
The process of regenerating, repositioning and re-branding Oldham: challenges and prospects for the future

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Abstract: This paper profiles how the Oldham borough has been repositioned since the events of 2001 when the city projected itself as a disaster area embroiled in social turmoil, economic and infrastructural degradation. To this day the core activity has shifted from the textile mills to services. The mills have mostly been converted into business offices. In the main, the paper concludes that with the right planning and sustained effort a place or a destination can be as good a brand as a successful product. The prospects for Oldham's future look bright and this has been made possible by the cooperation of the various stakeholders and a strategic vision epitomised in the strategic document codenamed 'Oldham Beyond'. While acknowledging the phenomenal transition of Oldham the paper points out that successful branding is hard work, sustained investment and requires a strategic approach. Furthermore if Oldham continues on its current path of development there is a bright future ahead which could attract more investment and thereby more development.

Keywords: branding; re-positioning; regeneration and place.

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1 Introduction

In 2001, the Oldham borough made headlines for ugly scenes that saw the borough lit up in a ball of fire reminiscent of a war zone. The calamity of a place tearing itself apart in the face of social exclusion created negative perceptions the world over. These scenes were beamed across the globe as headline news. The source of the crisis has its roots in

the collapse of the once vibrant textiles industry which in turn created a mass of redundancies across the borough and economic stagnation. The frustrations and feelings of social exclusion culminated in race hatred and the subsequent racial warfare. These developments practically tore to pieces both the image and the infrastructure of the borough. The borough of Oldham lost its appeal and created negative perceptions across the country and the world at large. Chernatony and McDonald (2003) point out that an area or a location can be a brand, certainly the Oldham brand lost its appeal because of the events of 2001. Subsequent years saw sustained efforts to recover from the damaging events of 2001. To this day the Oldham borough is a new place, having undergone fundamental transition. The place is still shaping up for a better brand and a preferred destination but it's no longer a place people will avoid or despise. The people of Oldham have shifted in their aspirations.

In a study on corporate communications on the city of Bradford in Yorkshire, Trueman et al. (2004) point out those poor perceptions of a city can devalue its image and have far reaching consequences for its future development. Trueman et al (2004) go further to argue that these negative associations could reduce the likelihood of inward investment, undermine business community activities and can adversely affect the number of visitors to the city and this could lead to exacerbating urban decline, while an improved 'brand' perception, reinforced by visual evidence of improvements within the city, can reverse the downward trend and sow the seeds for urban renewal. This was true of the state of the Oldham borough in the aftermath of the riots of 2001.

A number of processes took place to recreate a new place with a new appeal, a new brand has been created and much of the renewal has been driven by the regeneration programme that has impacted on both the social integration and physical infrastructure of Oldham.

In the re-branding and re-positioning of Oldham it is important to take into cognisance the fact 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 many localities, this also includes the agglomeration of creative and cultural industries and particularly the development of 'quarters' (Bell and Jayne, 2003). To this end the Oldham city centre has seen massive investments and increased economic and social activities which have given a new life to a city which was degenerating into a ghost city.

This paper firstly confirms the notion of places being brands just like goods and services. In the same vein the pattern of renewing places is a cornerstone for repositioning and re-branding places that have suffered exclusion and social degradation but that calls for a strategic and sustained effort by the community and other stakeholders. The paper demonstrates that the process is strategic in nature and is driven by a marketing ethos. A city is not just a local brand but a national and international brand whose value is in the suitability for a home for ordinary people, a tourist destination with potential to generate income and above all a good or ideal base for business. Indeed the literature has been enriched in that it has been concluded that a place such as a 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. It is also evident in this study that a crisis is not necessarily a

bad thing for development. The major wars have seen countries like Japan emerge from the ashes as global economic giants, hence effective regeneration or renewal can turn misery into boom.

2 The study objective

This study seeks to determine the extent to which a place or a city can be projected as a brand. The study will also determine the factors that influence the image of the city as a brand. The study will seek to meet the following specific objectives:

- conduct comprehensive literature review on the branding and re-branding processes for cities
- present the image of Oldham before and after regeneration
- assess the reasons for success or failure in the branding of Oldham
- analyse the benefits if any to Oldham resulting from the re-branding process
- evaluate how the re-branding of Oldham fits in with theory as investigated in the literature review
- comment on how the future will unfold after the regeneration process.

3 Background to Oldham

The Visit Oldham site (<http://www.visitoldham.co.uk/heritage/history.htm>, accessed 15.11.2006) profiles Oldham's history which dates back to the 11th century. Oldham flourished during the industrial revolution. Cotton spinning laid the foundations for the town's prosperity. By the end of the 19th century Oldham established itself as the greatest cotton spinning town in the world.

The success of the city was attributed to the determination, perseverance and ingenuity of Oldham's people. Increased demand for cotton on the world market meant that Oldham's share of spindleage would increase. By 1890 it had reached 11.4 million out of 87.7 million, which amounted to 13% of the world's total production.

The phenomenal developments in the boom years of Oldham have been described as follows:

“With this increase in market share came an increase in the size and number of Oldham's mills—from 50,000 spindles in 1870, to 90,000 by 1890 and no fewer than 17.8 million at the industry's peak in 1926—30% of the total for the whole of Lancashire. The number of mills rose to a peak of 320 in 1918. Industrial performance depended on the performance of textile spinning on the world stage.” (<http://www.visitoldham.co.uk/heritage/history.htm>, accessed 15 November 2006).

In 1999 Oldham attained 150 years of municipal status and democratic heritage. There was no slightest imagination that the Oldham borough would at some point be rescued from economic and social degradation. The recent developments in Oldham demonstrate the challenges for sustaining a good city brand. It is important that a city like any brand should renew itself in the face of the social and economic dynamics. It would appear the

borough suffered from myopia in the face of the dying textiles industry. This situation resulted in an impoverished and frustrated society; a tattered infrastructure; race hate and intolerance all factors which point at an undesirable social and economic environment.

4 Re-positioning and regenerating in changing perceptions and images

The social and economic ills that the Oldham borough had to endure in times of social and economic degradation culminating in the infamous riots had to be confronted and overturned so that the borough could renew and incarnate its soul for development to take root. That situation necessitated that the perception of Oldham as a place to live in, work in or visit needed to change. 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 it as a preferred brand, home or destination. Regeneration largely dealt with the physical infrastructure while re-positioning was focused on the perceptions of the stakeholders. A number of structural developments have taken place and social cohesion has been driven under the 'Oldham Together' programme which is well documented in the 2006 Cattle report focusing on social cohesion.

Ries and Trout (1986) in Kalafatis et al. (2000) state that, 'positioning starts with a product. A piece of merchandise, a service, a company, an institution, or even a person, positioning shifts the emphasis of marketing from the product to the battle for your mind'. It is important to note that this view suggests that in the main positioning is about the meaning or symbolism people will attach to something. In the mind is the space for categorising products and services relative to competing entities or items. In this regard the Oldham borough enjoyed superior positioning during the heydays of cotton spinning but this shifted with the death of the textile business in Oldham.

Groucutt (2006, p.104) defines re-positioning in two integrated ways as follows: First, the physical re-positioning of the brand into current and future potential competitors. Indeed, by physically re-positioning the brand contact will be made with the competitors. Secondly, the repositioning of the brand in the mind of the consumer. It is the consumer that has to be persuaded that the brand is right for them.

While the view taken by Groucutt is inclined towards commercial activities, the principle of re-positioning is equally applicable to the re-positioning of a place. 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.

Danson (1999, p.559) suggests that regeneration 'may be defined more specifically as the process of reversing economic, social and physical decline in towns and cities where market forces alone are inadequate to address such issues. It is therefore important to consider both the relevant symptoms and causes of such decline. While local circumstances are important, structural factors linked to broader socio-economic change also contribute to urban decline, and the result is often an increasing incidence of poverty and multiple disadvantage at the local level.'

Pacione (1997) in Danson (1999, p.559) points out that 'social symptoms of this process include crime, racial conflict and social exclusion, and economic symptoms

include de-industrialisation, manufacturing decline, increasing unemployment and welfare dependency, and decay of infrastructure.'

Danson (1999, p.565) in concluding the debates and surveys says that 'urban regeneration policy needs to be applied at a variety of scales, and there is an increasing recognition that it needs to be integrated, comprehensive and strategic in orientation.'

According to McGreal et al. (2004, p.162) 'the success of urban renewal strategies is inextricably linked to the performance and operation of real estate markets. Regeneration arises where real estate markets are fragile, the private sector is cautious about investing and the level of economic activity is in a state of decline.'

From the different arguments put forward about the essence of regeneration and re-positioning it is clear that the two concepts are closely related. While regeneration is mainly about uplifting the infrastructure and quality of life for a place it is very clear that such a process will shape perceptions about the place or product relative to other places or products. This is the core of re-positioning that is, creating a relative view vis-à-vis competition. Regeneration and re-positioning are at the heart of the rebranding of the Oldham borough in its quest for the renewal after years of economic and social degradation and the subsequent riots of 2001.

5 The concept of branding and re-branding

Branding is commonly associated with goods and services but not obvious with places. A place or a city is a brand, it has symbols and connotations that it represents or projects. In that respect a city can be a preferred brand or an unfavourable brand. As a brand a city attracts investment, labour of a certain type, infrastructure, tourism etc, just like a good product brand will be attractive and generate more sales.

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'. Branding gives personality to a service, product or place. The positioning of a service, product, person or place are enhanced or weakened because of their standing in the eyes of the stakeholder. The main issue in the process of branding is perception given that ultimately what counts is the way stakeholders view the phenomenon which transforms into positive or negative attitudes towards the item.

Knox (2004, p.106) says 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'.

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 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.

- Third, places are multi-functional. The same place can offer historical buildings, shopping facilities, sports facilities and entertainment venues.

In view of the aforesaid it is clear that in the case of Oldham one would be looking at a place with textile mills and pubs shifting to a commercial and service city. Chernatony and McDonald (2003) and Hankinson (2005) seem to share a common view that the branding of a place is a reflection of its attributes, that is social and business activities, natural resources and above all the efforts that go into shaping up that brand. A brand is not necessarily what the city or destination marketers say but the image or connotations that the marketers state or document but the perceptions created in the minds of the various stakeholders.

Bennett and Koudelova (2001) maintain that the aim normally is to develop an image of the locality as a quality destination for both leisure and business activities, and ideally, this image will convey the intrinsic attributes and quintessential character of the core identity of the region; but a dilemma may arise here, as many of the districts for most of UK and US downtowns contain populations which are extremely diverse in terms of ethnicity, country of origin, social class, culture, traditions, lifestyle, income level, and type of employment. This further suggests that the process of branding a city or a destination is complicated because of the diversity of the variables that underpin the branding as well as the multitudes of people of diverse backgrounds who reside in the cities. In that regard there are a number of key variables as identified by Hankinson (2005); referred to as eight clusters of brand image attributes: physical environment, economic activity, business tourism facilities, accessibility, social facilities, strength of reputation, people characteristics and destination size as influencing the branding of a city or a destination. These factors add depth to arguments by a number of experts Chernatony and McDonald (2003); Bennett and Koudelova (2001); Berry (2000) etc. who have pointed out that a city's brand is shaped up by a multitude of variables relating to the city's attributes.

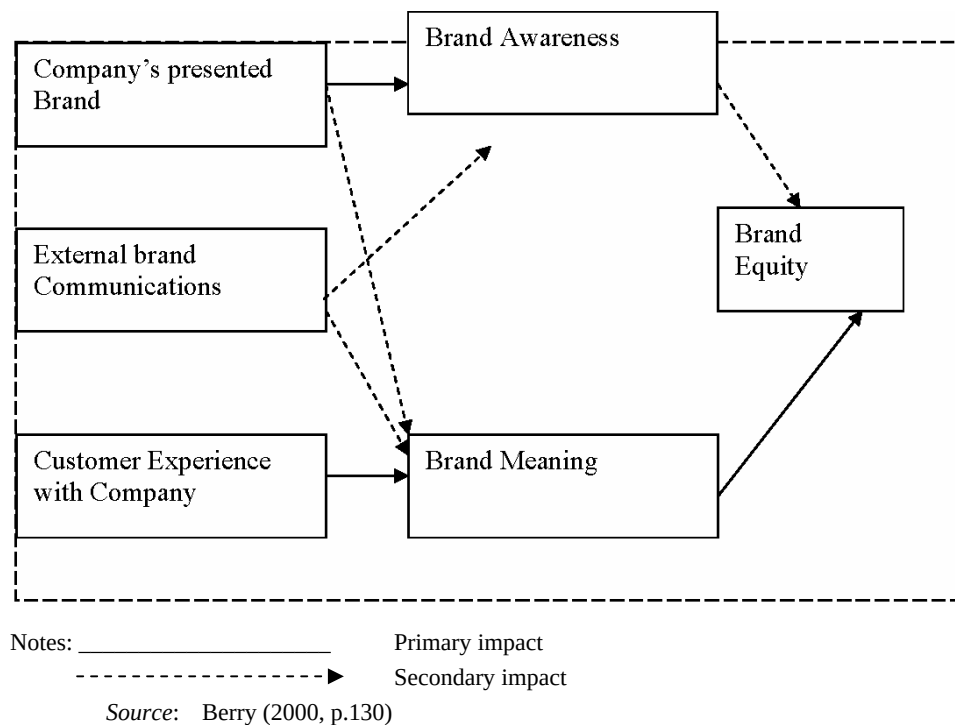
Berry (2000) presents a model that incorporates a number of variables that shape brand images as illustrated in Figure 1. The variables suggest that branding for services is shaped in the customer's experience and communications that in turn help create awareness of the meaning of what the organisation represents.

Grace and O'Cass (2002) point out that Berry's model shows that brand image is detailed to a greater extent within the model as it is complex in nature and originates from the favourability, strength, uniqueness, and types of brand associations that the consumer can identify with. In the case of a city the physical structures the behaviour of people, the symbols that identify the city and what people say tend to shape the brand image associations. Grace and O'Cass present a model that shows the different brand images for goods and services.

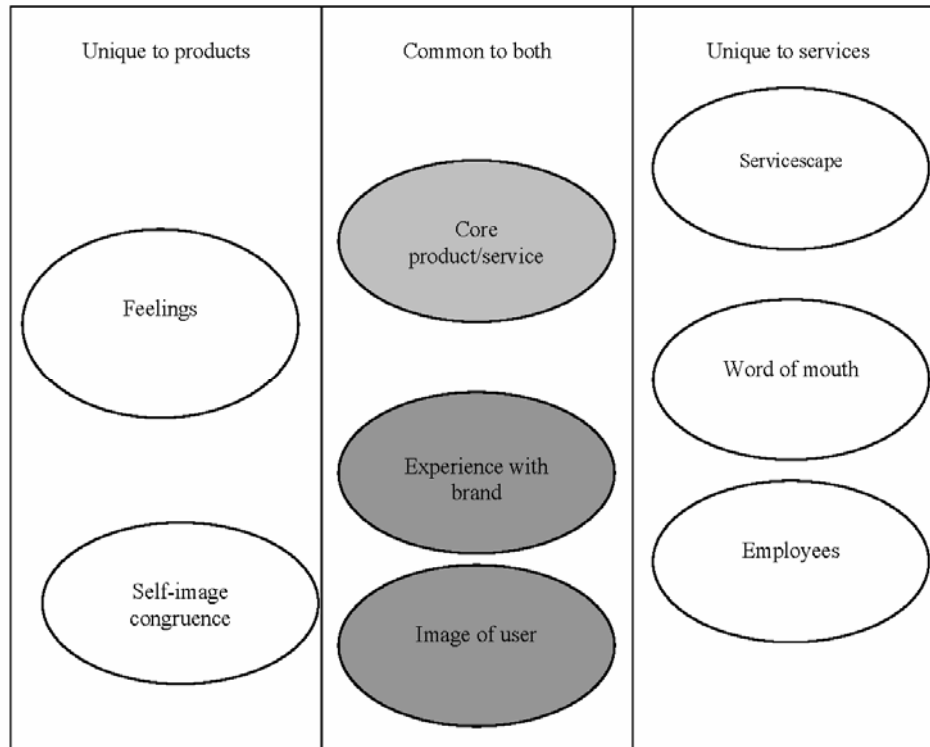
Grace and O'Cass' model (Figure 2) brings to the fore the crux of the matter in the phenomenon of images which is really about people's perceptions. In the case of a city this is about local people, visitors and any other special interest groups as investors etc. who come into contact with Oldham by way of information or visiting. Oldham has transformed over the last five years. The city has new infrastructure, has been socially reengineered via massive construction and reconstruction of the residential areas resulting in movements of society. In the process of changing the face of the Oldham borough there are social disruptions that have taken place and that has also helped in creating a more integrated communities as the relocation and re-housing process has meant new

social communities emerge living in better social environments. That has also helped create a sense of pride and aspirations for the future and that helps raise the profile of the residents of Oldham. A favourable image of Oldham is important to both residents and non-residents. The pride of residents would mean that the residents would be positive and want to support the borough's agenda; the non-residents would see it as a potential area to live in and invest in hence both will push forward the development agenda.

Figure 1 Service branding model



Trueman et al. (2004, p.323) reveals that 'it is important for Bradford to differentiate itself from other cities so that any regeneration will promote its strengths and unique characteristics that in turn can be recognised and adopted by local communities.' Trueman et al. adapted a model by Balmer and Greyser (2002) which illustrates different views of perceiving branding in an organisation. Bell and Jayne (2003) suggest that the culture of design lives in the city, in and with its citizens and this has a significant effect on the look and feel of the city and the lives of its residents and visitors and furthermore, the new cultural economies where design takes a central place tend to grow and flourish in locales that are innovative and adaptive. It is important to note that the branding of cities has similar elements to the branding of products. The systematic process carried out in the branding of products is equally important. Branding is too important to leave to chance, hence the need for systematic planning.

Figure 2 Key dimensions for branded products and services

Source: Grace and O'Cass (2002, p.108)

The model by Balmer and Greyser (2002) in Trueman et al. (2004), Figure 3 presents a diverse approach to analysing the branding process. The model by Balmer and Greyser (2002) adopted by Trueman et al. (2004) is very objective in that it seeks to understand branding from a variety of perspectives.

Leitch and Richardson (2003), suggest that multiple meanings may be attached to brands, constitutes an important dimension of brand strategy, particularly when brand alliances are contemplated and in terms of a corporate identity perspective, each organisation sits at the centre of its own web with its corporate brand.

Bell and Jayne (2003) further suggest that architectural and planning practice associated with design-led urban regeneration is connected with social regeneration, social exclusion and environmental sustainability, issues that are critical to the UK society, and design features are often written into the planning process in order to contribute to crime prevention, facilitate community interaction and enhance sociability in relation to housing, public space (such as streets and parks), and transport. These issues were pertinent in the renewal of Oldham after the events of 2001.

Figure 3 Building brand image and ownership by using the AC2ID framework

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
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
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.
Ideal identity	The ideal identity is the optimum positioning of the organisation 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 organisation’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 respectively.
Desired identity	The desired identity lives in the hearts and minds of corporate leaders. It is their vision for the organisation. 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.

Source: Balmer and Greyser (2002) in Trueman et al. (2004, p.325)

6 The regeneration of Oldham

Evans and Long’s (2000) Housing Association Trusts (HATs) are limited-life, non-departmental government bodies charged with the task of regenerating large housing estates with physical and social problems beyond the resources of the local authorities concerned.

- repair or improve tenants’ accommodation
- manage and use stock effectively
- encourage a wider range of ownership and greater choice of landlord

- improve the living, social and environmental conditions in their designated area
- empower tenants in order to ensure that at the end of their life, they left behind strong, sustainable communities able to exercise control over housing, and by inference, other services.

Hutchinson (2001, p.265) suggests that ‘effective area regeneration (or indeed many other areas of public service provision) requires a strategic approach. It is also evidenced by the growing number of academic commentators who note a necessity for a more strategic approach and the regularity with which the need for strategy and strategy development is raised as a key issue for local governance.’

The Wikipedia (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oldham_Riots, accessed 15 November, 2006) website states that:

“The legacy of the riots is broad and still in motion, but has seen increased race-relations and some community-amenity improvements in the town including the creation of a new Oldham Cultural Quarter (which includes the state-of-the-art Gallery Oldham and Oldham Library), and a number of proposed improvements and investments for the community facilities of the town. The community facilities currently available in Oldham have been heavily criticised, with not only Oldham but the entire Metropolitan Borough of Oldham now being the largest town without a major commercial cinema complex.”

With the changes alluded to it is clear that Oldham is taking a new shape probably for a better future as pointed out on the site, visit Oldham, ‘the ongoing regeneration and redevelopment of the Borough ensures that future generations living and working in Oldham will have as much to be proud of in their town as anybody has had at any time in its rich and vibrant history.’ <http://www.visitoldham.co.uk/heritage/history.htm>, accessed 15.11.06).

7 ‘Oldham Beyond’ the blueprint for regeneration

The re-branding of Oldham is founded in a strategic document called Oldham beyond (OB) which brings together the efforts of a number of key players in the renewal of Oldham. The document presents a fifteen year strategy to 2020. The institutions involved are North West Development Agency and Oldham Local Strategic Partnership which includes a number of key stakeholders in the renewal of Oldham. The OB strategic document was developed by a consultancy, URBED supported by Comedia, S333, King Sturge and WSP. The strategy is set out in three parts, namely, Oldham Beyond: A vision for the Borough of Oldham; The Heart of Oldham: A Masterplan of Oldham Town Centre and The Oldham Net: Ideas for Transformation.

‘This document sets out the route for Oldham’s renaissance, which encompasses its people and communities, economy, transport, housing market and physical environment.’ Oldham Beyond: A vision for the Borough of Oldham (2004, p.3).

The formulation of a strategy to deliberately shift or change the face of Oldham is certainly a bold step in repositioning and re-branding Oldham. The whole process is ambitious and challenging in nature. The success of the project depends on the continued commitment of the stakeholders to see the implementation of the strategy through. In the vision there are a number of strategic programmes that will epitomise the new Oldham.

These characteristics are a generator of wealth, many places making up Oldham and not just one, diverse neighbourhoods in the borough, an attractive borough, a desirable place to live in, an ambitious people, a sustainable borough and a new Oldham. In the main the vision captures the phenomenon of Oldham at three levels, Oldham Before, Oldham Today and Oldham Beyond.

Below is a brief discussion of the ten key ideas as espoused in the vision:

- 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 the crown in 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 regeneration of Oldham is anchored in the efforts of the Oldham Partnership, the communities and the various businesses operating in the borough. Social aspirations are an expression of the desire to improve livelihoods or to take up opportunities. In a report on the *Review of Community Cohesion in Oldham* by a team of experts from the University of Coventry in March 2006 led by Professor Ted Cantle made a number of important observations as follows:

- ‘Oldham Beyond’ would not be successful if communities remained divided and relations suffer from lack of trust. The investment drive to realise change cannot be realised where the community lacks pride, lacks confidence and the will to transcend the shadow of disturbances of 2001.
- Oldham today has its roots in the events of 2001 which have reshaped its destiny. Significant progress has been made but it is time to be more pro-active in promoting Oldham as a place moving forward, prepared to face the future with confidence backed up by a vision and strategy to deliver real and lasting change.

- If the envisaged Oldham were to become a reality, accelerating the pace of change is essential. Oldham faces dramatic changes in the composition of its population, with a decreasing white population and an increasing black and ethnic minority population. This position necessitates that the council, the Oldham Partnership, the local media and local communities to endeavour to ensure that the pace for change in building community cohesion shall not be overtaken by the potential for conflict.
- While making reference to a report entitled 'Forward together: building community cohesion in Oldham, impact and outcomes' (2004), Cantle et al. (2006, p.27) states the following:

“With change and diversification, there is evidence that Oldham’s economy and its local communities have benefited in recent years. Oldham has moved from the 38th most deprived local authority area in England in 2000 to the 43rd most deprived in 2004. In respect of the concentration of deprivation in particular wards, Oldham has moved from the 18th most deprived in 2000 indices of deprivation to 26th most deprived in 2004. Over the same period, unemployment rates have also declined, as has the gap between the Borough’s most and least deprived wards.”

8 Discussions

From the onset OB sets out a mission that is very optimistic about the future in stating:

“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.”
Oldham beyond: a vision for the borough of Oldham (2004, p.4).

OB has clearly set Oldham on the renewal escalator. The deliberate efforts since the launch of the visionary document have already set the borough on an upward developmental spiral.

The following are some major developments that have uplifted the standing of the borough since 2005. Some developments are still under implementation while others have been completed.

- the construction of the coliseum
- the establishment of the University Centre in partnership with the University of Huddersfield in August 2005
- the refurbishment of Alexander Park at a cost of £3.7 million
- town centre refurbishment and improvement as a meeting place
- modern bus station construction
- Tommyfield Market development by providing new stalls and parking
- integrated care centres to improve medical provisions in Oldham

- the west end area has been designated as an education precinct set aside for the expansion of educational provisions
- Hollinwood/M60 Junction has been identified as the major area for development and a strategic link to the outside world
- local areas of Failsworth, Shaw, Huddersfield Road District Centre, Chadderton and the Economic Development Zone have their own developmental plans.

From the foregoing there is a clear commitment to the renewal of Oldham on the part of the various stakeholders. That renewal will effectively reposition the Oldham borough as a new place with new features and new aspirations. At the same time Oldham will have a different identity and appeal, i.e., will be a different brand a preferred place for business and living.

OB is consistent with the arguments put forward by Hutchinson (2001) on the need for a strategic approach to regeneration. In that regard it is evident that the Oldham borough has sown the seeds for success in the process of its renewal. The strategic approach is further exemplified in the broad alliance for renewal as epitomised by the Oldham Strategic Local Partnership. In respect of the model by Balmer and Greyser (2002) in Trueman et al. (2005) it is clear that Oldham has scope for a better future.

Figure 4 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 city in 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.

Source: Balmer and Greyser (2002) in Trueman et al. (2004, p.325)

Figure 4 Building brand image and ownership by using the AC2ID framework for the Oldham Borough Council (continued)

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 organisation 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 organisation’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 organisation. 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.

Source: Balmer and Greyser (2002) in Trueman et al. (2004, p.325)

9 Conclusions

The image crisis Oldham has suffered as a result of the collapse of the once vibrant textiles industry culminating in high levels of poverty, lack of opportunities and race confrontation has unleashed a new challenge. The challenge for Oldham is the renewal of the borough which is being driven by the regeneration programme. From the foregoing discussions the following conclusions can be drawn in respect of the regeneration, repositioning and re-branding of Oldham.

Firstly, the Oldham borough's economic demise as a result of the collapse of the once vibrant textiles industry, resulting in poverty and infrastructural degradation and ultimately a calamitous race confrontation in 2001 created an ugly picture of the borough and effectively an undesirable brand. Practically, further degradation would lead to more economic and social problems which the state would not forever want to banish.

Secondly, in retrospect one would argue that despite the ugly scenes of the moment in 2001, the state of social and exclusion which contributed to the riots was the best thing that ever happened to Oldham in modern day. For once the Oldham borough was thrust on the national agenda and suddenly resources which would otherwise not be considered for Oldham started pouring into the borough to address the root cause of what had been identified as a national crisis. To third day this developed is credited with the benefits that have come from regeneration and new aspirations of the Oldham society.

Thirdly, the regeneration process for the Oldham borough is rooted in a strategy with a well grounded vision that is the Oldham Beyond and is already bearing fruit with a lot of evidence in respect of both the infrastructural and social transformation; hence the re-branding of Oldham is taking shape.

Fourthly, the momentum created in the regeneration and re-branding of Oldham is bearing fruit because of the cooperation of the various stakeholders. This in essence has meant that every part is playing its role and is genuinely committed to a successful transition as envisaged in the fifteen year vision as set out in Oldham Beyond.

Fifth, the future of Oldham is bright given that the pattern of regeneration and re-branding mirrors the experience of other cities, more closely that of Bradford. At the same time the proximity to the city of Manchester gives the Oldham borough an opportunity to capitalise on the spill over from the heart of the city as organisations search for more opportunities and push away from the city in search of cheaper accommodation and countryside business parks.

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