise making available
- alignment, combination, blocking, erasure or destruction.

It is a requirement of membership that researchers must ensure that their conduct follows the letter and spirit of the principles of Data Protection legislation from the Act. In the UK the eight data protection principles are:

The First Principle

Personal data shall be processed fairly and lawfully.[1]

The Second Principle

Personal data shall be obtained only for one or more specified and lawful purposes, and shall not be further processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose or those purposes.

The Third Principle

Personal data shall be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purpose or purposes for which they are processed.

The Fourth Principle

Personal data shall be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date.The Fifth Principle Personal data processed for any purpose or purposes shall not be kept longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes.

The Sixth Principle

Personal data shall be processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects under this Act.

The Seventh Principle

Appropriate technical and organisational measures shall be taken against unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data and against accidental loss or destruction of, or damage to, personal data.

The Eighth Principle

Personal data shall not be transferred to a country or territory outside the European Economic Area, unless that country or territory ensures an adequate level of protection for the rights and freedoms of data subjects in relation to the processing of personal data.

Exemption for Research Purposes

Where personal data processed for research, statistical or historical purposes are not processed to support decisions affecting particular individuals or in such a way as likely to cause substantial damage or distress to any data subject such processing will not breach the Second Principle and the data may be retained indefinitely despite the Fifth Principle.

As long as the results of the research are not published in a form, which identifies any data subject, there is no right of subject access to the data.

Code Definitions

Research   Research is the collection and analysis of data from a sample of individuals or organisations relating to their characteristics, behaviour, attitudes, opinions or possessions. It includes all forms of marketing and social research such as consumer and industrial surveys, psychological investigations, observational and panel studies.

Respondent   A respondent is any individual or organisation from whom any information is sought by the researcher for the purpose of a marketing or social research project. The term

covers cases where information is to be obtained by verbal interviewing techniques, postal and other self-completion questionnaires, mechanical or electronic equipment, observation and any other method where the identity of the provider of the information may be recorded or otherwise traceable. This includes those approached for research purposes whether or not substantive information is obtained from them and includes those who decline to participate or withdraw at any stage from the research.

Interview An interview is any form of contact intended to provide information from a respondent.

Identity The identity of a respondent includes, as well as his/her name and/or address, any other information which offers a reasonable chance that he/she can be identified by any of the recipients of the information.

Children For the purpose of the Code, children and young people are defined as those aged under 18. The intention of the provisions regarding age is to protect potentially vulnerable members of society, whatever the source of their vulnerability, and to strengthen the principle of public trust. Consent of a parent or responsible adult should be obtained for interviews with children under 16.

Consent must be obtained under the following circumstances:
- In home/ at home (face-to-face and telephone interviewing)
- Group discussions/ depth interviews
- Where interviewer and child are alone together.

Interviews being conducted in public places, such as in-street/ in-store/ central locations, with 14 and 15 year olds may take place without consent if a parent or responsible adult is not accompanying the child. In these situations an explanatory thank you note must be given to the child.

Under special circumstances, a survey may waive parental consent but only with the prior approval of the Professional Standards Committee.

Records The term records includes anything containing information relating to a research project and covers all data collection and data processing documents, audio and visual recordings. Primary records are the most comprehensive record of information on which a project is based; they include not only the original data records themselves, but also anything needed to evaluate those records, such as quality control documents. Secondary records are any other records about the Respondent.

Client Client includes any individual, organisation, department or division, including any belonging to the same organisation as the research agency which is responsible for commissioning a research project.

Agency Agency includes any individual, organisation, department or division, including any belonging to the same organisation as the client which is responsible for, or acts as, a supplier on all or part of a research project.

Professional body Professional body refers to The Market Research Society.

Public place A 'public place' is one to which the public has access (where admission has been gained with or without a charge) and where an individual could reasonably expect to be observed and/or overheard by other people, for example in a shop, in the street or in a place of entertainment.

Principles

Research is founded upon the willing co-operation of the public and of business organisations. It depends upon their confidence that it is conducted honestly, objectively, without unwelcome intrusion and without harm to respondents. Its purpose is to collect and analyse information, and not directly to create sales nor to influence the opinions of anyone participating in it. It is in this spirit that the Code of Conduct has been devised.

The general public and other interested parties shall be entitled to complete assurance that every research project is carried out strictly in accordance with this Code, and that their rights of privacy are respected. In particular, they must be assured that no information which could be used to identify them will be made available without their agreement to anyone outside the agency responsible for conducting the research. They must also be assured that the information they supply will not be used for any purposes other than research and that they will not be adversely affected or embarrassed as a direct result of their participation in a research project.

Wherever possible respondents must be informed as to the purpose of the research and the likely length of time necessary for the collection of the information.

Finally, the research findings themselves must always be reported accurately and never used to mislead anyone, in any way.

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Manchester in its Regional context

Source: Casino Hire UK, http://www.casinohireuk.com/casino-hire-manchester/, accessed, 4/08/2013.

Faces of Oldham

Terraced Houses in Glodwick

Halsall (2005)

New Housing stock in Glodwick

Halsall (2005)

Royal Oldham Hospital

Kadembo (2013)

Royal Oldham Hospital

Kadembo (2013)

The Christie at Oldham

Kadembo (2013)

The Oldham College

Kadembo (2013)

Faces of Oldham

The Oldham College   The Civic Centre Building Overlooking the
town

Kadembo (2013)   Kadembo (2013)

The Tommyfield Market   The Oldham Bus Station

Kadembo (2013)   Kadembo (2013)

The Oldham Bus Station   The Town Hall

Kadembo (2013)   Source: Oldham Council website

Appendix 9
British Geological Survey Map of Oldham 2001

Source: Oldham (2001) Oldham's Community Strategy: 2002 – 2022.

Appendix 10

Storytelling and Branding

Barker, B. and Boyle, C. (2009: p. 81)

Appendix 11

Key Statements on the Oldham Stories by Storytellers

R3   Cotton spinning did very well during the days of the industrial revolution …and went into terminal decline after World War 2…riots coincided with a disappearing industry. Oldham is a failed manufacturing town with no plan, no vision, no brand.

R4   In Oldham, there are very few things that make it exciting for entertainment and pre-occupation

R5   Oldham had a tarnished image (riots) and racist views (Asian town) experiencing decline of industry and employment.

R6   Riots were largely caused by a system that blocked opportunities for Asians and blacks from key positions and to re-brand Oldham needs a paradigm shift in the mind set off the people of Oldham.

R8   Oldham is a diverse segregated, low economy town with people coming from different backgrounds in respect of race, ethnicity, age, education etc, and this is observable even in residential areas where people do not mix. Top jobs in Oldham belong to non-Oldhamers as sign that local people lack ambition and inspiration.

R9   The Oldham Council is without a plan which reflects in the leadership of the borough and the town.

R10   The story is one about success without education as politicians "give people education", who in turn leave the town and the borough. Oldham has a sense of communities, ie one team many players.

R11   Oldham belittles itself, looks at the town with suspicion of anything new. People have no ambition and their attitude is backward. Racism is exacerbated by Oldham's identification of itself- an awareness of others and their unique difference. Many people want Oldham to be a brand but it is not as it lacks a marketing concept. Where

necessary to develop a brand would require the capturing of the true essence of the place as experienced by stakeholders.

R12   I am scared that Oldham is becoming a ghost town and many organisations are becoming less noticeable. The town is insular with no industry. Oldham is beautiful if you look hard enough.

R13   Before 1950 Oldham had no race mix and does not compare to today. Now there are enclaves of Bangladeshi and Pakistani communities. With the infrastructure improving success will be guaranteed following the respective developments and proximity of the M60 motorway to Oldham, the metro link meant to much of Greater Manchester and put Oldham within 25 minutes of Manchester Airport and within 2 hours 6 minutes of London.

R16   As Asians settled in certain areas of Oldham whites excluded themselves from integrating as they deserted   respective areas a system referred to as "white fright".

R17   Oldham can be described as a place on a hill that is windy and cold. The Asian community is symptomatic of a retrogressive community.

R18   What defines Oldham is that it is a town on a hill and every road is in a valley.

R20   There is nothing for young people to do together in Oldham. People who reside in Saddleworth want to get away from Oldham.

R21   Oldham signifies more of the past because its heritage is more than a nostalgic look to the past.

R22   Oldham's problems are not unique. What is unique about Oldham is its industrial history which has shaped its present state. The Asian community could be easier to integrate.

R23   Oldham town was doing very well until up to about 18 months ago when big names like Woolworth, Principles, Mother Care, Ethel Austin, etc pulled out and this meant Oldham has taken a backward step.

R24   Oldham used to be a safe place but now with prostitution and drugs on the rise it is bad for the town.

R26   Oldham is a place trying to reinvent itself, but some people are stuck in the past. Oldham wants to look different from the facts. Oldham is a town with a technical inclination and is a hardworking town.

R27   The centre of Oldham town is trying to redeem itself but there are too many dirty buildings.

R28   Oldham town is totally different from what it used to be when I was a child. The community aspect of life is dead and there is little interaction. There has been a significant cultural transformation.

R29   For most people the decision to call a borough the name of the principal town was wrong as the other townships lost their autonomy.

R30   There are many families in Oldham but there is very little to do for children and the youth.

Appendix 12

Statements by Questionnaire Respondents

QR1   A lack of leadership over the years has meant Oldham has not been able to positively identify itself beyond its geographic boundaries. A brand needs to carry with it its core values and identities that can be extended across a range of channels beyond such boundaries. I would struggle to find or think of such values and apply them to Oldham and see little visible evidence that there is a concerted effort to do so by key decision makers in the borough. However, the arrival of the Metrolink may provide the impetus for a concerted effort to develop the borough and the centre, and in the process build upon the opportunities this event will present. Oldham must establish itself as distinct from other parts of Manchester and as a destination itself – rather than a convenient means of leaving the town.

QR 2   It is good that Oldham is near to Manchester, Aston and Rochdale. The tram will soon be opened. The bad point is that there are no new jobs in Oldham.

QR3   Oldham is not visible enough to be classed as a brand

QR4   The University is a brilliant idea.

QR5   Lacks investment and image

QR6   Oldham is convenient and has good market, the view is beautiful as it is mountainous, you can see Manchester down at night. But the people are racist. They don't integrate; even if you greet them they look at you so badly as if you are a criminal. I cannot say it all, but most of them. In every society there are also good people.

QR9   It was good after World War 2 but no more.

QR10   Council needs to do more for the diverse community

QR11   Ethnic segregation, that is White and Asian districts

QR18 Will be good when tram starts running properly. However, town needs proper investment, it is not just about pound shops and prawn payday loan shops.

QR20 Beautiful historic buildings left to decay, poor use of tax payers' money on wasteful projects, eg., metrolink, no actual investment in the town to encourage visitors, rent/rates/taxes too high for business, shops and shoppers, decline of Tommyfield Market. There is no entertainment complex in Oldham.

QR21 I find Oldham an inward looking, insular town. It always feels disjointed and out of step. There are some beautiful and interesting places in and around the town. Noone seems proud of them. It has no clear brand.

QR22 Oldham declined a lot in the last 10 or so years due to the planning and eventual arrival of the metrolink. The shopping centre that once had a wide variety of shops is half closed and the shops that remain are low end and all similar to each other. Also, many of the old historical buildings have been neglected and are now derelict, giving Oldham a very tired and dilapidated look.

QR23 Oldham seems a nice place to work in, given its general facilities and intermixing of communities. However, one cannot help but notice the economic decline and lack of opportunities for the town's people. Oldham reminds one of the lower socio-economic indicators associated with some of our towns and cities.

QR32 The higher education initiative has peaked. It may revive by offering lower fees.

QR34 The University Campus Oldham and the tram are perhaps the good news Oldham has had a while. As a business owner in Oldham, I hope the tram system brings about the traffic of people that will SME's to provide the necessary employment. It is reasonably affordable to live in Oldham but the lack of job opportunities may lead to skills developed through our education system to live somewhere else after they qualify.

QR36 Oldham, despite being a nice place to live and study in, is not seen in good light by others. It has an industrial image of having estates and crime.

QR37 Oldham is a place with a diverse ethnic population and the ethnic diversity makes it stand out as a brand.

QR39 As a brand it has no consistency. As of now it is in decline and needs rejuvenation within its economy to survive.

QR40 Not from this area, just work in Oldham. The town seems to have a bad reputation.

QR42 Oldham is a nice place to live in and it is a multicultural community; however, there are some people who spoil it and have given Oldham a bad name as a racist place like the case of riots.

QR51 Need a proper university in Oldham, they have more choices of course.

QR52 I am not from Oldham neither do I ever want to live in Oldham in future. I really can't wait to finish my course and never come to Oldham ever again.

QR53 It is a good place. However, what the government does here is not great.

QR54 OMBC and councillors need to start listening to the people rather than telling them what is going to happen; like it or lump it!

QR56 Oldham is so much Asian, some other ethnic or other races feel so much inundated, it seems difficult to live here.

QR57 Despite all the negativity about Oldham I think the tram coming to the town benefits this place.

QR59 The football team in the town, Oldham Athletic used to play in the top league but has since gone down.

QR66 I think Oldham could be a brand with a poor image.

QR68 A lot of money being promised, but where is the money coming from?

QR70 Although I ticked the "Yes" on whether or not Oldham is a brand, I think some of the reasons for "No" needed ticking like; e) the logo does not give it a good image and f) All that is good is history. Years gone by the "brand" would have been wonderful and don't it would have had a negative; sadly over the years Oldham has been on the decline; but it is not yet dead and buried.

QR79 A northern English town which has had its better days. Needs something positive to drum about.

Appendix 13

Extracts from the Hemisphere Marketing Design Consultancy

Facts about Oldham's potential

- Sense of potential   -   There is so much that could be done but fear is
                                                        holding Oldham back.

- Opportunity of the youth   -   Oldham has the highest proportion of youth in
                                                        Greater Manchester.

- Diversity of environment -   Oldham presents a variegated range of factors in
                                                        respect of the landscape, ethnicity and that
                                                        provides balance to life.

- Accessibility and location -   Oldham is within easy access of major
                                                        motorways and easy to link to places within
                                                        Greater Manchester and sits on the edge of
                                                        Yorkshire.

- Hardworking and resilient -   People of Oldham are seen as hardworking and
                                                        can get on well with each other.

- Practical and down to earth -   The heritage of Oldham as a former global
                                                        cotton spinning capital testifies to the Oldham
                                                        spirit which is being observed with the scientific
                                                        projects of the Oldham Sixth Form College
                                                        which suggests a potential for a scientific centre.

A Summary of Factors Working against Oldham's progress

- Lack of Vision for the future -   Despite putting together *Oldham Beyond* as a
                                                        blueprint for the borough's future there is no
                                                        conviction on the vision as this might not have

been well communicated.

- Low aspirations and self belief-   There is a general pessimistic feeling in Oldham with little expectation about itself.

- Insular and backward looking –   Oldhamers hold onto the good of the past and fail to realise that the future awaits efforts to make it better. This is largely because there is very little that has occurred in the recent past about the town and the borough that people of Oldham could hold onto.

- Fractured community   -   The lack of cohesion across the borough touches on issues related to ethnicity, haves and have-nots and generational differences among others. But, education is helping to shift the paradigm. Some people would avoid the name Oldham and would prefer a name change but there are some who would hold on as part of the heritage. The report notes that the majority of respondents were not happy with Oldham's progress as a town and a borough. The different townships do not feel part of a big thing.

- Political divisions   -   There is too much division across different political persuasions which are retrogressive to the good of the borough and political parties would not take risks in the town as that would put them at a disadvantage. There is

disagreement on what how the town and borough could be projected.

- Architecture — Many good Victorian buildings have been neglected and the built environment of Oldham is largely mediocre. The only buildings worth noting are the old mills.

- Mills — Mills were acknowledged as a symbol of the good past but would be better utilised if a modern day use could be found as a way of reigniting the historical importance of mills.

- Access routes — The access routes into Oldham do not portray a good picture and adversely impact on the image of the place.

- Oldham town centre — The town centre seems hidden from the main means of transport, ie, the railway and the main roads all skate the town centre and the tram would do a lot of good to the town if it would pass through the heart of Oldham.

Ernest M. Kadembo: Selected Publications on Marketing, Positioning and Storytelling for Branding

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1. Marketing Initiatives in Zimbabwe: How the Economic Adjustment Programme has Transformed Marketing Practices in Zimbabwe; 2001 Proceedings p 197, International Academy of African Business Development, 2001, Washington DC.

2. Entrepreneurial Development in Zimbabwe; 2001 Proceedings p.176, International Academy of African Business Development, 2001, Washington DC.

3. Mission Statements: An Evaluation of Selected Colleges and Universities in the United Kingdom and Africa, 2004 Proceedings International Academy of African Business Development, 2004, Atlanta.

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5. Kadembo, E. M. (2004) 'Regional economic integration: challenges for Africa'. _World Review of Science, Technology and Sustainable Development._ 2(¾), pp. 290 – 301.

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10. Kadembo, E.M. (2009) 'The process of regenerating, repositioning and re-branding Oldham: challenges and prospects for the future', _World Review of Entrepreneurship, Management and Sust. Development._ 5(1), pp. 56–71.

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12. Kadembo, E.M. et al., (2010) 'The branding consultant's recommendation for

the re-branding of Oldham town: weighing in on the conceptual fit'. *The Marketing Review*. 10(4), pp. 319-331.

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Appendix 15

Overview of the StoryBranding Process for Oldham

- Storytelling and other right-brain skills are becoming more important as technology takes over many of our left-brain skills.

- StoryrBranding is not about how to convert advertising into stories. Rather, StoryBranding uses the way stories are and have always been constructed and applies it to the brand communications process.

- StoryBranding provides a new (but old) way to organise and simplify our thinking and to gain a better perspective on what we are really trying to accomplish across all stages of a brand's life cycle.

- Like story structure, a brand can be seen as dealing with obstacles to achieve a relationship with its prospect.

- The StoryBranding model consists of two character cells separated by an obstacle.

- The cells are composed of outer layers or behaviours we can see, and inner layers or values that aren't readily discernible but explain the outer-layer behaviours.

- To connect or attach the cells to each other, we must remove the obstacles. And then, we must make it certain that each cell's chemistry matches the chemistry of the other.

- Matching occurs when there is a logical consistency between the outer layers and the inner layers of both cells.

The Oldham story utilizes the world wide web and captures the history of the place, reconciles the internal and external challenges in projecting Oldham as an appealing brand through its story.

Source: Adapted from Signrelli (2013: p. 34)

Appendix 16

Synthesized model of corporate branding and brand-building behaviuor
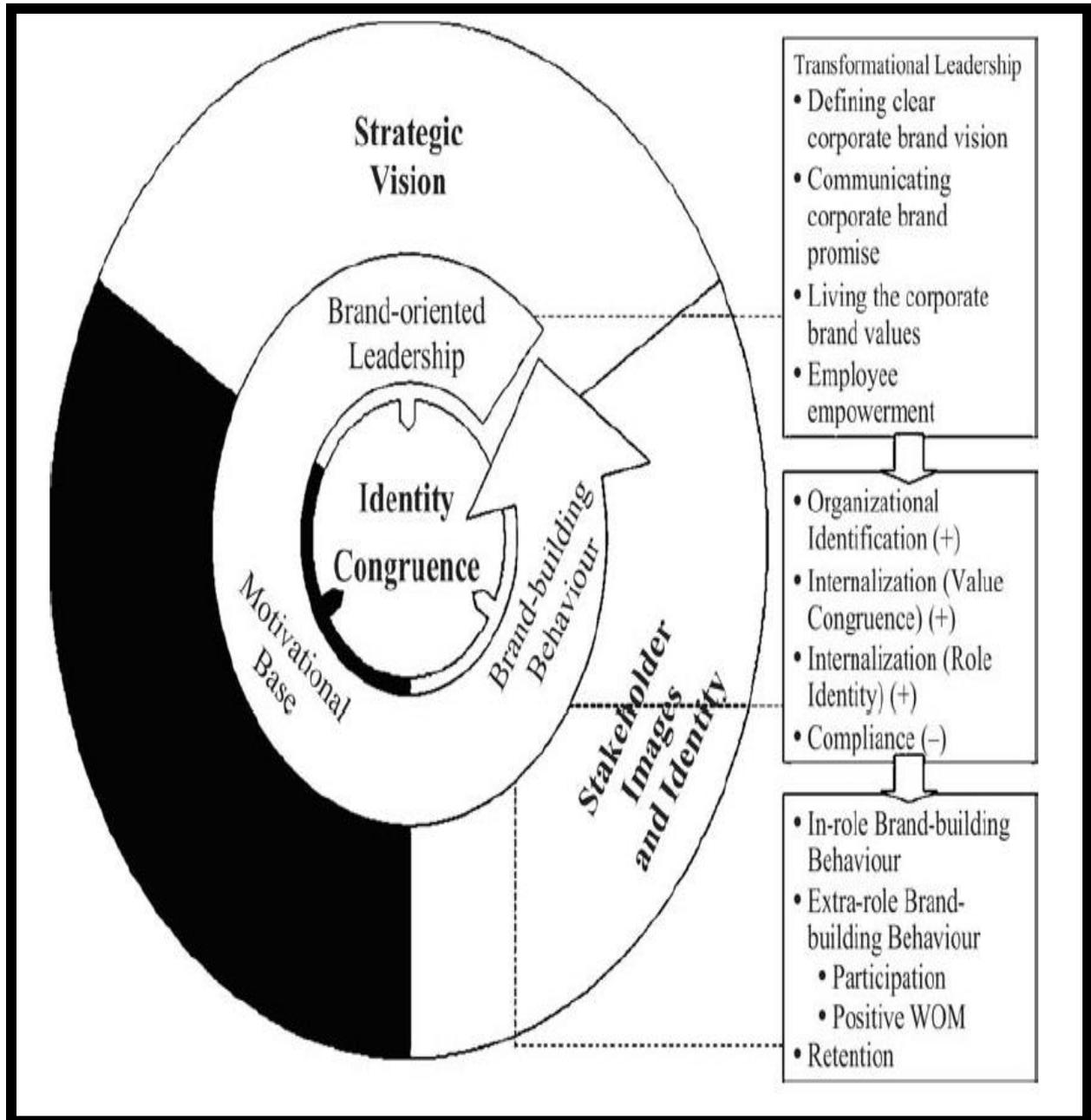
Source: Kaufman et al (2012: p. 195)