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Does It Work? Examining the Effectiveness of Place Branding in Local Economic Development

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Graduate Program in Geography
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

For cities in advanced economies, the past three decades have been characterized by a steady increase in the use of place branding, with it becoming an integral part local economic development policy. In the context of this study, place branding goes beyond the traditional understanding of logos and slogans, and instead is understood to be the culmination of intentional and unintentional actions by cities that help create and attenuate the network of connections of the place held in the mind of target audiences.

Place branding is now viewed by local policymakers as a necessary undertaking to respond to local issues that emerge (i.e. the decline of traditional economic sectors, changing demographics and population decline, the rise of the knowledge and creative economies changing position of cities in regional and global competitions for footloose economic resources). Indeed, local governments are now pinning their hopes on place branding as a way to counter many of the ills that their city faces.

Despite the increased attention that place branding has received as a local economic development policy, there is considerable uncertainty over whether it is effective in meeting the hopes and aspirations of the cities that employ it. In short, does it work? To address this question, this dissertation considers place branding's role in the attraction of three mobile economic resources (talent, immigrants, and businesses) to examine whether it is able to effectively influence these target audiences. Within this dissertation, influence is measured in several ways: place brand awareness, place brand equity, and decision-making of the target audiences. A key contribution of this dissertation is that it reframes the concept of equity to align with the geographical concept of sense-of-place.

Using the Province of Ontario, Canada as the study area, the effectiveness of place branding is quantified through multiple surveys of talent (n = 3951), immigrants (n = 739), and businesses (n = 659). The influence is examined across eight studies through a series of quantitative approaches (i.e. descriptive statistics, ANOVA, regression, exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, conjoint analysis, and Hierarchical Bayesian estimation). Overall, this dissertation demonstrates that place branding does have an influence on attracting mobile economic resources, and as a result has the potential to be an effective local economic development strategy. However, cities and other local governments need to be strategic in their branding efforts, and consider the brand to more than logos and slogan, to ensure it promotes the correct feature of the city that are meaningful to the target audiences being pursued.

Keywords: Place Branding, Local Economic Development, Effectiveness, Talent, Immigrant, Business, Cities, Ontario, Canada

Co-Authorship Statement

The following thesis contains manuscripts which have been published or submitted for publication to peer-reviewed journals. Chapters 2 and 3 were developed from a previously published article that was initially written for this thesis. The citation for the article is:

Chapters Two and Three: Cleave, E., and Arku, G. (2017). Putting a number on place: A systematic review of place branding influence. *Journal of Place Management and Development* 10(5): 425-446.

Chapters 4 to 7 have been written by Evan Cleave with Dr. Godwin Arku as co-author. In all four manuscripts, Cleave was the principal author and performed all research design, data collection and analysis. The following citations are provided to indicate the destinations of the manuscripts.

Chapter Four: Cleave, E., and Arku, G. (Submitted). Total Recall? Examining the impact of place branding on talent's place knowledge and perception *The Canadian Geographer*.

Chapter Five: Cleave, E., and Arku, G. (Submitted). Does Place Branding Work? Model and scale development to quantify place branding influence among talent *Urban Affairs Review*.

Chapter Six: Cleave, E., and Arku, G. (Submitted). Immigrant Attraction Through Place Branding? Evidence of city-level effectiveness from Canada. *Cities*.

Chapter Seven: Cleave, E., and Arku, G. (Submitted). Place Brand Influence on Business Location-Decisions: Examining the impacts of tacit knowledge and halo effects through conjoint analysis. *Economic Geography*.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

While place branding is commonly used as a tool of local government in communities of all sizes and types to promote and develop the local economy, the lack of hard data and documentation of its effects is acknowledged as a limitation of the research domain (Jørgensen, 2014). In addition, the research domain has been characterized by a lack of data-driven model development and theory building (Dinnie, 2008; Hankinson, 2001, 2010; Niedomysl, 2004; Pike, 2013). As a result, the classical problems with evidence-based evaluation of urban policy and practice persists (Harrison, 2000). The overarching goal of this dissertation, therefore, is to empirically examine place branding and the question that is asked is: *is place branding of cities effective at building awareness, altering perceptions and growing place equity, influencing the decision-making of target audiences, and ultimately useful in attracting or retaining mobile economic resources?* In short, does it work?

Overall, this dissertation examines this question and focuses on quantifying the influence and determining the effectiveness of place branding. Within this larger scope, this introductory chapter provides a broad overview of the research presented in this dissertation. The chapter has four main parts. In the first part, it undertakes a general summary of the salient issues surrounding place branding and its role in local economic development, including the development of framework for understanding what exactly place branding is and its role in influencing place perceptions and decision-making. It

also frames the issue of place branding as a geographical one, focusing on how place branding is linked with concepts of place *image* and *sense-of-place* – and why this is important for economic development. The second part considers how place branding’s influence and outcomes can be quantified, drawing from place branding and marketing literature. The third part of the chapter provides an overview of the research presented in the four manuscripts that comprise the main content of the dissertation. Finally, a description of the dissertation organization concludes the chapter.

1.2 Background: Conceptualizing Place Branding

This research seeks to identify whether place branding of cities is effective – in building awareness, shaping perspectives and building equity, and ultimately influencing the decision-making of key target audiences; framed within the rise and current widespread use of place branding as an urban and economic development policy by cities in advanced economies.

Place branding – or promotion, or marketing, or selling – is not new. Indeed, as Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2005: 506) have argued, “the conscious attempt of governments to shape a specifically designed place identity and promote it to identified markets, whether external or internal, is almost as old as government itself.” Ashworth and Voogd (1994: 39) further describe the role of place branding in local development, explaining that “since Leif Ericson sought new settlers in the 8th century for his newly discovered ‘green’ land, the idea of the deliberate projection of favourable place images to potential customers, investors or residents has been actively pursued.” For local

governments in advanced economies, however, the concept of place branding as a solution to solving local economic issues is a *relatively new* idea.

The prototype model for modern place branding – as used in this dissertation as an illustration – is the rebranding and extensive marketing related to the image rehabilitation of New York City in the 1970s. In a fairly unprecedented move, the local government turned to branding and marketing to solve both the *image* and *fiscal* crises the city faced (Greenberg, 2008). The pressures of a changing global economy including deindustrialization, the emergence of new and symbolic economies along with emerging markets and accelerated competition between cities and regions, and a negative city image exacerbated by negative representations in media coverage had led to New York City's decline in the early 1970s. The result of this decline was evident in what Greenberg (2008: 9) describes as “the exodus of corporations from Manhattan, the flight of middle-class residents, a rapid drop-off in tourism, and a tumbling of the municipal bond rating.” The unlikely path that New York City took was to aggressively work to rebrand and reposition the city to repair its image and re-attract various economic resources. While the iconic ‘I Love New York’ logo has become a key artifact of this rebranding, the actual effort was far more comprehensive with coalitions of key stakeholders that were formed to produce and consistently disseminate carefully constructed messages and a strong emphasis in forwarding local urban and economic development policies to support this emerging brand. This strategy worked – perhaps too well, as the development of a new city image and mythology around it work to obscure what Harvey (2002) and Smith (2002) have identified as vast structural inequalities in the

city. Yet for most, these realities are over-ridden with perception of New York as the world's most economically powerful city.

Why is this important? It matters because in the wake of New York's success, governments at all spatial scales and geographical contexts began adopting place branding as a solution to local issues. An apparent appeal of place branding is its flexibility in addressing a range of local economic development issues, including tourism (Hankinson, 2004; Morgan et al, 2002), attracting and retaining businesses (Hanna & Rowley, 2013; Pasquinelli, 2010; Ryu & Swinney, 2011), driving inward investment (Metaxas, 2010), attracting and retaining talent and residents (Hansen, 2010; Jacobsen, 2012; Niedomsyl, 2004; Zenker, 2009), and to redefining the image of communities that have undergone significant economic, cultural upheaval, or existential crisis such as the loss of rurality or connection with historic roots (Cleave & Arku, 2018; Hopkins, 1998; Stern & Hall, 2010).

The use of place branding by local governments, however, can be criticized in a number of ways, including that its use has become part of the neoliberal script of local development (Peck, 2014), that if not done correctly it can limit future avenues for local development (Stern & Hall, 2010), that there is generally too much focus on superficial aspects of branding – such as logos and slogans – as opposed to more comprehensive urban branding approaches (Anholt, 2005, 2009), and – most importantly – *that there is limited evidence of place brand effectiveness* (Cleave & Arku; 2017; Klijn et al, 2012; Jørgensen, 2014; Niedomysl, 2008; Zenker & Martin, 2011). Currently there is limited understanding of the effectiveness of place branding – that is, whether the strategy is reaching the target audience, changing how a locale is perceived, generating interest

amongst both internal and external audience (e.g. residents, businesses, and so forth), or driving consumption (that is, through the decision to (re)locate or (re)invest). In fact, despite its widespread use, there has only been limited research into the questions of whether place branding policy is effective in achieving expected positive outcomes or having any tangible effect on strengthening of the local economy. In essence, does place branding work? And does place branding matter to the groups identified as key target audiences within local economic development policy?

1.2.1 Place Branding: What is it and what can it do?

Before issues of measuring place branding effectiveness are considered, it is pertinent to outline what exactly is place branding and place brands are and what potential outcomes are among consumers. There has been considerable confusion in the research domain over the definition of place branding (Hanna & Rowley, 2008). This, in part, is due to the strong connections that exist between place branding, place marketing, as well as more traditional urban place promotion and place selling (Hanna & Rowley, 2008; Kavaratzis, 2004; Zenker, 2011). Indeed, cities and local communities in general have long promoted themselves through approaches such as advertising and marketing (Burgess & Wood, 1988; Gertler, 1990; Hopkins, 1998; Ward, 1998), development of logos and slogans (Cleave & Arku, 2014a, 2014b), through the development of symbolic representation and narratives (Hansen, 2010; Johansson, 2012; Kim, 2010).

Concurrently, there have been efforts to brand cities and to position them against local and global competitors through strategic policymaking and urban development (Allen, 2009; Friedmann, 2010; Govers, 2013; Kavaratzis, 2009; Oliviera, 2015). This place branding through urban policy and development generally involves more functional

approaches, including through urban redevelopment (Kirby & Kent, 2010; Paddison, 1993), the hosting of large sporting and cultural events (Ashworth, 2010; Hall & Hubbard, 1996; Zhang & Zhao, 2009), and the cultivation of the local economy in well-defined sectors (Pasquinelli, 2010). The distinguishing feature of place branding is its strategic nature (Anholt, 2009; Govers, 2011; Kavartzis, 2009; Oliviera, 2015). As Govers (2011: 231) argues “place branding should inform place marketing and function as a strategic compass,” arguing that there needs to be a ‘product’ that underpins any promotional efforts. Thus, city branding bridges the functional and representational elements of city promotion.

A final consideration is that the goal of place branding is to create a positive image, association, or reputation in the mind of the consumer amid the complex urban environment and the myriad of promotional activities that are undertaken by local governments. Indeed, within contemporary research place branding has been described as the development of a reputation about a place (Anholt & Hildreth, 2005), the creation of associations in the mind of the consumer (Braun, 2012; Zenker, 2011), or the creation of shared but selective symbol for the place (Boisen et al, 2011). The key implication of these descriptions is that the outcome of branding is not simply the communicated expression of a place, its physical structure, or its realities (economic, social, cultural), but rather the perception of those expressions in the mind of the target groups.

So, within this broader context, what is place branding? Table 1.1 summarizes key definitions of place branding drawn from the research domain. Consolidating these definitions, and contextualizing them within the broader literature, *place brands are the images, perceptions, knowledge, and reputation of a place, based on the network of*

associations that are made with and attributed to the place by a target audience. This definition is used in this dissertation as it is broad in scope, allowing a wide array of city offerings, characteristics, and attributes to be considered as key elements of the place's brand. Additionally, this definition ties together existing branding definitions into a more comprehensive understanding of place branding, its inputs, and its potential impacts.

These associations are developed many ways, including through “the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place's stakeholders and the overall place design” (Zenker & Braun, 2010: 3), and are presented to the target audience through multiple channels. Kavartzis's (2004: 67) tertiary model of place communication argues that these associations are developed through the physical, behavioural, economic, and political landscapes of a place – created by the actions of residents, stakeholders, and government, but also through history, urban design, and economic change; in formal communications through official channels, like all forms of advertising or public relations; and through the word-of-mouth details reinforced foremost by the media and the residents. Place branding, therefore, is more than just a logo or slogan (i.e. simple place brands), and instead is far more complex (i.e. advanced place brands).

A key implication of this is that a place's brand can develop from strategic government planning, but also from sources (i.e. residents) and forces (i.e. broad political-economic changes) that are beyond the place's control. Additionally, the brand of the place can develop from explicit policymaking meant to position the city, but unintentionally or implicitly through other action, development, or policymaking that is

Table 1.1: Key place brand and place branding definitions

Definition	Author
<i>Simple Branding:</i> Refers to a designed visual identity — name, logo, slogan, corporate livery. It is the way in which the identity of the company, product or service is dressed, and therefore recognized.	Anholt (2005: 117)
<i>Advanced Branding:</i> Includes the simple definition but goes on to cover a wide area of corporate strategy, physical attributes, consumer and stakeholder motivation and behaviour, internal and external communications, ethics and purpose.	Anholt (2005: 118)
Place branding centres on people’s perceptions and images and puts them at the heart of orchestrated activities, designed to shape the place and its future.	Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2009: 507)
The place brand is a symbol that suggests ways of experiencing or relating to the community.	Arvidsson (2006)
The place brand strategy could be a framework of core values, emphasizing the identity of the place. Such a framework should then work as a set of guiding principles against which all other strategies and policies should be judged to the extent to which they are on-brand or off-brand and to the extent to which their contribution to the place brand is positive, negative or neutral.	Boison (2015: 16)
An empirical phenomenon in the governance of urban districts and communities, especially in urban regeneration programmes. Branding has been widely applied to change the image of regenerated areas, with the aim of attracting investors and new residents.	Eshuis and Edwards (2012: 1066)
Place branding refers to the development of brands for geographical locations, such as regions, cities or communities, usually with the aim of triggering positive associations and distinguishing the place from others. Place brands are symbolic constructs meant to add meaning or value to places. Brands are signs that identify places and evoke associations that imbue places with cultural meaning.	Eshuis et al (2014), Eshuis and Klijn (2012)
Place branding encompasses tangible and intangible place brand attributes as well as functional and symbolic place brand benefits.	Jacobsen (2012: 253)
A strategically produced and disseminated commercial sign (or a set of signs) that is referring to the value universe of a commodity	Johansson (2012: 3611)
to form a unique selling proposition that will secure visibility to the outside and reinforce ‘local identity’ to the inside	Kalandides (2010: 28)
the branding of districts or communities aims to create a favourable image of the place by emphasising certain functional, symbolic and experiential aspect.	Kavaratzis (2009: 26)
Branding is positioned within cities’ wider quest to promote their distinctiveness amidst a growing competition for resources, visitors, residents and companies.	Turok (2009)
A network of associations in the consumers’ mind based on the visual, verbal, and behavioural expression of a place, which is embodied through the aims, communication, values, and the general culture of the place’s stakeholders and the overall place design	Zenker and Braun (2010: 3)

not specifically understood to be place branding, where any element that influences the network of associations can influence the brand.

1.3 A Framework for Measuring Place Branding: Place Brand Equity

Building off the discussion of what place branding is, it is clear that it is a complex assemblage of different underlying elements (see Zenker, 2009; Zenker et al, 2013) that shape a target audience's perception (see Pike, 2005). This suggests that capturing the influence of place branding can be difficult, as it is not something that can easily be studied longitudinally. In fact, the few studies that have attempted to examine difference in attraction of a target audience following the implementation of a place branding program have found mixed results at best (Niedomysl, 2004, 2007, 2008).

By drawing from traditional branding and marketing, place branding, and geographic perspectives, however, a framework for the different ways that a place brand's impact might be quantified begins to emerge. To be certain, a geographical tact that draws parallels between concepts of *sense-of-place* and *place equity* is not the only way to quantify the influence that place brands may exert. However, in the context of the current research this is how the influence will be conceptualized, thereby providing a new way to approach this issue. Just as there is no single defined way to measure sense-of-place, however, there is also no clear consensus to quantify the impact that place branding has on consumer decision-making.

So, how can a place brand's influence be measured? If a brand for a product is construed as a network of associations, it is the attenuation of this network that gives a brand its image strength and meaning, in theory improving the brand equity (Keller,

1993; Berry, 2000; Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Zenker, 2014), in particular customer-based brand equity. Customer-based brand equity is defined as the “differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand” (Keller, 1993: 2). Such equity is accrued when the consumer is familiar with the brand and holds favorable, strong, and unique brand associations. This form of equity is measured in the awareness or the strength of an emotional connection between the brand and the individual.

Place brand equity is the capacity for a place’s brand to add perceived value to the place (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). A strong and positive place brand has the potential to become a successful city brand by maximizing brand equity (Parkerson & Saunders, 2005; Chan et al, 2015). Building off Keller (1993) and marketing literature, Florek (2012, 2015) divided brand equity into two interconnected dimensions, namely perceptual and behavioural. This aligns well with the understanding of place branding in this dissertation – that the network of associations can influence how brands are perceived (perceptual) and influence decision-making (behavioural).

From a place branding perspective, brand positioning concerns elements of the place that are emphasized through its brand communications (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005) and stressed through the positioning of the place brand as a network of associations (Zenker, 2014). Thus, how are the outcomes of place branding initiatives measured? Human geography, it turns out, has its own form of equity – sense-of-place. Discussed in greater detail in Chapter Two, place and sense-of-place are fundamental geographical concepts and are used to explain connections and perceptions individuals and groups have of place. Cloke et al (1991: 81) understand sense-of-place to be “a rudimentary understanding of how a place ‘works’. It’s a general feeling about a place.” Similarly,

Gregory et al (2009: 676) define sense-of-place as “the attitudes and feelings that individuals and groups hold vis-à-vis the geographical areas in which they live. It further commonly suggests intimate, personal and emotional relationships between self and place.” Finally, Knox and Marston (2007: 33) contextualize sense-of-place as “the feelings evoked among people as a result of the experiences and memories they associate with a place and the symbolism they attach to that place. It can also refer to the character of a place as seen by outsiders: its distinctive physical characteristics and/or its inhabitants.” This sense-of-place is not limited to those already living in a place but can develop among outsiders where the brand can “evoke a significant common meaning for people who have no common experience” with the place (Knox & Marston, 2007: 35).

Extending this argument of place and place branding, this research posits that the stronger the sense-of-place, the stronger the place brand equity. In the marketing literature, brand equity influences consumer decision-making (Keller, 1993). This is no different in place branding. The stronger the place brand equity, the greater the potential for influence on decision-making. Sense-of-place can be seen as being influenced along several major dimensions: brand awareness, perceived brand quality, and brand associations (Pike, 2005; Gartner & Ruzzier, 2011; Buil et al, 2013; Zavattaro et al, 2015). The effectiveness of the place branding effort can be identified by whether it has influenced the place brand awareness or image, changed the attenuation of sense-of-place, or influenced consumer decision-making.

1.4 Dissertation Format: Integrated Articles

As previously noted in the introduction to this chapter, the goal of this dissertation was to determine if branding efforts by cities are effective at influencing perceptions of a target audience, their decision-making, and ultimately useful in the context of attracting or retaining mobile economic resources. These resources represent a diverse group, with this dissertation focusing on three: domestic talent, international immigrants, and businesses. Greater detail for why these groups were selected is presented in Chapter Three, however, in brief, they represent key economic resources identified within economic development plans of cities in advanced economies. While the Province of Ontario is where this research is situated, the findings are broadly informative and transferable to cities and other jurisdictions. In addition, by focusing on multiple study groups in this dissertation (i.e. talent, migrants, and businesses), rather than more narrowly on a single case group, allows for a broader and more comprehensive examination of place branding and its influence in attracting mobile economic resources.

Finally, as Section 1.2 discussed, there are several dimensions in which place branding can be measured: brand awareness, brand perceptions, and decision-making. The effectiveness of branding efforts along these dimensions is directly examined in dissertation, while the concept of adaptiveness implicitly described and addressed more fully in Chapter Eight. The diversity of target audiences and ways to measure place branding influence allow for a comprehensive examination of its effectiveness, addressing the research objective laid out at the beginning of this chapter, and allowing for an answer to the simple question *does it work?*

The methodology and study parameters are described in brief here, but are discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three, while the relevant research and findings for each study are presented in each of the four manuscripts (Chapters Four to Seven).

1.4.1 Manuscript 1: Place Brand Awareness Among Talent

The first study of this dissertation (Manuscript 1) evaluates the research question *does place branding influence place awareness and knowledge?* To support the evaluation of this inquiry, the study subsequently considers: *are city brands correctly recognized by talent? Can talent recall brands from cities in Ontario? And does the presence of the place brand influence the perception of favourability among talent?*

At the core of branding effectiveness is *brand awareness* – which Keller (1993) identifies as a key component of brand knowledge and equity. Indeed, it is no different for place brands, with familiarity (Morgan et al, 2002; Zenker, 2014) and awareness (Jacobsen, 2012; Konecnik & Gartner, 2007) being identified as important factors in the development of place knowledge and equity, as the overall effectiveness of promotion (Hospers, 2003). For a brand to be effective, the target audience has to be aware of it. However, the few examples of empirical research that exist on quantifying brand awareness are limited to destination branding (see Beritelli & Laesser, 2018), and in the context of city branding is non-existent.

To investigate whether place branding does influence talent awareness and place knowledge, this research considers core areas of place branding: *recall* and *recognition*. Together these form the basis for place knowledge, which can be considered analogous to sense-of-place. This framing of the issue allows the simultaneous examination of place

branding effectiveness, while re-situating the issue from a marketing context into a geographic one. This is important for place branding efforts, because if there is no awareness, then it means the brand is failing to reach or connect with the target audience.

1.4.2 Manuscript 2: Place Brand Perceptions and Decision-Making Among Talent

Focusing again on talent, Manuscript 2 considers if *place marketing and branding of cities influence how target audiences perceive them? And does it influence decision-making?* There has been considerable effort on the part of cities to develop branding and marketing efforts that connect with target audiences, to shape their perceptions of the city. Although models have attempted to understand the structure of this relationship, there still remain several key questions about whether place branding makes a difference in talent attraction and retention. A key difference between this research and previous work is the addition of sense-of-place as the interface between branding and the target audience. In this regard, sense-of-place becomes the equity that a city has. This research considers the structure of the relationship between ways cities brand and position themselves, how these shape the perceptions of the target audience (i.e. talent), and ultimately the extent to which this alters the decision-making of where to live and work.

To accomplish this, the manuscript presents a methodological approach that is new to place branding and local economic development research – through scale development and verification using exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis. While structural equation modeling (see Klijn et al, 2012; Zenker et al, 2009) and multidimensional scales (see Florida et al, 2012; Lawton et al, 2013; Mellander et al, 2011) have been applied previously in place branding research, this chapter presents a

more robust and comprehensive method for scale development and validation drawing from marketing research (see Cleveland & Laroche, 2007; Churchill, 1979).

1.4.3 Manuscript 3: Place Perceptions and Decision-Making Among Immigrants

This chapter presents the study of the impact of place branding on international immigrant decisions of what city they choose to live once they have already decided to move to Canada. To do this, Manuscript 3 asks: *does place branding at the city level attract immigrants once they have decided to migrate to a country or region? And what brand elements are most influential?* The need to attract immigrants is an important one for cities in advanced economies, as they represent a key source that provides a talented, well-educated workforce – an area that most mid-sized cities tend to struggle with. While place branding has explored the idea of talent and creative class attraction, as well as intra-regional migration, there is limited research into whether it influences how immigrants view and evaluate competing cities within a region. Using the case of London, Ontario, this research examines what factors positioned the city in a favourable way compared to other competing cities within the region.

This study makes several key contributions: first, it examines a target audience that is identified as important by city economic development policy, but up to date under researched; second, it focuses on recently arrived immigrants – post-decision of where to live, contrasting most existing research on place branding's influence that explores pre-decision-making; and finally, it provides the examination of place branding's impact on a group other than talent allowing for comparison and triangulation. This study considers

place branding in the way that cities have positioned themselves through explicit branding efforts, as well as, unintentional efforts of how cities have been positioned.

1.4.4 Manuscript 4: Place Brand Influence on Business Decision-Making

The final study focuses on businesses and approaches the influence of place branding from a new way. Rather than examine its dimensions, brand equity is taken as an inherent feature of how cities are perceived through *tacit* understandings of place. In addition, this study positions the influence of place branding as a halo or summary construct effect that is influenced by explicit, perceived, and tacit knowledge about a city.

While understanding the flows and sites of accumulation for businesses is important in understanding the global economy, place branding's role has been under-researched. Additionally, the research has considered business decision-making as non-compensatory, rather than as a series of trade-offs in which place knowledge and connection can influence. In light of these limitations to existing scholarship, Manuscript 4 considers the question: *does place branding influence business location decision-making?* Guiding the research is the hypothesis that *place makes a difference* and that this difference will manifest in differences in the attributes firms prioritize and to the extent in which they are prioritized when evaluating places to locate their business. This chapter presents a methodology previously unused in place branding and economic geography research – conjoint analysis and Hierarchical Bayesian estimation, which quantifies firm decision-making and allows for the isolation of trade-offs caused by place branding.

1.5 Organization of Dissertation

The dissertation is comprised of eight interrelated chapters, including this one. Chapter Two provides a discussion on theoretical context of place branding. Chapter Three presents a high-level overview of the research methodology in this dissertation, including: broad overviews of the study area (the Province of Ontario) – including a discussion of key political-economic, place branding and local economic development issues; as well as a summary of, and rationale behind, the key analytical approaches employed in this dissertation. Chapters Four through Seven are the integrated research articles that address the key research objectives of the dissertation, described above. Finally, discussion and conclusions on the main findings of the dissertation are presented in Chapter Eight.

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CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH CONTEXT AND THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a detailed background on the context that the research in which this dissertation is situated. The goal of this chapter is to set the broader theoretical framework, while the Chapter Three provides the conceptual and methodological framework for the dissertation. The chapter is organised around two major topics. First, the chapter explains why the research is geographical and provides a political-economic contextualization of place branding. In doing this, the chapter presents an overview of globalization, neoliberalism, entrepreneurial governance and the impact on local economic development and place branding. Second, it outlines the broad theoretical and conceptual frameworks that have been employed to explain place branding equity – focusing on *place* and *sense-of-place*. The concept of place branding is interlaced throughout the two theoretical areas to properly situate it. While this chapter provides an overall framework, Chapters Four through Seven also present context specific theoretical framing and discussion based on the particularities of the study.

2.2 Study Context: Geography, Political-Economic Change, and Place Branding

Place branding is inherently geographic (Andresson, 2014; Pike, 2009, 2013). Indeed, this study of effectiveness is situated within the concept of places, and the place images and sense-of-place that are cultivated by potential target audiences through networks of associations, interpretations, and understanding of urban space. The

perception and effectiveness of brands may also vary between people with different socio-economic and spatial positions, further adding geographical dimensions. Place branding also represents a set of business and marketing concepts increasingly being applied to places, where ideas and management principles of promoting products and corporations are adopted by cities (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005).

There are two key areas that help situate this research within the broader domain of human geography, that situate place branding within a framework of globalization, neoliberalism, and entrepreneurial governance. First, place branding has a role in explaining the flows of economic resources (i.e. talent, migrants, and businesses) and making cities sites of resource accumulation (see Doel & Hubbard, 2010; Hall, 2015). Second, place branding and related understandings privilege the concept of entrepreneurial governance, which emphasizes strategic planning, development, and growth strategies as a response to the pressures of neoliberalism and globalization on cities (Brenner, 1998; Harvey, 1989a; Peck, 2004; Rantisi & Leslie, 2006).

Finally, this research explicitly connects the concept of place branding with the human geography concepts of place and sense-of-place, by considering how branding shapes the image and perceptions of cities within the mind of a target audience and how this influences their evaluations (i.e. the perception of cities as places to live and work for talent in Chapter Five; the influence of place branding on where immigrants decide to live in Chapter Six; and the impact of place on trade-offs in business decision-making in Chapter Seven). Place branding has been identified as an approach to create, change, preserve or regain place identities and images (Andresson, 2014; Ashworth & Voogd, 1994; Gertner & Kolter, 2004). In this context, a relationship exists between space and

place and the development of place identities (Kalandides, 2011). There is a place-bound symbolic quality to the space in which the brand was produced, facilitating an understanding of the place, development of an image, and, ultimately, consumption.

2.2.1 Political Economic Framework

As the example of New York City from Chapter One described, place branding has been used as a method of mitigating pressures of a changing global economy. Within advanced economies, New York City is not unique as cities faced the related problems of de-industrialization and globalization pressures (Arku, 2014; Bradford, 2003; Goodwin, 1993; Greenberg, 2008; Hannigan, 2003). Indeed, globalization has presented challenges to cities in advanced economies, as improvements to transportation, communication, and logistical systems have changed the nature of the flows of economic resources (Hall, 2015). New markets have emerged as nodes in these new global flows acting as new sites of capital accumulation. With these global flows embedded within a system of global capitalism, cities once dominant in manufacturing and traditional economic sectors were affected by a series of spatial fixes – in general terms processes of spatial reorganization and geographical expansion that serve to manage crisis-tendencies inherent in accumulation (Harvey, 1996; 2001). As Harvey (2001: 25), explains “capital has to build a fixed space (or ‘landscape’) necessary for its own functioning at a certain point in its history only to have to destroy that space (and devalue much of the capital invested therein) at a later point in order to make way for a new ‘spatial fix’ (openings for fresh accumulation in new spaces and territories).” Successive rounds of spatial fix are facilitated by innovation in physical and social infrastructure; and as Harvey (1989b) and

Massey (1994) argue, a time-space compression leads to an acceleration of these capitalist activities that destroy spatial barriers and distances.

The result of this globalization and political-economic change is that within the larger historical context of global capitalism, economic development has come to be characterized as a zero-sum game, being embedded in a framework of inter-place competition for resources, jobs and capital (Harvey, 1989a, 2006; Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Malecki, 2004). Contemporary business attraction can be characterized as a circuit of constant migration, where places poach these footloose economic resources from their competitors (Gertler, 1990), and businesses continually relocate to the locale that provides them the best opportunity for success (Leigh & Blakely, 2013). Due to the zero-sum constraints of the economic system, development activity becomes an exercise in uneven development, as the market simply reorganizes capital, labour and production over space (Harvey, 2006). Camangi (2002) and Malecki (2004) argue that because of this uneven accumulation, cities and regions can go out of business as they become so depleted by outmigration of economic resources that they are at a long-run competitive disadvantage.

While the potential challenges for globalization are clear, Wolfson and Frisken (2000) also argue that it also provides opportunities, such as the rise of new economic resources (i.e. highly-skilled and well-educated immigrants) that can be attracted and more easily relocated to a city. The implication for cities in advanced economies is that traditional economic sectors have declined, generally relocating to emerging markets where the costs of production and labour are lower, and therefore have been forced to adopt new approaches to stabilizing their economy. Within this competitive global

landscape, place branding has become an approach for cities to compete on their own terms. It represents an effort by municipalities to actively attempt to shape how their locale is perceived by potential consumers, allowing them to appear more competitive against other jurisdictions (Anholt, 2005, 2010). As Pasquinelli (2013: 2) describes, municipalities “need to construct their own competitive advantage in order to position themselves in a ‘market of geographies’, an open territorial competition space where new development opportunities might spill out.” In fact, within this capitalist system of global flows, place branding and the locational advantage they can provide may help explain the stickiness or assemblages of capital and other economic resources in some locations.

2.2.2 Neoliberalism

The rise of place branding as a local development strategy is embedded in a larger trend in the structure of urban governance due to changing political-economic circumstances. The neoliberal political-economic environment marked a shift away from the Fordist-Keynesian golden age, leading to a spatial-scale recalibration of the sites of production, consumption, and governance (Jessop, 2002; Ward, 1998). The national-state has diminished as the principal anchoring point for institutions of macro-economic management, with neoliberalization inducing competition at the local level (Peck, 2002). Cities and other contemporary urban centres have experienced social and spatial restructuring as the sites of capital accumulation (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Peck, 2002; Swyngedouw, 2007), with responsibility for generating local economic growth increasingly being assigned to local municipal governments (Arku, 2014; Stern & Hall, 2015).

In this new scale, localities have been forced to compete by cutting social and environmental regulatory standards and re-examining the political and institutional structures that had been constructed and employed in the past (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Jessop, 2002; Ward, 1998). Brenner and Theodore (2002: 385) characterize this period as one “of institutional searching and experimentation within restrictive (and ultimately destructive) neoliberal parameters.” This re-scaling of power has led to “changing political-economic power relations, transformations in institutional capacities, and shifts in the parameters of political agency” (Peck, 2002: 332).

In the context of place branding, neoliberalism is also greater than spatial restructuring of political power or rollback of regulation. As Peck and Tickell (2002) and Walks (2008) note, there is also a rollout of policy and power that restructures the relationship between individuals and the government. Stern and Hall (2015: 17) further this argument by suggesting that “neoliberal governments appear to retreat from the day-to-day business of governing citizen behaviour, but in fact they do no such thing.” Instead, the policy becomes increasingly regulatory of urban space (Keil, 2002; Smith, 1996; Walks, 2008). While the impacts of globalization have fundamentally altered how urban areas are perceived in the global political-economy, it has, by extension, privileged place branding. In this context place branding can be described as a tool to facilitate the reorientation of restructured local space and place. Rather than growing organically, it is often (at least the parts that government consider place branding) strategically controlled to present a specific image to govern and shape the perceptions of individuals and businesses to drive cycles of investment and re-investment.

2.2.3 Entrepreneurial Governance

Within the broad context of the processes of global capitalism and the pursuit of neoliberal policy, urban governments have begun focusing on emerging shift from urban managerialism toward urban entrepreneurial governance. The rise of the ‘entrepreneurial city’, which has been identified as an outcome of the structural changes that have occurred in the global capitalist economy since the global recession of 1970s (Hannigan, 2003; Harvey, 1989a; Hubbard, 1996; Logan & Molotch, 1987; Pasquinelli, 2010). Due to the rapidly changing urban political-economies found within North America and Europe characterized by the emergence of a new ‘entrepreneurial’ style of local governance, urban centres have been promoted as sites for accumulation (Brenner & Theodore 2002). This entrepreneurialism captured the businesslike essence of city governance and its associated characteristics, including risk-taking, inventiveness, and profit motivation (Harvey, 1989a, 2006; Hubbard & Hall, 1998). Consequently, image promotion was increasingly privileged by planners, economic development practitioners, and politicians (Hannigan, 2003; Harvey, 1989a). The use of branding within this entrepreneurial governance can be viewed as a natural outcome of the emerging system, as it presented a new (and therefore risky) means of allowing urban areas to remain economically relevant through inventive repackaging and promotion (Pasquinelli, 2013).

Urban entrepreneurialism typically rests on “a public-private partnership focusing on investment and economic development with speculative construction of place rather than amelioration of conditions within a particular territory as its immediate political and economic goal” (Harvey, 1989: 8). The lynchpin to urban entrepreneurialism is the presence of public-private partnerships (Gillen, 2009; Jessop, 1997, 1998; Roberts &

Schein, 1993). These partnerships are an integration of local boosterism of private interests with local public-sector powers with the goal of attracting external funding and investments, businesses, or labour (Harvey, 1989a). The activities embedded in public-private arrangement are entrepreneurial in design and execution. Rather than emphasizing rational planning and coordinated development, which mitigate risk but have less chance of making a significant change to the attractiveness of the city, projects in the 'entrepreneurial city' tend to be speculative in nature. Large-scale developments or attraction of large-scale events, are intended to improve the image of the municipality, increase its attractiveness, and drive investment; however, these activities are undertaken with the speculation of creating an improvement, rather than tangible evidence that any change will occur. Additionally, Harvey (1989a) and Roberts and Schein (1993) argue that in these speculative ventures, the public sector generally assumes the risk, while the private sector receives the majority of the benefit.

As was the case in New York City (Greenberg, 2008), place branding has a role in positioning the entrepreneurial city, shaping how it is perceived. Through the regulation of space and image, place branding can obscure the uneven development within the city. Various scholars argue that development within cities is driven by urban elites, who stand to gain from the activities of public-private partnerships (e.g. Hall & Hubbard, 1996; Harvey, 1989a; Logan & Molotch, 1987). While positioning cities as a place of prosperity and economic strength for all within a target audience, the arrangements of entrepreneurial governance can allow for these regimes of capitalist accumulation to benefit from the marginalization of the lower class (for example, the gentrification of inner cities has forced lower-income residents out as property and rent values have risen).

The place brand, therefore, can be used to convince residents that prosperity exist for all, and that assuming risk in speculative public-private partnerships will lead to an improved urban environment and stronger economy.

In the 'entrepreneurial city' there is emphasis on the political-economy of place, rather than territory. Specifically, this indicates that the construction or regeneration of place can have impacts that are greater or smaller than the specific territory within which the projects are located (Harvey, 1989a). Embedded in this political-economy of place is the notion that it can be commodified, packaged and sold to the consumer (Biddulph, 2011; Hubbard, 1996; Leigh & Blakely, 2013). Place then becomes a commodity capable of generating wealth and power (Logan & Molotch, 1987; Molotch, 1976).

Finally, promotion is privileged in entrepreneurial governance. Even if meaningful changes are being made within an urban area, it needs to be communicated to both external (and internal) audiences to allow for consumption of the redefined spaces (Hospers, 2003). The place brand becomes the ethos of the changing urban landscape; a shorthand method to communicate and comprehend the change that is occurring. Further, as cities are integrated into a global struggle for mobile economic resources, extolling the virtues of the city through the brand can provide a potential competitive advantage (Hansen, 2010; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005; Paddison, 1993).

2.2.4 Local Economic Development

Within this broad political economic context, place branding is seen as playing an important role in local economic development. Against the backdrop of greater global competition and flow of economic resources, cities in neoliberal environments are

increasingly responsible for their own economic development policy and practice.

Coupled with the shift from managerialism, place branding and promotion are now key features of local governance, meant to position the city – through regulation and control of the city’s image – against local, regional, international competitors to become a node of accumulation for some form of economic resource.

From an economic development perspective, place promotion is not new (Leigh & Blakely, 2013). Gertler (1990), Kitchen (1985), and Paddison (1993) all point out that within local economic development, municipal governments are driven by self-interest, and have a strong incentive to promote information that depicts the locality in the way that is most favourable for generating inward investment. The primary difference between the advertisement and promotion described by Gertler (1990) and his contemporaries and modern place branding lies in its strategic nature. Traditional advertising and promotion of cities can be classified in the “shoot anything that flies, claim anything that falls” approach to economic development (Rubin, 1988: 237). By flooding the market with information about a place, the goal was to reach the maximum number of potential investors. The current place branding effort of cities is more strategic, as it is meant to specifically target audiences. A place can have all the conditions that a target audience is looking for, however, if this is not promoted or the correct network of associations not formed, then the target audience will not know of the potential opportunity. Hospers (2003) suggests that place branding is vital in the development of a place. If the municipality desires investment of traditional or new-economy industries, to attract talent, or become known as a centre for innovation, entrepreneurship, or creativity it needs place branding to promote itself and enter the

consciousness of the target audience. A place could have the necessary infrastructure and economic ingredients to be a leader in an economic sector, but without effective self-promotion effort it will never achieve that external reputation.

Since the turn of the twentieth-first century – and the rise of the new economy – economic development has privileged the accumulation of human capital through a focus on quality-of-life strategies, away from more traditional ‘smoke-stack chasing’ (see Arku, 2015; Hutton & Vinodrai, 2015; Kavaratzis, 2004, 2009; Osgood et al, 2012; Reese & Sands, 2014; Vinodrai, 2015). Several scholars (e.g. Arku, 2013; Bramwell & Wolfe, 2008; Gertler et al, 2002; Florida & Mellander, 2015; Lewis & Donald, 2010; Vinodrai, 2015; Wolfe & Gertler, 2001) identify a shift from traditional to knowledge and creative-based sectors, while Cai (2002), Harvey and Young (2012), and Pasquinelli (2013) suggest talent and tourism cultivation as strategies to offset declining industry and rising unemployment rates.

This change has been punctuated by the rise of the creative class, and more broadly highly-skilled and well-educated talent, as a target of many cities’ efforts to increase their economic productivity (Florida, 2002). Economic development has also started to take on a more holistic view, as vain attempts to lure businesses in the hope of economic growth have been replaced by sustainable approaches that consider economic development to include social capital and flexibility. Popular practices from the past, such as incentives and tax-breaks, have been replaced with a more strategic place management (Clifton, 2004; Giovanardi, 2012; O’Donovan, 2004; Pasquinelli, 2010). Place management provides a mechanism of government to manage a wide range of challenges and opportunities that cities encounter on a regular basis (Kavaratzis, 2005;

Pasquinelli, 2013). Place management provides a strategic and coordinated method to improve the social and economic potential, allowing cities to become more aware and in control of how policy decisions that are not explicitly place branding related influence the brand and the way the city is perceived. Here again, place branding emerges as a potential tool for city governments as a way of integrating and communicating to position the managed place.

2.3 Context for Place Equity: Place Branding and Place

Space and place define the core nature of geography (Agnew, 2011; Tuan, 1996), and indeed key components of understanding place branding. From an ontological perspective, place becomes the dominant explanation of what comprises the world, but with place explained in the broader frame of space (Tuan, 1996). Tuan (1977) defines space as formless and profane, devoid of any true meaning; however, in the context of place branding, cognitive space provides a better framework for contextualizing how the world is understood. This cognitive space is defined and measured in terms of values and perceptions, acting as a setting for understanding behaviour (Knox & Marston, 2007). Cognitive space can be used to explain the political economic environment of an increasingly globalized world. First, as economic resources can move freely globally, absolute space and position become less important, and instead how places in cognitive space are perceived relative to each other become more important. As globalization leads to greater economic, social, cultural, and aesthetic homogenization – where cities are increasingly the same providing similar services and infrastructure, and improvements in communication and transportation allow increased connectivity – meaning and

uniqueness are diminished. As Scholte (2005) would argue, the exceptional becomes the mundane. In this cognitive space, increased homogenization leads to diminished knowledge, values, and distinct perceptions. Unique and positive place brands, however, provide an avenue for making city's distinctive (i.e. Turok, 2009) and positioning them against competitors in a way that knowledge and understanding are attributed to them, shaping the way they are perceived.

This perspective is eminently compatible with neo-Marxist conception of place. The neo-Marxist perspective explains the creation of place through the social production of the spaces within which social life takes place (Agnew, 2011; Lefebvre, 2009). In this perspective, relational space is delineated through policies by government and the economic transactions that are requisite to a capitalist system, and help shape spaces of everyday life, influenced, sometimes to the point of hegemonic domination, by systems of structural governance and control (Agnew, 2011). This 'colonization' occurs through a form of place management – carefully measured spatial practices of commodification and the neo-liberal creep of increasing corporate 'seduction' and attempted privatisation of urban space (Davis, 1990; Goss, 1993) government controls, and – in relevance to this research – place branding policies; all of which are designed to rationally order space. Indeed, in this context, place branding becomes a process of 'roll-out' neoliberalism, meant to assist in government control of urban space and its image (see Stern & Hall, 2010).

In an ideal world, the place brand is developed from the local identity through place management and actions (branding efforts) is experienced by individuals through primary, secondary, and tertiary channels (see Kavaratzis, 2004), which influences both

the awareness and image of the place. Together, these factors work to attenuate the magnitude and the attitude of the sense-of-place. Of course, it is worth mentioning that this ideal concept of the place brand is not always reflected in practice, as it is often developed from what place managers think the local identity is (or what they want it to be). As Kavaratzis (2004) and others describe, there are potential implicit and unintentional factors that can shape a place's image as well.

Mirroring place branding and marketing's influence on place image and identity (Kalandides, 2011; Stock, 2009; Warnaby & Medway, 2013), Goss (1993) describes how place has been coopted, managed and sanitized with the goal of driving consumption. While the places that are constructed within this tightly controlled space have links to someplace and sometime, the imagery and configuration of space are designed to create a specific emotional connection with the consumer that drives consumption (Goss, 1993). In essence, the reality of the place is less important than how it is perceived.

In this context Agnew (2011), Doel & Hubbard (2010), and Massey (1999) contextualized places as nodes in the flow of social relations, creating an adaptive and dynamic landscape constantly challenging past authenticities and allow for future change. In this definition, places are not isolated, but always regarded in relation to other locations in the cognitive space external to the city. Similar to Massey's (1994, 1999) concept that places are regarded in relation to other places, Alkon and Traugot (2008) and Billig (2005) describe how place comparisons and place meta-narratives are a key part of the creation of place. In place comparisons, actors try to differentiate a place from its neighbours, generally through the advocating of strategies designed to maintain difference between them (Alkon & Traugot, 2008). This again is compatible with place

branding efforts that describe brand narrative (Hansen, 2010) and place comparisons (Turok, 2009) as ways of positioning the city.

2.3.1 Place Branding and Sense-of-Place

Building off Pred (1984), Warnaby & Medway (2013: 351) argue that places “be regarded as the result of processes and practices, and consequently sense-of-place is developed through the interaction of structure and agency.” While this neo-Marxist perspective explains structure – the use of place branding as a control of absolute, relative, and cognitive space, a humanistic geography perspective explains agency and how this influences potential consumers. In its most general form, the epistemological element for the study lays within the concept of sense-of-place (Cloke & Johnston, 2005; Cloke et al, 1991; Richards, 2009). The epistemological underpinnings are used by those branding to develop the sense-of-place.

Sense-of-place refers to the attitudes and feelings that individuals and groups have towards a place. This is not dissimilar to what place branding should be in theory and practice, which has been defined as the network of associations of individuals about a place that are constructed by a wide array of place promotion and place marketing initiatives. Allen (2007: 61) describes place branding as:

shorthand for the personality of place in the place environment that broadens the traditional role of marketing beyond communicating features and benefits to one of deepening relationships with customers.

These suggest intimate, personal, or emotional bonds that form between an individual or group and place. As a result, place branding outcomes can be explained by humanistic understandings of sense-of-place outcomes, in terms of the positive affective qualities of

place-attachment, through senses of affection, rootedness, and belonging with a place (Relph, 1976; 1981; Tuan, 1977). A critique of place branding, such as those highlighted by Cleave et al (2017) and Medway & Warnaby (2017), fail to pick up on these more emotional and affective understandings of place, creating bonds between consumers and place that are often hollow or lack substantive meaning.

However, to fully understand sense-of-place, place itself must also be understood. Broadly, place refers to a location in space that act as *loci* of meaning and memory, infiltrated by intense emotions, relationships and connections that create a sense of belonging. As Cresswell (2004: 12) puts it, “place focuses on the realm of meaning and experience. Place is how we make the world meaningful and the way we experience the world.” For a place to be a place, it must have meaning, and one way to communicate and reinforce this meaning is through place branding.

Humanist geographers (e.g. Relph, 1970; Tuan, 1971, 1977), have described the creation of place through a lens of phenomenology. There is a strong sense within the tradition of humanist geography to explain place as a subjectively sensed and experienced phenomenon. Place refers to a location or space that has gained special meaning through personal, group, or cultural processes. While Relph and Tuan may have considered direct interaction with a location a requirement to imbue meaning, that is no longer necessarily true. If we consider Kavatzis’s (2004) tertiary model of place communication, primary communication can shape sense-of-place through direct interaction. However, direct marketing and word-of-mouth communication channels can also influence place perception. As a result, a connection with a place – the sense-of-place – can be created without direct interaction, but rather as an individual navigates contemporary place brand

landscapes. Particularly in the age of digital and globalized communications, an individual can have their perceptions of a place shaped prior to any direct interactions.

Epistemologically, the phenomenological conceptualization of place is through the everyday world of an individual's immediate experience, including their actions, memories, fantasies, and perceptions (Relph, 1970; Tuan, 1996). Relph (1976) further explained place through the understanding of three components: physical settings, activities, and meanings. The conceptualization of place has been further described through models that similarly rely on the relationship between multiple attributes (Smaldone et al, 2005). Canter (1997) expanded on Relph's (1976) model through the 'facet theory' describing place through the interrelations of the concepts of functional differentiation, place objectives, scale of interaction, and aspects of design. Similar to Relph (1976), the model postulated by Canter (1997) the physical characteristics of a place, however, also includes the individual, cultural, and social aspects of place (Gustafson, 2001). Gustafson (2001) describes place through the interplay of the relationships of self (the individual and their emotions, activity, self-identification), the environment (including the physical environment, types of place, distinctive features and events), and the perceived characteristics and behaviours of others.

Agnew (1987) conceptualizes place through three major elements: first, locale, the settings in which social relations are developed; location, the geographical area enveloping the site social interaction; and sense-of-place. Thus, meaningful places are constructed through social relations, but they geographically located in space and at the same time give individuals a sense-of-place (Agnew, 1987; Gustafson, 2001).

Distilling these models for explaining how place gets its meaning, there are several overlapping features. First, there needs to be a setting (physical, economic, social) in which the meaning occurs. This suggests that place branding has a territoriality to it, that it must be bound within a location in space. Billig (2005) identifies this in her research, where the sense-of-place for residents in Israel varied based on the length of time that they had been in the community. It was also noticeable that the perceived place did not conform to any political boundaries, suggesting that boundaries of place are contingent on the individual. Second, this commonality also suggests that the physical design of the space play an important role in creating and storing meaning. Canter (1997) and Agnew (1987) all suggest that place is developed through the interaction with others and is a key element in the development of place, suggesting a social component beyond the physical environment that helps to imbue meaning.

2.3.2 Summarizing Place Branding, Place, and Sense-of-Place

Within academic research and practice, there has been considerable confusion over the delineation between place branding, place marketing and place promotion, with the three terms often being used interchangeably. At their core, the three concepts exist along the same spectrum and are deeply interconnected. Place branding is the strategic construction of a place image (Stock, 2009) that reflects a core local identity through its behaviour and metanarratives.

Place marketing (of which direct promotion is one part of the marketing-mix) is the attenuation of the place image through tactical communication of local strengths and attributes to a specifically targeted audience. Both marketing and branding work together

to shape place image and are inextricably linked. Place marketing requires the place to be the underlying product, to provide substance; and the problem with a lot of place marketing is that it thinks the brand is the product, and, thereby, forgets the place. Place branding, on the other hand, requires marketing to actively communicate the desired attributes and place values. From an urban economic development standpoint, place branding can be viewed as an attempted manifestation of the local identity and reality, both present and future (as shaped by actions guided by place management), while marketing is the promotion of these values. Together, they are meant to shape perceptions of the place, and drive consumer decision-making. Since they are both vital, their influence and outcomes should be considered together.

But, what are the place branding and marketing really influencing? Much of the place branding research to date appears to skirt the issues of place and sense-of-place – and there has certainly been extensive study and explanation of how place image is developed and how it influences individuals' decision-making. In the contemporary global landscape, however, this relationship can be formally joined: *place branding can be a key influencer of sense-of-place.*

While branding is not the sole channel through which sense-of-place is formed – it also comes from more personal, emotional, everyday and affective geographies – the brand can act as a mediator between the fundamental functional and emotional values of a place (San Eugenio-Vela & Barniol-Carcasona, 2015) and the psychosocial needs of consumers (de Chernatony & Riley, 1998), which Anholt (2005) has argued it influences all forms of consumer relationships with place and their subsequent decision-making.

2.4 Putting It All Together

In the contemporary global political-economic context, successful places must understand the needs and wants of specific target markets and find ways to satisfy them more efficiently and effectively than competitors (Gertner, 2007). Indeed, Allen (2007), Loewendahl (2001), and Metaxas (2010) argue that the decision to invest in a place comes from the investors having a clear understanding of the perceived benefits from that investment environment. Many studies (e.g., San Eugenio-Vela & Barniol-Carcasona, 2015; Florida, 2012; Kotler & Gertner, 2002), identify that places with dynamic brands – that can articulate local benefits - are able to attract investment with greater ease. In this regard, Allen (2007) and others have noted the place-as-product analogy, where places have to be properly primed to facilitate consumption. By creating a strong place-product, which can underlie the brand, places open the door for being competitive. According to Hall (1998) and Metaxas (2010) the concept of place branding includes (a) a clear and distinct image of the place, which truly differentiates it from other competitors, (b) associations with quality and with a specific way of retailing to the final consumer, (c) ability to deliver long-term competitive advantage, and (d) overall, something greater than a simple set of nature attributes. In this context, place branding becomes what Allen (2007: 61) describes as “a strategic lens, a decision-making tool” to help manage places in a way that allows consumer-place connections and associations to form.

Perspectives on what place branding can achieve appear to intersect with geographical concepts of place and sense-of-place, typified by the development of a clear place image that creates strong location-based connections and associations. It is

acknowledged that branding is not the only way in which sense-of-place is developed, but it does represent a new pathway from which place branding can be examined.

By situating this research within a geographical framework, it reframes the debate about place branding as one about place and sense-of-place. Interestingly, this has synergy with corporate place branding frameworks. As Allen (2007: 61) notes:

What has recently come to distinguish the concept of place branding is the need to provide clear product differentiation in an increasingly competitive, globalizing marketplace that rests on memorability and emotional connection with consumers.

Unpacking Allen's argument, it seems clear that psychosocial connections to a place give it its importance to a consumer, as this is what makes a place stand out from other places that often have similar characteristics and amenities (see Morgan et al, 2002). Therefore, leveraging a place's brand presents the opportunity to influence perceptions of the locality and creates a strong psychological connection. Thus, this research extends the argument of Allen (2007), Oliveira (2015) and others who argue that place branding represents a place management and spatial strategic planning tool. The novelty of the approach of this dissertation is that it argues that place branding represents an approach to strategically manage place and presents one way to strengthen and shape the sense-of-place of key target audiences of consumers.

By taking a geographical perspective and contextualizing place branding as a place management and strategic planning tool for shaping sense-of-place, a framework for examining how place branding influence is measured emerges. Indeed, a contention of this research is that in many regards, those writing about place branding and its influence are at very least implicitly (if not explicitly) dealing with the concepts of place and sense-of-place.

The need for quantifying the influence of place branding is prescient, as it comes in a period where local governments in advanced economies are adopting place branding policymaking at a feverous pace. This renewed appreciation of place branding from an economic development and strategic spatial planning (Oliveira, 2015) standpoint has resulted in local governments committing resources into place branding projects where there is no clear expectation of success. This style of ‘searching for the silver bullet’ policymaking – which extends broadly into other economic development and urban issues – has led to call for judiciousness by academics and practitioners. As Osgood et al (2012: 12-13) explain:

Although no one can fault local governments for engaging in a broad array of strategies to attract economic development, they should still be vigilant about the extent to which those practices are indeed producing outcomes.

While branding efforts in other sectors – such as product, service, and corporate branding – all have developed key performance indicators to measure the influence of their brands on consumers (see Aaker, 1996), place branding is lagging behind. Indeed, efforts by local governments to gauge the success of their place brands are overly reliant on anecdotal evidence at best, and, at worst, failing to quantify the place brand outcomes, leaving uncertainty over whether place branding is producing any positive outcomes.

Within urban management and sustainable local development, fiscal prudence has become increasingly important at the local level. This has become particularly true in a climate of western austerity cuts in the public sector following 2008 financial crisis. However, a number of municipal governments in Ontario – and other advanced economies – have been strongly criticized for undertaking poorly conceived place branding initiatives that divert resources away from providing residents with basic

amenities. It is necessary, therefore, for urban governments to determine whether their investments in place branding initiatives are effective and efficient in drawing consumer attention and generating the desired investment. From a place management standpoint, therefore, a pertinent question is: does place branding even makes a difference in the life of an urban area by influencing perceptions and decision-making within a target consumer group? Interestingly, this issue of putting a number on a place brand or a place highlights another commonality between place branding and cultural geography, namely, how do you measure influence or success? Because the relationships between consumers, places and place brands are complex it may be difficult to capture how a particular place is perceived or how these perceptions and connections influence consumption. However, human geographers have long considered these relationships, and drawing from their understanding of place provides a path forward for quantifying place branding influence.

2.5 Summary

This chapter provided the broader theoretical context within which the dissertation is situated. It starts by explaining how place branding is a geographical issue, then building off of that considers two key areas that are relevant to the research presented in this dissertation. Place branding is explained as an outcome of the changing political economic landscape that cities within advanced economies have faced over the past half-century, and as a process of contemporary urban neoliberalism and entrepreneurial governance. The chapter then considers the role of place and sense-of-place in connection with both place branding and the broader political economic climate that it occurs within. The chapter shows that place branding is a way to facilitate the

development of place perceptions – place image and sense-of-place – but it is also critiqued as being another form of controlling urban space and image to drive consumption.

The next chapter (Chapter Three) builds off this theoretical framing of the issue to provide more specific information on the study design, including descriptions of Ontario as the study area, the study groups, as well as, data collection and analysis. Finally, moving forward in the dissertation, each area of research (Chapters Four through Seven) also present context specific theoretical framing and discussion based on the particularities of the study

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CHAPTER THREE

STUDY DESIGN OVERVIEW

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a high-level overview of the study design for the research of this dissertation. In doing so, it lays the foundation for the research chapters (Chapters Four to Seven) and discussion chapter (Eight) that comprise the remainder of this dissertation. The overview of this chapter is supplemented by more specific methodological information in the subsequent chapters.

To provide an overview of the research, this chapter first provides a description and rationale for the study area (the Province of Ontario, Canada) and the three study groups (talent, immigrants, and businesses). Building off the theoretical context of Chapter Two and study area context, the chapter continues by proposing a conceptualization which links place management and actions of local government, place branding, sense-of-place and consumer decision-making. Together this provides the context in which the research is situated. The final section of the chapter provides an overview of the research, describing broad data collection and analytical features relevant to the forthcoming research chapters.

3.2 Study Area

This research is situated in the Province of Ontario, Canada – and it is focused primarily on a range of cities within the province. While the research is ostensibly focused on city-level branding in Ontario, it has much broader implications. The

political-economic framework that has facilitated the rise of place branding (see Chapter Two) is not unique to Ontario, but instead influencing cities and regions in all advanced economies – indeed there is ubiquitous need across all governments to attract and retain economic resources. Additionally, the use of place branding and need for local governments to understand its impacts is also universal. Place branding is being used to attract talent (Hansen, 2010; Zenker et al, 2013a), residents (Niedomsyl, 2004), change perceptions of cities (Donner et al, 2014), and attract investments (Metaxas, 2010). Finally, the decision-making of target audiences (i.e. talent, immigrants, and businesses) and the way they interact with city brands appears to be consistent across different geographical contexts (Lucarelli, 2012). As a result, lessons learned from Ontario and its cities can inform both theory and practice on place branding effectiveness.

From a research standpoint, it was logical to focus this study in a single region, as the study compares perceptions and evaluations of city brands and constraining the study area within a geo-political boundary allows for control of broader social and political issues, macro-level institutional restrictions, and the general economic development climate allowing for differences that are detected within the research to be more readily attributed to local variability. In addition, by adopting a comparative research strategy across multiple cities – providing both geographic and urban variability – this dissertation can provide both a more robust analysis of place branding’s role in local economic development and a broader picture of its use compared to single-municipality case studies (Reese, 1992). Additionally, most place branding research has focused on large cities and regions, when it is smaller and more peripheral municipalities who are facing the greatest likelihood of urban and economic decline (Hall & Hall, 2008). In Ontario and other core

economic regions, the trend has been towards agglomeration of activities in the largest cities, leaving smaller urban spaces to fight for the remaining scraps of mobile economic resources. Consequently, it is important to understand the decisions that cities of all sizes—not just the largest and most prominent—are making in their place branding and economic development efforts (Lewis & Donald, 2010; Reese, 1992; Sands & Reese, 2007).

3.2.1 The Province of Ontario: Existing Branding Efforts

The Province of Ontario represent a strong case study for place branding for several reasons: first, Ontario appears to be a hotbed of place branding activity, with an adoption rate at the local level (88%) that outpaces that of neighbouring regions, such as in the State of Michigan, USA (48%) (Sadler et al, 2016). Second, previous research indicates that place branding is being adopted by municipalities of all sizes, types, and geographic contexts (Cleave & Arku, 2014, 2015).

Beyond logos and slogans – which represent the primary focus and branding outcomes in the province, there are several tangible examples of how cities have used complex and comprehensive branding strategies to reposition their city. This includes large scale urban redevelopment projects (e.g. the *Distillery District in Toronto*), cultural redevelopment projects (e.g. the *cultivation and promotion of creative and artisan businesses in Prince Edward County; development of downtown districts*), the attraction of international events to reposition cities on the world stage (e.g. *London hosting the 2013 World Figure Skating Championships; Toronto hosting the 2015 Pan American Games*), developing place narratives and mythology to attract a target audience (see

Hopkins, 1998 for discussion of *rural communities in Southern Ontario*), redefining and repositioning the community following the decline of traditional industries (see Stern & Hall, 2010 for the example of *Cobalt, Ontario*), online promotion including social media presence and hosting promotional videos on YouTube (Cleave et al, 2016), and development of recreational activities and greenspace.

Perhaps the strongest example of how this integrated approach was used to rebrand and reposition the city in Ontario is found in the City of Kitchener. Kitchener used place branding to facilitate broad improvements to the local economy, urban landscape and culture. The economy, buttressed by knowledge-based industries, was cultivated through partnerships with two local universities, the recruitment and retention of highly skilled labour, and an aggressive online strategy designed to engage and attract potential businesses. This online strategy included an up-to-date website that provided site selectors with an array of information about the city, its workforce and the costs of doing business in Kitchener (e.g. housing, taxes and development charges). This development of the economy was paired with redevelopment of Kitchener's downtown, and placing heavy emphasis on revitalizing the local culture and social environment. Kitchener was strategic in identifying its strengths (i.e. a highly educated workforce and a strong technology-based regional economy), its target businesses, and the improvements that the city needed to optimize their opportunity for growth. Because of these policy decisions, Kitchener attracted Google to open its largest campus in Canada.

3.2.2 Institutional Context for Place Branding

An explanation of why place branding is prolific in Ontario can be traced to spatial restructuring of political power in the province since the mid-1990s. In response to the stresses of changing global and local economies and the downloading of responsibilities from the province to the local level, Ontario underwent a series of amalgamations forced by the conservative-led provincial government, reducing the number of municipalities from 815 to 444 (Sancton, 2000). Local governments were forced to confront how to represent these newly formed municipalities; forcing local governments to consider how best to brand and promote themselves. There are, however, concerns over whether place branding policy in Ontario is being employed in substantive and impactful ways. That said, lessons learned from Ontario can be useful to understanding issues of place branding in other areas, as Ontario faces many of the same political and economic challenges and opportunities found in other advanced economies (Arku, 2013), and as a result, findings from Ontario can be generalized, applied, and contrasted to policy findings in other locales.

Within the province, a tension also exists between the neo-liberalization of global economic markets and the institutional controls at the provincial level that constrain them. Since the late-1990s there has been a continual downloading of economic responsibilities from the province to its municipalities. Cities in Ontario, however, are creatures of the provincial government, and through the *Municipal Act* face a range of legislative restraints that define the scope of their power. Specifically, the province holds an array of historical institutional controls that define the tools available to municipalities in the area of economic development. As a result, local governments remain constrained

by the province's restrictive legislation that limits the extent of their power and economic development efforts (Arku & Oosterbaan, 2015; Gertler, 1990; Reese & Sands, 2007).

The implication of this institutional context, as Gertler (1990: 43) argued is that:

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

Municipalities in Ontario have thus been compelled to find creative ways to enhance the economic growth and competitiveness of their jurisdiction, particularly as American states have taken a more liberal, free-market approach to local economic development.

Due to the need for creative development strategies, place branding has been increasingly emphasized to positively promote the municipalities to draw in tourists, talent, immigrants, residents, and business.

Contemporary to these political processes, the Province of Ontario has also faced significant economic challenges that have been spurred on by the evolution of the global capitalist economy and the changes in flows of economic resources facilitated by globalization. As with most advanced economies, Ontario has been forced to cope with the issue of deindustrialization. The province's historical strengths in traditional manufacturing sectors, such as automotive and steel, have faced restructuring and decline. Municipalities which had previously prospered from the presence of large manufacturing complexes were forced to cope with the aftermath of industrial restructuring and shifting of capital to more productive areas of the economy and different methods of industrial organization (Tassonyi, 2005; Wolfe & Gertler, 2001). Exacerbated by the global financial crisis of the early-20th century, the province has

suffered from a range of economic problems, such as closures of traditional industries, fiscal stress and rising unemployment (Arku, 2013). For example, the City of London, Ontario has faced continual stress over the past two decades from the pressures of economic restructuring. For example, Bradford (2008, 2010) notes that London faced decline of financial services in the 1990s, economic stress due to the emergence of North American free trade, and a major decline in manufacturing in the economic recession of the 2000s. London, however, is not alone in its struggles.

3.2.3 Local Economic Development Planning

Overall, the challenges of the changing economy have affected the fortunes of most municipalities and communities in Ontario and their approaches to local economic development (Bourne et al, 2010; Hutton, 2010; Vinodrai, 2010). As a result, over the past twenty years, there have been significant changes to both the approach and the policies of local economic development in Ontario. For the majority of the 20th century, the role of economic development officials has been characterized as that of ‘salesmen’, whose primary duty was to recruit major manufacturing facilities (Taabazuing et al, 2015). However, the approach that these ‘first and second-waves’ of economic development took was a haphazard, reactionary, and disorganized approach to planning, with few formal goals, processes, or strategies (Osgood et al, 2012; Rubin, 1988; Waits et al, 1992). In addition, local governments have been criticized for attempting to find ‘silver bullet’ solutions to economic issues, and as a result have adopted policies without firm expectations of success (Reese & Sands, 2014). In the last two decades, however, policymakers and officials have adopted a more systematic approach to economic

development, codifying strategy in formal economic development plans (Arku, 2015; Cleave et al, 2018). These plans identify key sectors of emphasis and initiatives to be undertaken – all within the context of the history, socio-economic and political realities of the municipality.

Cities in Ontario appear to have awareness of the need for a new approach for economic development and begun to re-orient their strategies accordingly. A key component of re-orientation of local economic development, that captures the more proactive and holistic approach cities are beginning to use, is the adoption of formal written economic development plans. A written economic development plan is a local government's formal statement of what it intends to do to enhance the material and social well-being of a community. The plan is often broad in scope and offers a vision of a better economic future and encourages participation of key stakeholders within the community. Such plan typically identifies key sectors of emphasis and initiatives to be undertaken to meet the prescribed targets – all within the context of the history, socio-economic, and political realities of the community.

In Ontario, the re-orientation of local economic development has forced local governments to take a more holistic view, considering factors beyond large firm attraction, and instead taking co-ordinated action designed to enhancing assets and address local weaknesses. In many regards, this has manifest itself through a re-orientation of focus towards advanced industry sectors, as well as creative and knowledge-based economies. The processes occurring in Ontario is like those in other advanced economies, as there is strong alignment between the strategies being developed in Ontario and those identified by Bradshaw (2000), Clark and Moonen (2014), Donahue

et al (2017), Leigh & Blakely (2013), Osgood et al (2012), and Reese and Sands (2007) as being given priority in the United States and Europe.

In particular, these strategies have manifest themselves in policies emphasizing technology, tolerance, and talent (Florida, 2012); workforce development, skilled labour, knowledge and human capital (Gertler & Vinodrai, 2005); education and the leveraging of universities (Bramwell & Wolfe, 2008); collaborative and regional approaches (Arku, 2014); business attraction strategies that avoid incentives (Cleave et al, 2017); quality of life and place (Clark, 2007); all included as part of comprehensive place branding and marketing initiatives. In addition, economic development strategy now privileges sustainable development, recreational opportunities, downtown revitalization, cultivating arts, culture and heritage, and the provision of city services (Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Leslie & Rantisi, 2006; Reese & Sands, 2007; Gertler & Vinodrai, 2005).

3.2.4 Integrating Place Branding into Local Economic Development

Within this broader context of economic change, place branding has an increased role. As previously noted in this chapter, 88% of municipalities in the province have some form of place branding (Sadler et al, 2016). Interestingly, a similar rate of usage (90%) for place branding is found within the 51 cities in the province as place branding is identified as a key strategy within strategic local economic development policy. Table 3.1 summarizes key perspectives on place brands and branding presented by cities in their economic development strategies. Of note, the way place branding is described suggests it is viewed as a complex and wide-ranging strategy. As the City of Ottawa (2014: 7) describes:

The City will aggressively build on its current level of international marketing efforts by developing, in concert with its partners and stakeholders, consistent and co-ordinated city-wide branding.

However, current in practice, place branding appears to be more focused on logo and slogan development.

Table 3.1: How place branding is perceived by cities - selections of branding definitions and goals from city economic development documents

City	Description
Kawartha Lakes (2006: 42)	The brand should evoke the very best of all aspects of Kawartha Lakes – the ‘Quality of Place’ must shine through. Further, the usage of the brand must be ‘earned’ in order to maintain the high status and quality that the brand is meant to evoke; failing this relegates the brand to a mere label.
London (2015: 16)	Community branding is more than the development of a logo, tagline, or slogan – it requires a brand identity with community traction and buy-in, strong stewards that will ensure the brand is communicated consistently over the long term, and a commitment from stakeholders to deliver on the core messages of the brand.
Mississauga (2010: 41)	Consistency of message and brand in all future economic development marketing materials will emphasize the City’s attractive local assets, quality of place, and the strengths of its business community and support infrastructure.
Orillia (2008: 71)	Branding objectives: a) Development of a new corporate logo, slogan-motto; b) enhance website content for economic development; c) comprehensive community profile document that captures the ‘authentic’ Orillia that can also be used as a business and workforce recruitment tool.
Ottawa (2014: 30)	Effective branding requires a strategic approach to public relations and a commitment to the formation and management of an image as an ongoing, holistic, interactive and community-wide process. It is much more than developing a logo, tagline or slogan. It requires a strong steward that will ensure the place brand is communicated consistently on a long-term basis...Branding, image and place identity is not focused solely on messaging.
Prince Edward County (2010: 18)	While one of the County’s most important assets, the messaging associated with the County’s image and brand is not controlled by the County. Community stakeholders perceive that there is a general lack of coordination within the County when it relates to local branding and tourism promotion activities, which has led to confusion in the local business community.
Timmins (2011: 63)	A brand symbolizes the meanings and values that distinguish the community from others. It is a promise...a powerful influence on perceptions, intentions and behaviour, especially if the brand evokes some of the aspirations or shared values of its target audience.
Vaughan (2010: 73)	In place branding, an important component is the co-ordination of resources and experiences to maintain consistency with an established brand. It is a strategic process for developing and maintaining a place identity that is compelling and relevant to all key audiences...coordinating and organizing of all of the variables that influence a city’s image.

Note: These represent a selection of perspectives drawn from published local economic development documents of cities in Ontario (listed in the reference section)

3.3 Identifying the Study Groups

As noted in Chapter One, this dissertation examines place branding effectiveness among three groups: talent, immigrants, and businesses. These three groups were selected for two main reasons: first, they represent key groups within the existing research domain, highlighted as key economic resources that cities and other places can attract and retain through branding; and second, they represent key resources that cities in Ontario are privileging in their local economic development efforts. In fact, these groups have also been identified as key target audiences for place branding, with the City of London (2016: 16) outlining:

A city's image or place brand plays a key role in economic development marketing, contributing to the differentiation of an area and outlining the unique value proposition of the community to businesses, visitors and residents.

Of note, two other areas often identified as potential targets for place branding – tourism and foreign direct investment (FDI) – were not included in this study. In the case of tourism, it is due to the well researched field of destination and leisure studies being well established, as well as tourism tending to be considered separate from other local economic development issues, with cities often having their own tourism-based brands. FDI was not included as it is broadly not a strategy that cities outside the largest in the province are readily pursuing. As a result, talent, immigrants, and businesses were selected as they represent key targets of economic development planning.

3.3.1 Talent

Talent are the most well-researched group when considering place branding effectiveness (see Florida, 2012; Hansen, 2010; Insch & Sun, 2013; Jacobsen, 2009,

2012; Lawton et al, 2013; Mellander et at, 2011; Zenker, 2009; Zenker et al, 2013a, 2013b). In many ways this makes sense, as attracting and retaining a highly-skilled and well-educated workforce is understood to be a vital component for cities to remain relevant in the changing global economy. Particularly in the emerging new and creative economies – and driven by the creative class dissertation of economic development – human capital is seen as a vital cog in local economies. As Romer (1990: 98) describes “what is important for growth is integration not into an economy with a large number of people, but rather into one with a large amount of human capital.” In doing so, the attraction of talent emphasises quality of place as a key influencing factor (Florida & Mellander, 2015). In a context of economic competitiveness between cities, it appears relevant to evaluate if criteria related to the promotion and positioning of quality of place in place branding efforts have an influence on the attraction and retention of talent.

Cities in Ontario follow this model, as 71% prioritize talent attraction and retention, while an additional 19% focus primarily on attracting the creative class. Table 3.2 summarizes key conceptions of the need for attracting talent. In general, the perspective of cities matches that of the academic literature, with talent being privileged in the shifting economy. As the City of Barrie (2009: 56) argues, “in this new era, a community’s ability to attract and retain the highly educated workers needed for sustained growth has become central to long term economic success.” Echoing the same theme, Greater Sudbury (2015: 27) suggests that “the increasing desire to support a knowledge-based economy has generally positioned the talent and creativity of the community’s workforce as a central element of competitiveness.” The broad understanding is that, cities in advanced economies need talent to stabilize and grow.

Table 3.2: Defining city’s need for talent - key descriptions from Ontario local economic development documents

City	Description of the need for talent
Barrie (2009: 51)	In this new era, a community’s ability to attract and retain the highly educated workers needed for sustained growth has become central to long term economic success.
Brantford (2010: 41)	The <i>emerging economies</i> will be created more around the base of human talent than these physical attributes. The critical assets of the future are the people in the community and their capabilities.
Greater Sudbury (2015: 27)	The increasing desire to support a knowledge-based economy has generally positioned the talent and creativity of the community’s workforce as a central element of competitiveness. This has placed an emphasis on both attracting and retaining a highly skilled workforce, but also more fully leveraging the skills and talents of the existing population to accomplish goals around economic diversification and employment growth.
Hamilton (2010: 2; App. B)	Addressing Youth Retention and Attraction, and developing a successful strategy in regards to it, not only ensures that Hamilton has a diverse, vibrant, educated and engaged Labour Force, it essentially ensures that Hamilton has a future.
London (2015: 11)	The driving force behind any effective economic strategy is talented people. We live in a more mobile age than ever before. People, especially top creative talent, have the ability to move to places in which they want to live and work. A community's ability to attract and retain top talent is fast becoming the defining issue of the creative age. As the global economy becomes more competitive, jurisdictions will be challenged to attract and retain the brightest talent, as well as provide the necessary skill training, career advancement and education opportunities to stay competitive.
Ottawa (2014: 10)	Perhaps only a few cities globally can boast such a high concentration of knowledge-based workers as Ottawa. Over the years, this smart talent has been the fuel behind heavy investments made into this region’s various business sectors that continue to grow and diversify and attract intelligent people from across Canada and around the world.
Waterloo (2009: 23)	A community’s human capital is an indicator of its growth potential as it speaks to the capacity for innovation and entrepreneurial activity. Human capital is defined as the accumulation of skills and talents which manifests itself in the educated and skilled workforce of a given region.
Windsor (2011: 23)	Despite the fact that Windsor-Essex has a relatively high unemployment rate, the medium and longer term economic development success of the region will, hinge in large part, on its ability to attract and retain talent.

Note: These represent a selection of perspectives drawn from published local economic development documents from cities in Ontario (listed in the reference section)

However, there are two limitations within the existing research on branding and the attraction of talent: first, that there is an overwhelming focus on the creative class (see Florida et al, 2011; Lawton et al, 2013; Mellander et al, 2011; Zenker, 2009); and second, focus is on established talent, who have already made a determination of where to live

and work, rather than emerging talent on the brink of entering the workforce. This study, in contrast, examines the perceptions of this emerging highly-educated talent, which is in high demand but also have the mobility and life-flexibility to locate in any city they prefer. To do so, the study group is comprised of students from the University of Western Ontario, London. Western is a member of the U15 Research Intensive Universities, which is the organizations engaged in the highest level of research activity among higher education organizations in Canada. The students were drawn from a range of disciplines, and because of the mobility of undergraduate students (see *Insch & Sun, 2012; Llewellyn-Smith & McCabe, 2008*) represent a geographically diverse study group.

3.3.2 Immigrants

At a national level, Canada – as with many countries with advanced economies – has relied on immigration to support urban and economic development. Indeed, three-quarters of the recent population growth in Canada is the result of immigration (*Buzdugan & Halli, 2009*), as is nearly all the net labour force growth. At the city level, immigration has also been identified as a key economic issue, with immigrants being a sought-after group. About 60% of cities in the Province of Ontario identify attracting immigrants as a key economic priority in their economic development planning (see *Table 3.3* for a selection of comments from policy documents on the importance of attracting and retaining immigrants). As the *City of London (2016: 15)* articulates:

Immigration has also taken on more significance to the economic expansion of the city. With an aging population and low rates of natural population growth, more and more of the country's cities and regions will need to rely on immigration as a way to sustain employment growth.

Table 3.3: Attracting immigrants - key rationales for attracting immigrants in local economic development documents from Ontario’s cities

City	Description
Brantford (2010: 209)	New Canadian residents, especially those with professional qualifications, represent an essential asset for the future of Ontario... This will ‘improve’ the work force age demographic, and, potentially, the educational profile. Also, since many will bring families with them, the future profile is also enhanced.
Elliot Lake (2013: 47)	New and recent immigrants provided the entrepreneurial capacity and the labour skill requirements needed to help backfill certain segments of the economy and labour market that are absent, and which are likely to compound as the population of Elliot Lake continues to advance in age.
Greater Sudbury (2015: 11)	<i>(As part of the goal to create 10,000 jobs by 2025):</i> A community that maximizes the value of its people, and that attracts, welcome and retains immigrants and newcomers with know-how and talent
Guelph (2010: 7)	The western world’s growing dependence upon the talent pool migrating from developing countries means places are also competing for selection by migrants as a preferred destination... success will depend on attracting a steady stream of talented workers from other countries, and integrating them into our workforce as productively as possible... Guelph needs to become a destination both compelling and welcoming to migrating talent.
London (2015: 11)	Attracting and retaining immigrants in London is critical to the city’s competitiveness ... One in five Londoners are newcomers to Canada, and yet for companies to access the skilled workers they require, this proportion will need to increase in the years ahead.
Hamilton (2010: 1; App. C)	For many reasons, Hamilton needs to take a proactive approach to immigration. Population growth is stalled, our labour force is aging, newcomers trying to access the labour market are faced with unnecessary barriers and too many of them are living in poverty. Many immigrants to Hamilton are highly educated with job specific skills and entrepreneurial talents – the very ingredients that are essential to compete and prosper in the knowledge-based, global economy.
Mississauga (2010: 17)	Unlike immigrants in many other large cities around the world, most immigrants in the Toronto region are skilled. This provides greater “potential to be innovative and creative, develop international trade relations, provide cultural amenities and sustain a cosmopolitan character that enhances the quality of urban life across the region.
Ottawa (2014: 29)	By addressing labour market barriers, the City can have a positive influence on attracting and retaining immigrants and longer-term economic development... and can harness cultural opportunities to make new Canadians feel welcome.
Vaughan (2010: 85)	By building the relationships... the City can begin to craft a marketing strategy to attract new residents to the city of Vaughan. Canada is facing a labour shortage, and many experts are citing increased attraction of skilled immigrants to mitigate the problem.
Waterloo (2009: 30)	There is an underutilization of existing human resources within the community, and is also suggestive of systemic challenges related to the integration of new labour into the community. Furthermore, if this trend continues, it may become a serious disincentive to immigrants considering Waterloo as a settlement and employment destination, meaning that new immigrants will take their skills and intellectual capital to other communities.

Note: These represent a selection of perspectives drawn from published local economic development documents (listed in the reference section)

A second key rationale for cities is adapting to the demographic change and slow population growth occurring within the province. As the Prince Edward County (2010: 1) describes:

Rural and smaller communities across the rest of Ontario are facing population challenges that mirror those found in Prince Edward County. In Belleville and Quinte West, for example, between 2006 and 2011, population growth was only slightly ahead of Prince Edward County, with 1.3% and 0.9% growth rates respectively.

As a result, city governments are realizing the need to attract immigrants. Beyond helping address issues of population and labour sector growth, immigrants also provide a source of highly-skilled, well-educated, entrepreneurially-inclined workers. In many regards, international immigrants fill the same needs that cities seek in domestic talent. Therefore, local governments have begun to recognize the need to develop branding efforts that position their city in a favourable way compared to competitors in an attempt to attract this immigrant group.

There has been a limited research on its role in immigrant attraction. To rectify this, this dissertation examines the perspectives of immigrants post-migration living in London, Ontario. This allows for the examination of how city branding efforts influenced where immigrants choose to locate, after the decision to migrate to Canada was already made.

3.3.3 Businesses

The final group investigated in this dissertation is businesses, which again represent a key strategic economic development priority for cities in Ontario.

Approximately 85% of the cities in the province have a specific business attraction and

retention policy as part of their economic development policy. Table 3.4 outlines some key perspectives on the need for business attraction, with City of Waterloo (2009: 7) arguing the need to “Make Waterloo the location of choice for innovative and growing businesses” and the City of Toronto (2013: 13) stating:

Business investment decisions are complex and based on many interrelated factors. Creating a positive business climate that stimulates economic growth and job creation therefore requires a coordinated and integrated approach.

Within this context, there has been a broad focus of local governments in Ontario and other advanced economies to emphasize local entrepreneurial ecosystems with focus on the development of small and mid-sized firms (Auerswald, 2015). Indeed, there has been increased recognition and acceptance of the importance of small and mid-sized firms in emerging knowledge, creative, and technology-based sectors (Florida & Melander, 2015; Gonzalez-Pernia, 2015). Built around highly educated and skilled workforces, this transition into the new economy emphasized the need for high levels of entrepreneurship. In addition, from both the perspective of local government officials and businesses in Ontario, there was both efforts to brand cities for the purposes of business attraction, and potential for this to influence decision-making of where firms locate.

This study group was drawn from two cities in Ontario: The City of London and the Regional Municipality of Waterloo (the cities of Waterloo, Cambridge, and Kitchener). Waterloo was selected as it has a strong reputation for business success within its local economy built around knowledge-based and high-tech firms, as well as an integrated approach that incorporates place branding as a strategic guide for development. Alternatively, London – as identified earlier in this chapter – has had significant local economic issues and developed a poorer reputation and business brand. In addition, until

Table 3.4: Explaining the need for attracting business - key rationales from locale economic development documents in Ontario

City	Description
Hamilton (2010: 5)	The establishment of a positive business environment is one of the fundamental conditions required to implement this new “orientation” towards innovation...Hamilton’s strategic goal of aggressively attracting new business is completely dependent upon its ability to accommodate that growth.
London (2015: 15)	London’s economy has changed considerably over the last several decades. With the decline in manufacturing, entrepreneurship and small business growth has been a notable contributor to business development in the city in recent years.
Ottawa (2014: 9)	Issue: Local high-tech sector historically highly dependent on a few large companies. Strategic Solution: Investments in nurturing a thriving entrepreneurship culture to help create the ‘Fortune 500’ companies of tomorrow, as well as opening up of national and international export markets for local small/medium-sized firms.
Toronto (2013: 10)	All cities are competing for business growth in many situations: multi-national companies looking to expand a business line (or where to consolidate and reduce away from), entrepreneurs looking for the best business environment, inventors looking to commercialize their innovation.
Waterloo (2009: 8)	Entrepreneurial vision and strong individual business accomplishment have been drivers of past performance in the Waterloo economy, and many small start-ups have grown to become international giants in their respective fields. The City must work diligently to preserve and enhance the connections of these companies to the community, and to ensure that these firms remain committed to maintaining operations within the community.

Note: These represent a selection of perspectives drawn from published local economic development documents (listed in the reference section)

the early-2010s the focus of the city’s business attraction strategy was primarily large, low skilled food process and manufacturing. The local government had also received harsh criticism for failing to attract automotive firms into the city losing out to regional competitors. As a result, London has a weak business attraction and economic development reputation. The firms in the study were drawn from a wide range of sectors (described in greater detail in Chapter Seven), though retail firms were excluded from the study to allow for focus on firms that were key producers and innovators.

3.4 Quantifying Place Branding: Conceptual Framework

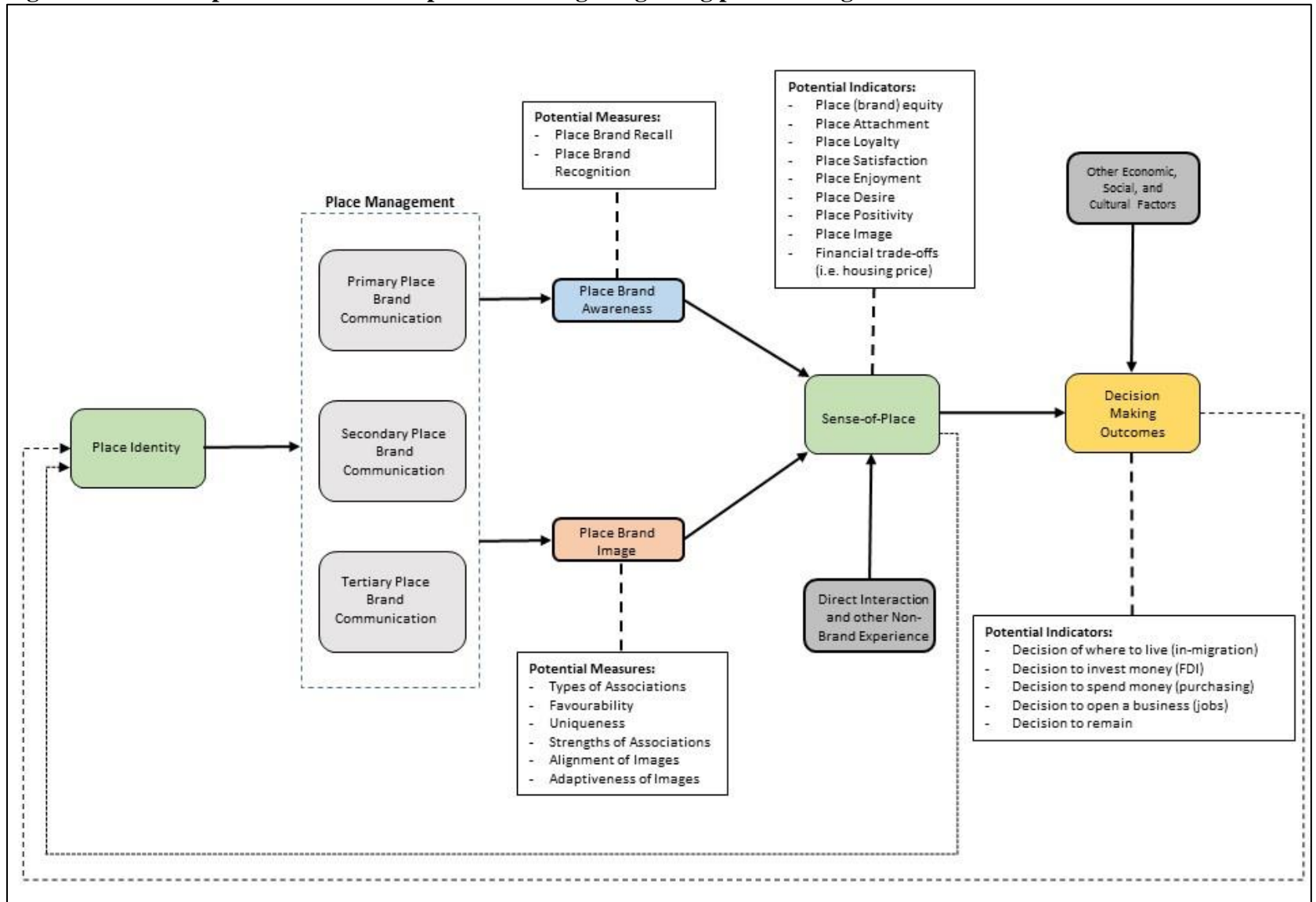
Extending the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter Two and the research context described in this chapter, Figure 3.1 summarizes the arrangement between government control of space and response to challenges, place branding and marketing, sense-of-place, and consumer decision-making. Place management decisions and actions influence both the level of place brand awareness and how it is perceived in the minds of consumers. These factors work in conjunction to shape the attitude and the magnitude of sense-of-place, which ultimately affects consumer perceptions and decision-making.

Despite the difficulties of quantifying the outcomes of place branding policy within a complex urban system, it is possible to develop a general framework by drawing from a range of disciplines relevant to understanding place branding. Underlying these processes, is the understanding that organizations – and places – are increasingly seeking to extend the economic value they can create through strategic policymaking and interventions (Gummerus, 2013). Thus, the goal is to institute these initiatives to create some form of value (e.g. a change in perception, a decision to invest).

3.4.1 Revisiting Equity

Place brand equity has been identified as a method for examining the influence of place branding (Donner et al, 2014; Florek, 2015; Jacobsen, 2009, 2012; Jørgensen, 2014; Lucarelli, 2012; Zenker & Martin, 2012). However, as Lucarelli (2012: 233) concludes in a meta-study on brand equity, there remains considerable disagreement on what the actual evaluation and measurement of city branding should entail, pointing out

Figure 3.1: A conceptual framework of place branding integrating place management and influence on consumer



that “there is no common definition of brand equity but several interpretations that entail different models and tools for evaluation.”

However, by examining place branding and traditional marketing literature, a framework for place brand equity can be developed. Pike (2010) suggests that Consumer-Based Brand-Equity – a model promoted by Aaker (1991, 1996), Keller (1993, 2003), and Yoo and Donthu (2001) – provides a model for measuring perceptions of a place. This model for equity measures the customers knowledge and connection to a brand, as well as how well it resonates; built off brand awareness and image-based dimensions. But what forms the basis of this equity? Lucarelli (2012) proposes a place brand equity model focusing on city brand elements, city brand measurements and city brand impact. Drawing from Jacobsen (2009, 2012), Kavartzis (2004), Lucarelli (2012), Niedomysl (2004, 2007), and Zenker (2009) a wide range of tangible and intangible brand elements emerge – including events and activities, urban and natural landscapes, recreational, urban, social and cultural opportunities and offerings, the local history and heritage, economic, political and spatial planning, urban development, local government and institution, word of mouth, as well as traditional branding elements (i.e. logos).

City brand measurements often focus on outcomes related to sense-of-place, such as satisfaction and loyalty (i.e. Zenker et al, 2013b). However, as framed in the first two chapters of this dissertation, sense-of-place provides a measure of how the brand influences consumers. When taking a geographic perspective, however, focus also needs to be placed on the sense-of-place that is developed through branding, its antecedents, and its outcomes. These indicators are more ethereal and may not necessarily have as obvious (or tangible) an outcome as the economic indicators. The image of a place is

generally accepted to be based on attributes, functional consequences (or expected benefits), and the symbolic meanings or psychological characteristics consumers associate with a specific place, and the image influences positioning and ultimately behavior (Anholt, 2007). Indeed, Govers and Go (2009) find that “images are personal constructs, the sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions in the minds of individuals.” The formation of image has been described by Reynolds (1965) as the development of a mental construct based on a few impressions chosen from a flood of information, and place image was first defined by Hunt (1975) as the total set of impressions of a place, or an individual’s overall perception.

Finally, brand equity demonstrates the way the brand impacts consumers and the city. In other forms of branding, key performance indicators are used to measure the influence the brand has on consumers (Baldauf et al, 2003). As with firm-based branding, a strong place brand represents a key competitive advantage, and can function as a main source of a place’s ability to attract desired and target audiences. Socio-economic performance indicators, therefore, present a potential path to quantifying the effects that place branding may have. As Figure 3.1 shows, place branding can ultimately influence consumer decision-making and therefore could be quantified through tangible outcome indicators including retaining and attracting new residents, business, and investment (FDI and spending), and economic output (GDP), all of which are key economic outcomes for cities. For consumers, this can mean impacts on decisions of where to live, work, or locate.

3.4.2 A Framework for Measurement

While equity provides a way to understand the influence of place branding, further discussion is needed on how best to measure branding outcomes. Within the literature, place branding is typically contextualized as the application of marketing and branding techniques to places (Warnaby & Medway, 2013), which, in turn, provides another research domain from which measures of success can be drawn. On this basis, place branding influence can be further categorized along three interrelated dimensions: adaptiveness and effectiveness. Adaptiveness is defined as the ability of an organization to respond to environmental changes (Kahn & Mayers, 2005). Though often explained as a precursor to efficiency and effectiveness, adaptiveness can be understood as the ability to allow for the potential of maximizing value by positioning a brand to reflect an evolving political-economy at local and global scales (Khan & Meyers, 2005). If a brand is not adaptive, it may be difficult to generate positive outcomes.

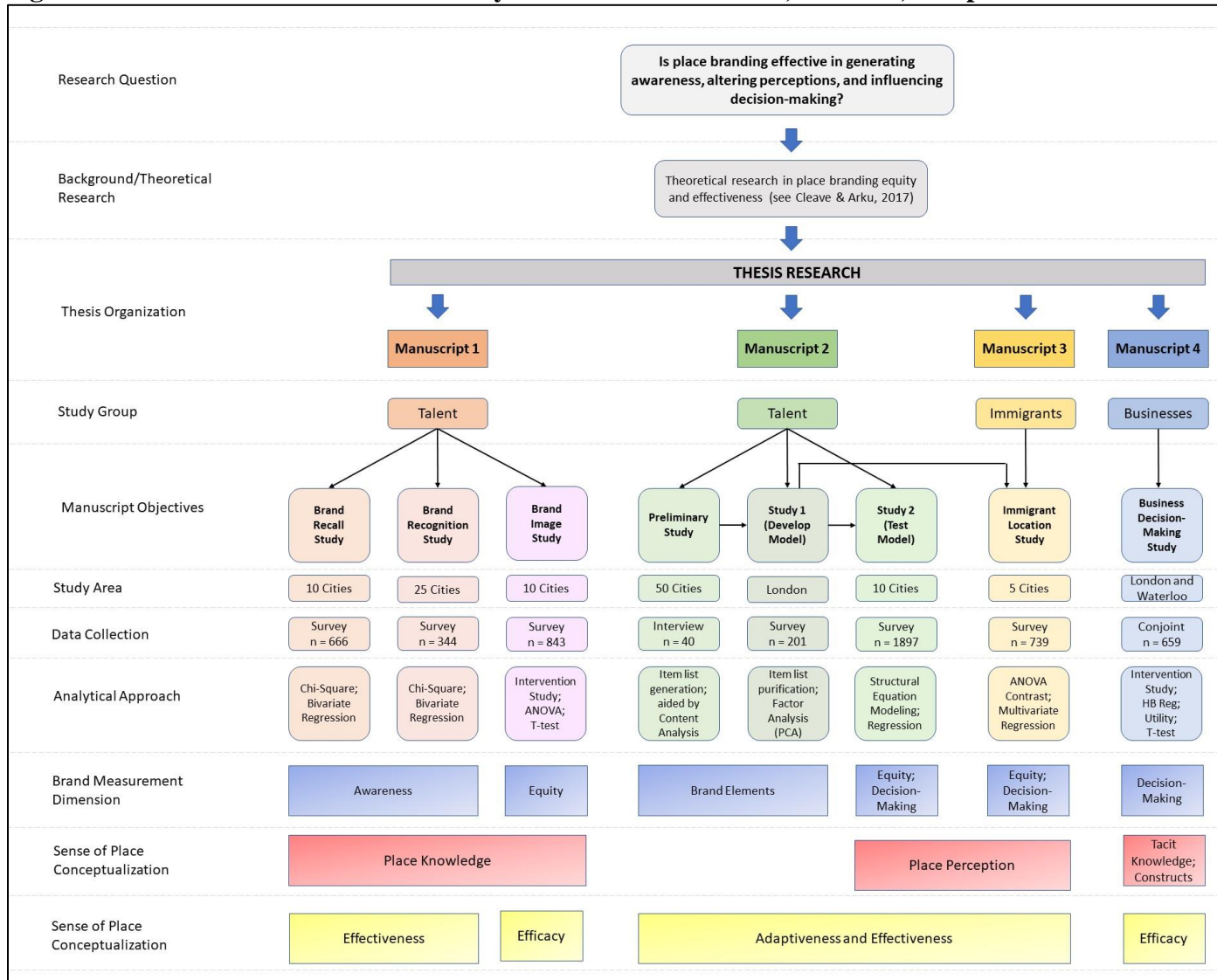
Effectiveness presents a tangible path to measuring influence and can be seen as the measure of an initiative to produce a desired value-outcome (Gummerus, 2013; Kotler, 1977). Effectiveness can be subdivided into two dimensions: simple effectiveness and efficacy. Efficacy – or true effectiveness – considers whether an intervention is successful under ideal conditions, such as in studies that compare responses of intervention and control groups (Pittler & White, 2010); while simple effectiveness takes a broader perspective to understand the benefits or utility that a policy has at achieving a desired outcome (Nagel, 1986; Pittler & White, 2010).

3.5 Study Overview

Figure 3.2 provides an overview of the research conducted in this dissertation. Broadly, this dissertation adopts a quantitative approach, although it builds on qualitative research in early stages. The rationale for adopting a primarily quantitative approach was that it allowed for an analytical approach that measured the influence of place branding – allowing for identification of statistical significance in effectiveness measurements, and conclusions to be made on whether it actually worked. The use of a quantitative approach also provided a pathway for conducting research on a larger sample, collecting a wider range of perspectives, and allowing comparisons between cities. Finally, a quantitative approach allowed for the effectiveness and adaptiveness of place branding efforts to be measured along dimensions of awareness, image/perception, and decision-making/outcomes.

Returning to Figure 3.1, there are several locations where effectiveness and efficiency could be measured. Sense-of-place can be seen as being influenced by two key dimensions: place brand awareness and place brand image (Keller, 1993). To create a strong sense-of-place, there needs to be awareness of the place brand and it needs to create a positive image in the minds of those the brand interacts with. As delineated on Figure 3.1, the influence of the place branding effort can be identified by whether it has affected the place brand awareness, image, or changed the attenuation of sense-of-place. Additionally, the influence of place branding can be measured through the relationship between sense-of-place and the decision-making of the target audience.

Figure 3.2: Research overview – summary of dissertations studies, methods, and place measurements



Note: Final survey sample size for the entire study was n = 5389.

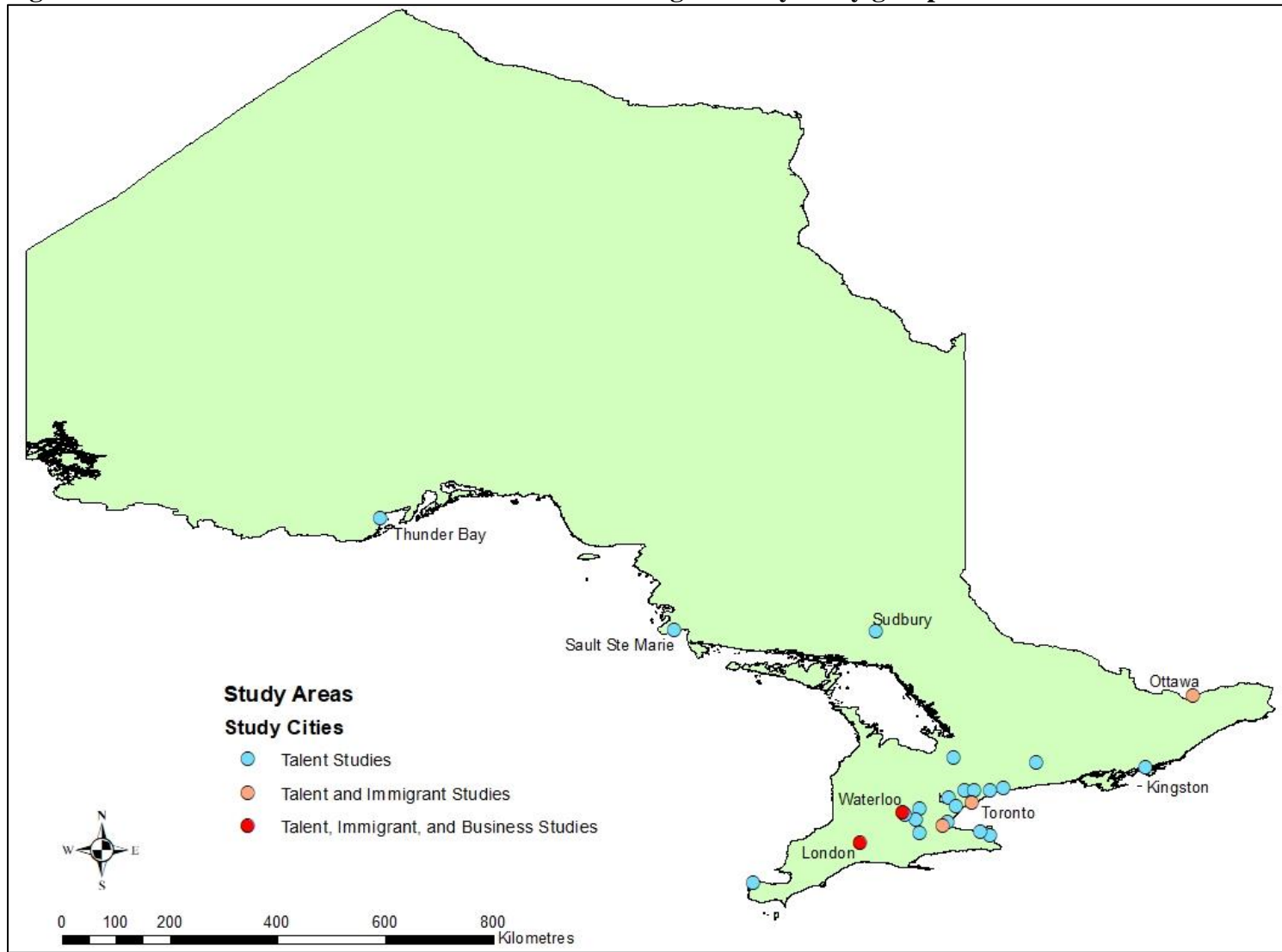
3.5.1 Data Collection and Analytical Approach

Chapters Four to Seven present the eight studies that comprise the research of this dissertation. In each of the subsequent chapters, context-specific details about the specific study design, key research questions and hypotheses, data collection, analytical approaches are provided. Seven of the studies rely exclusively on surveys as the main part of their data collection, while the eighth is what was used to form the foundation of the survey used for talent and immigrants in Chapters Five and Six.

Chapter Four focuses on the issue of brand awareness and image, collected through three surveys (see Appendix C.1 to C.3). The first two surveys focus on effectiveness of place branding efforts in generating place awareness, by determining whether the study group can recognize (for 25 cities) and recall (10 cities) place branding efforts of cities in Ontario (see Figure 3.3 for a map of study locations). The goal of this stage of research was to determine whether there was any brand resonance among talent. Influence of potential exposure to the place brand was also examined, using whether the respondent had lived in the city and the city population size as a proxy for city prominence. The findings were examined using descriptive statistics, chi-square analysis, and bivariate regression.

The third study presented in Chapter Four focuses on whether a place brand intervention influences the perceptions of a place. The talent were randomly divided in three groups, a control group and two intervention groups that provided brand information about the city. The respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of cities based on imagery they were exposed to. This allowed for a measure of efficacy in whether the place branding efforts – and the brand awareness of the talent – influenced

Figure 3.3: Ontario cities included in this research – categorized by study group



their perceptions of place. Two key elements of this chapter were: that it relied on simple branding (logos and slogans) to examine place brand awareness and influence; and that it framed the issue of sense-of-place being formed through interaction with the place brand, and that place brand awareness is important in the development of this place equity. The approach used in this chapter represents a new approach to city branding evaluation.

Chapter Five again presents three studies, with each building off the previous one to develop the multidimensional scale ultimately used in the investigation into the structure of the relationship between place branding, the perception of talent about cities – again framed through sense-of-place as a measure of place equity, and talent decision-making about where to live and work. A key contribution of the approach in this chapter is that it considers the decisions of talent prior to a decision, limiting the amount of potential bias in responses due to increased place experience and familiarity. By using a group that is on the verge of entering the job market, it ensures that a decision on where to live and work is inevitable, where other studies using established talent or creative class do not. As a result, perceptions on cities as a place to live and work become a strong proxy for a decision.

Following the study design framework set out by Churchill (1979) and Cleveland and Laroche (2007), the first study developed the broad framework for the study, constructed the initial multidimensional scale (survey with 101 items; see Appendix C.4) and begin development of a conceptual model. The second study distributed the survey to explore perspectives of talent on the City of London, with principal components analysis applied to the responses to purify the survey to 28 items (see Appendix C.5), identified seven key latent variables, and completed the conceptual model.

The third stage used the responses of a more widely distributed survey about talent perspectives on ten cities (Toronto, Mississauga, Hamilton, Brampton, Markham, Windsor, Vaughan, Kitchener, or Ottawa) to conduct structural equation modeling to test the conceptual model (see Figure 3.3 for a map of study locations). The advantage of structural equation modeling, compared with correlation analysis, is that the relations in the conceptual model can be tested simultaneously. This approaches reality better since in reality the various factors also interact with one another to produce effects. It also enables us to see whether some of the relations that appeared to be strong in single correlation remain significant when they are combined with the other variables (Klijn et al, 2012). This approach is again novel for place branding research as structural equation modeling is rare (see Klijn et al, 2012; Zenker et al, 2009) and has previously not utilized the robust survey design approach put forward by Churchill (1979) and Cleveland and Laroche (2007). Overall, the study examines the effectiveness of place branding on developing equity and the effectiveness of this equity in shaping decision-making.

Chapter Six extends the survey developed in the second study of Chapter Five to examine the ways city place branding influences the decision-making of immigrants. This chapter acts as a counterpoint to research on talent, as it examines perspectives post-determination of where to live and explores what brand elements were most important in shaping decision-making. The survey (see Appendix C.6) was distributed to immigrants living in London, Ontario and asked them to provide perceptions (through a multidimensional scale) on the city plus one other key immigrant destination in Ontario (Hamilton, Ottawa, Toronto, or Waterloo; see Figure 3.3 for a map of study locations). Using ANOVA contrasts, this chapter identified the elements where London stood out

compared to its competitors. In addition, multivariate regression was used to examine the relationship between the latent place brand factors and sense-of-place. This allowed for both an examination of the effectiveness of place branding at generating equity and decision-making, but also the adaptiveness of place branding by determining whether current human capital attraction strategies position cities in a way conducive for attracting immigrants.

Chapter Seven explores the influence of place equity – framed through sense-of-place as tacit knowledge – on the prioritization and trade-offs of city features in business decision-making. The influence of sense-of-place was conceptualized as having a halo or summary construct effect, where certain elements of cities were tacitly understood, altering the importance of those elements based on whether the city was perceived to excel or struggle in that area. Through compensatory trade-offs, an adaptive choice-based conjoint survey was used to identify which feature were most important to businesses in London and Waterloo (see Figure 3.3 for a map of study locations). Through a control-intervention study the influence of place perceptions on the importance of these features was examined. Hierarchical Bayes estimation was used to estimate part-worth utilities of the features based on the responses of the conjoint survey. The use of conjoint analysis in this way is unique.

3.6 Summary

This chapter provided the broader practical and conceptual context within which the dissertation is situated. It starts with a discussion on the political-economic situation in the Province of Ontario and relates that to the issue of city place branding as an

economic development approach – focusing on the justifications for examining the attraction of talent, immigrants, and businesses. This is followed by a discussion of the conceptual framework in which the research is situated and ways in which the influence of place branding can be quantified, and effectiveness evaluated. The chapter then deals with the methodology and data sources on which this dissertation relies. Justification for employing a quantitative approach is provided. While this chapter served as an overview, the following chapters contain additional study-study specific details on the methodologies that were utilized.

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CHAPTER FOUR

MANUSCRIPT 1: PLACE BRAND AWARENESS AMONG TALENT

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of three inter-related studies examining the effectiveness of place branding efforts of the largest cities in Ontario, Canada and whether they are effective in communicating and influencing well-educated talent, ultimately answering the question *does place branding influence place awareness and knowledge?* The studies investigate whether place branding efforts have a core effectiveness – if they can successfully break through with a target audience and if the brand resonates in a positive way with this audience. The ability to create a favourable image and strong understanding of the place brand can shape both connection and perception of a place, influencing the sense-of-place. Sense-of-place is related to place loyalty, attachment, and satisfaction. From an urban and economic development perspective, this is important as it can influence decisions-making to migrate or remain. In theory, therefore, place branding can play an important role in shaping sense-of-place amongst a target audience as well as having an impact on attracting and retaining mobile economic resources, such as well-educated talent. To do this, however, the place brand must both reach and resonate with the audience. To this end, this chapter focuses on whether branding efforts are effective in achieving their core goals for reaching talent: whether city brands can be recognized, recalled, and if the branding efforts influences perceptions of the place.

This research is prescient, as in Ontario and abroad place branding is increasingly being identified by local governments as a tool to attract talent to stabilize local

workforces that support the transition into the knowledge-intensive new economy (Taabazuing et al, 2015). In addition, place branding has been linked with the attraction and retention of other mobile economic resources, including migrants (Niedomysl, 2004, 2007), investment (Metaxas, 2010), business (Cleave et al, 2016; Pike, 2013), and tourism (Beritelli & Laesser, 2018). Indeed, the proliferation of place branding initiatives as a tool of local economic development has been significant over the past several decades, with all large urban areas participating in some form of branding effort. In fact, reliance on place branding has become so commonplace with city governments, place branding is viewed as ‘business as usual’ (Braun et al, 2018; Eshuis & Klijn, 2012; Kavartzis & Hatch, 2013) and simply ‘the cost of doing business’ (Cleave et al, 2017a).

However, this over-reliance on place branding has been critiqued as a questionable way to expend government resources and public funds, as they detract from larger and more substantive urban development projects. Additionally, if every city now has a brand – focused around a common theme – the homogeneous landscape that is created makes it difficult for individual cities to stand out and improve the place knowledge of their target audience. Pike (2013) argues that diffusing marketing and competition between cities and between regions might worsen the uneven development, allowing large cities to continue to attract most of the available economic resources, and leave smaller cities jockeying for position over the scraps that remain.

Cleave et al (2017a, 2017b) and Donner et al (2014) have demonstrated that place managers and local economic development officials understand the value of place branding efforts to improve or stabilize their local economies. However, the approach that cities take has been strongly criticized, particularly for being overly superficial and

focused on logo and slogan development and marketing campaigns, rather than comprehensive and substantive branding efforts. As a result, there are significant questions about the effectiveness of place branding. In light of these calls from academics, some recent studies have begun to examine the effectiveness of place branding efforts by local governments (see Braun et al, 2014; Donner et al, 2014; Jacobsen, 2009, 2013; Klijn et al, 2012; Niedomsyl, 2004, 2007; Zenker, 2009; Zenker et al, 2013). Broadly, the focus of much of this empirical research considers the effectiveness through place brand equity – which attempt to measure the perceptions of a place and its brand (Cleave & Arku, 2017). When considering a brand equity, the existing research has generally focused on the types and strengths of place brand associations.

Interestingly, there have been few studies that consider place branding from a place knowledge perspective by examining place brand recognition, recall, or the favourability of the image. Indeed, this is a major gap in the research domain. If the goal is to understand effectiveness of place branding efforts, then the core areas that determine the level of brand knowledge should be investigated. This research attempts to fill this gap by considering *does place branding influence place knowledge?* To explore this overarching question, three highly related studies – utilizing the results of three separate surveys of students at the University of Western Ontario – were developed to investigate the core areas that influence place brand knowledge: recallability, recognition, and image favourability. An underlying hypothesis for Studies 1 and 2 was that greater prominence and experience with a city facilitates greater place brand knowledge. A second research hypothesis, tested in Study 3, is that the presence of a place brand influences the talent perception and favourability of a city. Altogether, this research helps to determine

whether efforts in Ontario's cities are having a positive impact, and whether their branding efforts are reaching their desired audiences.

4.2 Place branding: An extension of product branding and marketing?

Place branding has the same goal as traditional branding and marketing exercises – managing exchange values; however, instead of promoting and positioning a product to a target audience to drive purchase, place branding is asked to do the same for cities to drive migration and retention of economic resources. A second parallel can be drawn with traditional branding and marketing efforts around how a brand's outcome can be contextualized. Keller (1993) and Yoo and Donthu (2001) suggest that brand knowledge is the outcome of the branding effort – a combination of recognition/recollection and image strength/positivity/composition which together determine whether the brand successfully positions itself in the mind of the audience. The stronger this brand knowledge, the greater potential for brand equity where a product will be perceived more prominently and positively in the mind of the consumer compared to competitors.

Within marketing literature, there is a strong connection drawn between brand knowledge and brand equity (Keller, 1993), with brand equity being conceptualized in terms of asset value (Dyson et al, 1996), a more relevant measure in regard to place branding is through customer-based brand equity (Berry, 2000; Keller, 1993; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Keller (1993: 8) defines customer-based brand equity as the “differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand.” Brand knowledge occurs at the confluence of brand awareness – or the recognition and recall of the brand, the brand image constructed through the development and leveraging of a

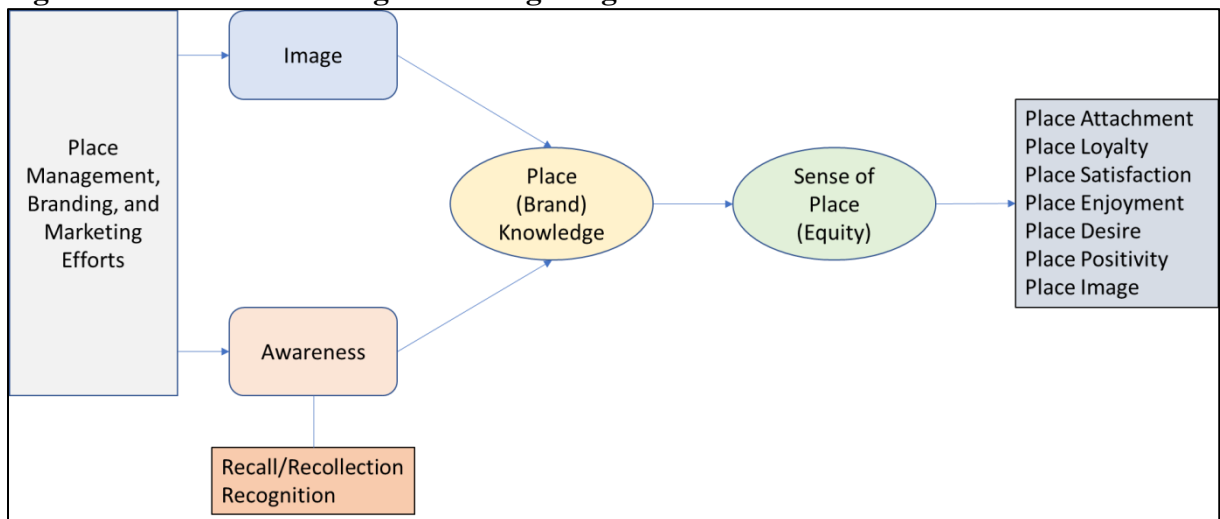
network of associations with the brand and product, and the meaning that consumers apply to the brand (Aaker, 1996; Berry, 2000; Keller, 1993; Yoo & Donthu, 2001). The strengths of each of these attributes will influence the brand equity. A brand will have positive equity if consumers react more favourably to the product than they do a generic, average, or nameless brand (Aaker, 1996).

For cities, the conceptualization is similar, as the desired outcome of most place branding appears to be improved *place knowledge* – through increased awareness of the city and its brand, as well as improved the place image (Braun et al, 2014; Cleave et al, 2017b; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005; Zenker & Beckmann, 2013). The greater the place knowledge, the greater potential for *place equity*, or the perceived value a place has over competitors. As Cleave and Arku (2017) have argued, this place equity can ultimately be a driver of decision-making among talent and businesses over where to live, work, and operate. Since an important outcome of place branding efforts is the differentiation and (re)positioning of a city against its competitors, a key goal of branding efforts is to maximize this equity (Donner et al, 2014; Jacobsen, 2009, 2012).

Expanding from the marketing literature, the elements that are emphasized in the positioning of the place brand become a network of associations (Zenker & Braun, 2010). In theory, this stronger place brand equity will influence place satisfaction, loyalty, and attachment, which can influence the decision-making of an individual about where to live, visit, work, or spend money. However, for brand knowledge and equity to be fully realized, the image associations must be favourable, but there also needs to be strong brand awareness. An unrecognized brand is unlikely to have a strong influence on consumer decision-making. This concept extends to city branding as well, as Hospers

(2003) suggests that place branding is vital in the development of a city. If a city desires investment of traditional or new-economy industries, to attract talents, or become known as a centre for innovation, entrepreneurship, or creativity it needs place branding to promote itself and enter the consciousness of the target audience. A city could have the necessary infrastructure and economic ingredients to be a leader in an economic sector; however, if it does not promote itself that way it will never achieve that reputation. As a result, the initial marketing and branding framework developed by Keller (1993) can be extended to explain places and their brands. In this context, place equity is driven by place knowledge (see Figure 4.1). This place knowledge is influenced by the

Figure 4.1: Brand knowledge – relating image and awareness to consumer influence



(Developed from Cleave & Arku, 2017; Keller, 1993)

favourability of the place image that the brand helps to foster. While a favourable image is important, extending Hospers (2003) argument, it means nothing if it cannot be directly associated with a place. The ability to recall or recognize a place’s brand is important, otherwise the favourable image developed by the brand will not be accurately associated. Therefore, having strong brand recognition and recollections is vital.

4.3 Place Branding in a Geography Context

The perception about the need for place branding among local governments is the product of increased global competition – with emerging and competitive markets jockeying for position to attract scarce resources – the influence of neoliberalism, restructuring of power, capital, and sites of production, and the rise of a more entrepreneurial attitude of governance among cities and regions (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Harvey, 1989; Isin, 1998), and the outcome of urban policy meant to create or reinforce place identities. Due to increased competition, cities need to ensure efficiency in their branding and marketing efforts (Jacobsen, 2012; Berry, 2000) by understanding the consumer behaviour related to their perceptions of a brand (Yoo et al, 2000).

In fact, place branding appears to occur at the confluence of broader political-economic processes, as well as core human geography concepts around space, place, and sense-of-place. Within contemporary research, a place brand is described as the reputation about a place (Anholt & Hildreth, 2005), the network of associations in the mind of the place consumer (Braun, 2012; Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2005; Zenker & Braun 2010; Zenker 2009), or a shared but selective symbol for the place (Boisen et al, 2011). Place branding, therefore, is the process of shaping the reputation, creating the network of connections, and developing the selective symbols. All seem to point to the idea that place branding can actively shape perspectives about place and create connections that can influence an individual's decision-making. The connection to a place – the *sense-of-place* – is analogous to place equity. As a result, the brand's image and awareness shape knowledge, which in turn shapes sense-of-place.

Though a social construct, if space is considered empty it becomes a frame for locations where substantive items are contained (Manzo, 2005; Tuan, 1977). Or, in this context, a more apt description of space when considering place branding is that of a homogenized landscape where every place has a brand, creating a space where there is no discernible difference or variation across it. Indeed, place refers to a location or space that has gained special meaning (Low & Altman, 1992) – or in the context of place branding, interaction with a city’s brand. The place brands act as *loci* of meaning and memory, infiltrated by intense emotions, relationships and connections that create a sense of belonging. These psychosocial connections that are facilitated and mediated by the brand are necessary to give a place its meaning and importance to a consumer, and make it stand out from other locations that are increasingly homogenized (Allen, 2007; Cleave et al, 2016; Morgan et al, 2002). Within human geography research, there is a potential framework in which branding can be situated to understand how it can influence the meaning or understanding of a place. Tuan (1991, 1996) emphasizes language and symbology as pathways through which meaning can be created, imbued, and communicated. As such, a logo, slogan or even a name can make the overlooked more visible and real, while narratives and storytelling helps explain how individuals and communities choose details to reflect various themes. Place metanarratives, cultural descriptions of types of place, offer broad notions in which details of specific locales can be contextualized (Alkon & Traugot, 2008). Interestingly, Cleave et al (2017a) argue that place brands are often conceived as a way of communicating a story or metanarrative. Indeed, it appears that place brands can help develop connections and meaning with consumers by helping to develop narratives, imagery, or even create a label about a place.

It is acknowledged that place branding is not the only way in which place narratives are formed or communicated. Nor is it the only way in which sense-of-place is developed. However, it does represent a key way in which local governments are actively trying to shape how they are perceived and understood.

From a humanistic point of view, space is a key part of the natural world and can be experienced. Rather than being formless and profane, it is articulated through social practices that create and make use of different conceptions of space (Harvey, 1973; Tuan, 1996). Indeed, Tuan (1996) argues that from the humanistic perspective, space becomes less abstract, and is understood through the sensation, perception and conception of the world. In the context of place branding, it is the brand that helps to develop these understandings of a city. Further, there is a strong tradition within human geography (see Tuan, 1977, Relph, 1970, 1976) to explain place as a subjectively sensed and experienced phenomenon. It is a space that people have made meaningful, situated geographically and socially, imbued with deep feelings and vested with emotions (Cresswell, 2004). Epistemologically, the phenomenological conceptualization of place is developed through the everyday world of an individual's immediate experience, including their actions, memories, fantasies, and perceptions (Relph, 1970; Tuan, 1996). Relph (1970, 1976) and Tuan (1977, 1996) relate space and place through the experiences of humans as active agents – it is through the interactions with a place brand that greater knowledge, and perspective about the city it represents are developed. As Allen (2007) argues, it is the interaction with the brand that allows individuals to develop initial understandings and connections, which can help develop and reinforce brand knowledge.

Ultimately, this suggests that for a place brand to be successful, it needs to have a favourable brand image, as well as having a strong brand awareness. As a result, place brand recognition and recall become as important as image in shaping knowledge through branding. These dimensions of place knowledge are reinforced through interactions that individuals have with the place brand – both in person, but increasingly through media and online content. If the image is not strong or coherent, or the brand does not make sufficient impact it is unlikely that any meaningful place (brand) knowledge will be created, limiting the place-based equity. This also suggests that exposure to the place brand is likely to influence the effectiveness, therefore, those who encounter a brand more frequently – for instance, by living in the city – are more likely to be influenced by it, due to repeated interaction with it.

4.4 Overall Study Parameters

All three studies were conducted through surveys of students at the University of Western Ontario, London, and focused on the understandings of branding efforts of the largest cities in the province. Students were selected as the study group for several reasons: first, they represent the well-educated talent that cities are actively competing for (Darchen & Trembley, 2010; Florida, 1999, 2002; Smith et al, 2005), have been linked with the transfer of knowledge (Bramwell & Wolfe, 2008), and key to fostering innovation (Darchen & Trembley, 2010); second, due to their life-stage, they are generally mobile and have ability to migrate with relative ease; and third, due to their youth they are less likely to have extensive place knowledge or connection with cities outside the limited number of places that they have lived. The University of Western

Ontario was selected as the site for the study as it is a diverse school that draws students from all parts of Ontario, Canada, and internationally. Additionally, it is a multi-disciplinary school that is highly regarded for training students in a wide range of disciplines including medicine, social and natural sciences, business, and technology.

The cities examined in this study were selected as they were the largest and most prominent cities in the province, as well as the ones most members of the study group would have likely had some interaction with. By limiting the study area to a particular jurisdiction (i.e. Ontario) helps account for broader political-economic forces or other layers of spatial identity (i.e. place perceptions of Ontario or Canada; see Boison et al, 2011) that could confound participant perspectives and responses. As well, cities in Ontario have also been criticized for focusing their branding efforts on logos and slogans rather than more holistic branding efforts (Cleave & Arku, 2014), bringing into question whether their branding successfully communicates with an audience. Finally, cities in Ontario share similarities with other developed markets, as the downloading of political power from higher levels of government have forced them to become increasingly responsible for their own economic development. Attraction and retention of talents is a key priority of city government economic development efforts, and branding is viewed as one area to achieve this.

One caveat of this research is the reliance on logos and slogans, which represent only one dimension of the place brand. While there have been recent efforts to undertake more holistic approaches to place branding (e.g., Braun et al, 2018; Donner et al, 2014; Eshuis & Edwards, 2013; Hansen, 2010; Pasquinelli, 2010), most cities appear to consider logos (and slogans) as the product or outcome of their efforts (Cleave et al,

2016; Pasquinelli, 2010). Indeed, the modern urban landscape has become “forests of logos, slogans and messages” (Power & Hauge, 2008: 125). A logo serves as a visual cue (Baker & Balmer, 1997) and only becomes a brand when it is recognized and conveys meaning to external audiences (Govers, 2013). In Ontario, 88% of communities employ a logo within their primary place branding efforts, while 68% use a slogan. The use of these tangible place brand elements in this study ensures the study participants were exposed to an actual part of each city’s brand in a straightforward way. Beritelli and Laesser (2018) argue that logo recognition is a valid proxy for assessing whether intended branding, as the logo is a specific choice by the city in how it is represented.

4.5 Study 1: Place Brand Recognition

To support the overall research question, the first study asks: *are city brands correctly recognized by talent?* In the accrual of place and brand knowledge, recognition is important because a favourable image that is promoted provides limited value if it is not associated with the correct place. If talent cannot recognize place brands and connect them to the right city, the value that the brand promotes may be lost or attributed to a competing place.

Following a key hypothesis guiding this research – that greater exposure to brands influences brand awareness and image – this study explored brand recognition through two hypotheses:

H1: Those who live/have lived in the city are more likely to recognize the brand than those who are external to it.

H2: Larger cities (in terms of population) are more likely to have their brand recognized than smaller ones.

It is assumed that greater exposure to the brand will improve its chance of being recognized. The assumption of this analysis is that living in the city acts as a strong proxy for brand exposure and interaction. Additionally, city size is used in this study as a proxy for city prominence, as larger cities are more likely to have prominent brands allowing for greater exposure and awareness.

4.5.1 Data Collection and Analysis

To test these research hypotheses, data was collected through a survey (see Appendix C.1) in which respondents were asked to identify the place branding efforts of the 25 largest cities in Ontario that had a logo (Table 4.1). Logos were used in this study as they act as the loci or tangibilization of the city brand. As well, logos present a manageable way to explore brand recognition among the respondents through an acknowledged and well-understood channel of place communication, allowing for less intensive data collection process (Beritelli & Laesser, 2018). Respondents were instructed not to guess, but rather only respond to logos that they could correctly identify. This survey approach allows for two key pieces of information: if the brand was thought to be recognized and if it was correctly associated with the right city. The respondent believing that they recognized the place brand, measured if in their response they associated the brand imagery with a city, indicates whether or not those surveyed had encountered the brand sufficiently for it to appear familiar. Secondly, correctly associating the place brand with the city it represents, provides a measure of the overall effectiveness of the communication. A test for the difference of two proportions was used to identify any

significant deviations between the associated and actual accuracy of the brand recognition of each city. This allows for a measurement of resonance of the brands.

H1 was tested using Pearson's chi-square analysis for both general brand recognition and identification accuracy. H2, the influence of city size on brand recognition and accuracy was modeled using bivariate regression. For this second hypothesis, place brand recognition and place brand recognition accuracy were the response variables (as a %), while city population size was the independent variable.

4.5.2 Study 1 Findings

The final sample size for Study 1 was 344. Of this, 55% of respondents were female and 45% were male. On average, the students were in their third year of university and came primarily from social sciences (53%); however, were also represented by students in business programs (26%), health (8%), and other (13%). Finally, 93% of respondents indicated that they had lived in at least one of the 25 cities in the study.

Summarized in Table 4.1, it is evident that brand recognition is low, as logos were recognized only 30% of the time, ranging from a high of 68% for Toronto to a low of 10% for Thunder Bay. For logos that were recognized, they were associated with the correct city approximately 54% of the time. This ranged from 86% accuracy for City of London, to a low of 14% for City of Peterborough. From this summary analysis, it suggests that the branding efforts of cities in Ontario are not reaching their audience, with the implication that this will limit the ability of the brand to influence them. As a result, it can be described at an overall level that place branding has not been effective in achieving one of its basic goals. However, for 22 of the 25 cities, the actual recognition

accuracy was higher than the rates of perceived recognition (significant at $\alpha = 0.01$ or greater in the test of two proportions). This indicates that while there is limited reach of the brand, in cases where it does reach the audience it begins to resonate and be recognized.

Table 4.1: Perceived and actual brand recognition of cities in Ontario among talent

<u>City</u>	<u>Population (1000s)</u>	<u>Perceived Recognition</u>	<u>Recognition Accuracy</u>	<u>Difference of Accuracies</u>
Toronto	2615	68%	76%	12%*
Ottawa	866	41%	67%	26%***
Mississauga	713	21%	40%	19%**
Brampton	523	29%	28%	-1%
Hamilton	519	35%	57%	22%**
London	366	43%	86%	43%***
Markham	301	30%	67%	37%***
Vaughan	288	47%	73%	26%***
Kitchener	219	36%	47%	11%*
Windsor	210	55%	72%	17%*
Burlington	175	21%	7%	-14%*
Sudbury	160	19%	39%	20%**
Oshawa	149	27%	43%	16%**
Barrie	136	34%	47%	13%*
St Catherines	131	23%	36%	13%*
Cambridge	126	22%	26%	4%
Kingston	123	28%	43%	43%***
Guelph	121	20%	25%	5%
Thunder Bay	108	10%	25%	15%**
Waterloo	98	23%	54%	31%***
Brantford	93	13%	41%	28%***
Pickering	88	18%	29%	11%*
Niagara Falls	83	55%	83%	27%***
Peterborough	87	23%	14%	-9%*
Sault Ste Marie	75	13%	31%	18%**

* sig. at $\alpha = 0.05$; ** sig. at $\alpha = 0.01$; *** sig. at $\alpha = 0.001$ (z-test for two proportions)

As hypothesized in H1 and H2, there does appear to be a slight but significant relationship between brand exposure and place brand recognition. Examining H1 (Table

4.2), those who had lived within a city were more likely to recognize (66%) and correctly attribute (79%) the place brand compared to those external to the city (26% recognition, 48% accuracy respectively). In both cases the chi-square analysis rejects the null hypothesis, indicating that a relationship exists between brand exposure and recognition.

Table 4.2: Impact of living in the city on brand recognition

	Recognized the Brand	No Recognition	χ^2	Accurately Recognized the Brand	Misidentification	χ^2
Lived in the City	558 (66%)	289 (34%)	570.4*	440 (79%)	118 (21%)	172.7*
Never lived in the city	2033 (26%)	5720 (74%)		967 (48%)	1066 (52%)	

Results of the chi-square analysis to examine H1; * significant at $\alpha = 0.05$; 1 df

The hypothesis that exposure influences recognition is further supported by the regression analysis to explore H2 (Table 4.3), as there was a significant relationship (at $\alpha = 0.05$) identified between population and brand recognition. Indeed, for every additional 10,000 people, the general recognition increased by 1.6% and accuracy by 1.5%. Together, these findings suggest that greater exposure and interaction with the brand will strengthen the connection with the city, improving the place knowledge.

Table 4.3: Effect of city size on rates of place brand recognition

Overall brand recognition

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	0.25	0.0212	8.57	0.000
% change per 10,000 people	1.66	0.0001	3.52	0.002

Accuracy of recognition

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	0.41	0.047	8.379	0.000
% change per 10,000 people	1.56	0.0001	1.956	0.045

Results of bivariate regression analysis; evaluates H2

4.6 Study 2: Place Brand Recollection

Place brand recall, or recollection, represents the second dimension of brand awareness, with the ability to recall a brand and its attributes a prerequisite for brand generated place knowledge. In general, recollection is more difficult than recognition as there are no visual stimuli to trigger memories or emotions. However, it is also vital, as ability to recall accounts for what individuals will think of a city when there are no visual cues present or direct interaction with the brand. As a result, the key research question guiding Study 2 is: *can talent recall brands from cities in Ontario?*

For Study 2 it was again hypothesized that awareness was influenced by exposure to the branding effort, and that prominence of the city and direct interaction with the brand would influence how readily it was recalled. To test this broader hypothesis, the two research hypotheses used in this study were:

H3: Those who live in the city are more likely to recall its brand than those who are external to it.

H4: Larger cities are more likely to have their brand recalled than smaller ones.

Again, it is assumed that greater exposure to the brand will improve its chance of being recalled. As with Study 1, city population size was used as a proxy for prominence and having lived in the city was a proxy for familiarity and exposure to the brand.

4.6.1 Data Collection and Analysis

For Study 2 data was again collected through a survey of students at the University of Western Ontario (see Appendix C2), where respondents were asked to recall the slogan of the ten largest cities in the province that had a useable slogan (Table 4.4). Slogans are less commonly used than logos, so there was a smaller pool of cities to

draw from. However, the ten cities used for this study are among the fifteen largest in the province. Slogans present an easier avenue for testing place brand recall, as they are generally short sentences or descriptors, which are easier for respondents to describe compared to logos.

In the survey, the respondents were prompted with the names of the cities and asked to provide the slogan or brand description for only the ones they could recall. This approach allowed for two measures to be taken: first, the overall level of recollection, measuring whether there was any information or perspective that was held about each specific city and their brand; and second, whether they were actually recalling correct brand information. Responses were evaluated by comparing the brand description of the respondent against that of the city brand. Although slogans were what the respondents were prompted to provide, if their description correctly resembled any form of a city's brand – including the logo, slogan, nickname, or broader branding strategy – it was accepted. Again, a test for the difference of two proportions was used to identify any significant deviations with the perceived and actual accuracy of brand recollection to measure the of resonance of the brand for each city.

Using a similar analytical approach to Study 1, H3 was tested using Pearson's chi-square analysis for both general brand recall and identification accuracy; while H4, the influence of city size on brand recollection and recall accuracy was modeled using bivariate regression. For the regressions used to test H4, place brand recollection and recall accuracy were used as the response variables measured in response rate accuracy as a percentage, while city population size was the independent variable.

4.6.2 Study 2 Findings

The final sample for Study 2 was 666 respondents. 53% of respondents were male and 47% were female. Respondents were most commonly in their third year of study and came primarily from disciplines of geography (25%), sociology (16%), political science (12%), management studies (11%), natural sciences (10%), business (7%), engineering (6%), health (5%), and other (8%). Finally, 91% of respondents indicated that they had lived in at least one of the cities in the study.

Table 4.4: Perceived and actual brand recollection of cities in Ontario among talent

City	Perceived Brand Recall	Recall Accuracy	Difference
Brampton	17%	6%	-11%*
Hamilton	31%	27%	-4%
Kitchener	22%	26%	4%
London	40%	18%	-22%***
Markham	19%	3%	-16%**
Mississauga	28%	22%	-6%
Ottawa	41%	2%	-39%***
Toronto	41%	24%	-17%**
Vaughan	30%	4%	-26%***
Windsor	28%	11%	-17%***

* sig. at $\alpha = 0.05$; ** sig. at $\alpha = 0.01$; *** sig. at $\alpha = 0.001$ (z-test for two proportions)

Compared to Study 1, those surveyed had a considerably more difficult time recalling brands compared to recognizing them, as at an overall level some form of association was reported only 30% of the time (compared to 66% of the time for recognition). A similar pattern was noted for accuracy of the recollection (Table 4.4), as brands were only accurately recalled 14% of the time. In general, this lack of accuracy can be attributed to the identification of prominent city elements that are not included in the place branding strategy. For example, the CN Tower was identified as being part of Toronto's brand in nearly half of the responses. Though it is a case of a unique and distinguishing feature for the city, it does not appear in any branding. Interestingly, the

findings of Study 2 differ from the brand recognition findings of Study 1. As Table 4.4 summarizes, the accuracy of the recall was lower than the perceived brand recall, with eight of ten cities having a lower recall accuracy than perceived recall – of which seven had a statistically significant difference (at $\alpha = 0.05$). This suggests that without the visual cue of the logo, it is difficult for talent to recall place brands and correctly associate them with a city.

Similar to Study 1, the null hypotheses for H3 and H4 were rejected, indicating an association between exposure to the brand and the ability to recall it. As seen in Table 4.5, which summarized the chi-square findings related to H3, those who had lived within a city were more likely to recall (57%) and correctly attribute (33%) the place brand compared to those external to the city (24% recollection, 7% accuracy). Interestingly, the level of accurately identified brand elements was considerably lower when the respondents were asked to recall the brand. This suggests that the brands that are being used do not accurately reflect how the city is perceived.

Table 4.5: Impact of living in the city on brand recollection

	Brand Recall	No Recall	χ^2	Accurate Recall	Mis-Recollection	χ^2
Lived in the City	602 (57%)	451 (43%)	458.9*	199 (33%)	403 (67%)	229.5*
Never lived in the city	1365 (24%)	4242 (76%)		92 (7%)	1273 (93%)	

* results of chi-square analysis; evaluates H3; findings significant at $\alpha = 0.05$; 1 df

Finally, the results of the regression analysis used to evaluate H4 (Table 4.6) show there was a significant relationship (at $\alpha = 0.05$) identified between population and brand recollection. Indeed, for every additional 10,000 people, the general recognition increased by 0.68% and accuracy by 0.44%. Together, these findings suggest that greater exposure does again improve the place knowledge, however, without visual cues, the

ability of the brand to be recalled is limited. This suggests that the branding efforts of cities in Ontario have not been successful in connecting with the audience in a way where the brand resonates and remains, suggesting the sense-of-place developed by the brand is weak.

Table 4.6: Effects of city populations size on brand recollection

Overall brand recall

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	0.25	0.034	7.219	0.000
% change per 10,000 people	0.68	0.000	1.957	0.048

Accuracy of recall

	Coefficients	Standard Error	t Stat	P-value
Intercept	0.114	0.045	2.53	0.035
% change per 10,000 people	0.437	0.044	2.92	0.032

Results of bivariate regression analysis; evaluates H2

4.7 Study 3: Place Brand Favourability

Does the presence of the place brand influence the perception of favourability among talent? As Figure 4.1 depicts, place knowledge is influenced by both brand awareness and image favourability. While Studies 1 and 2 explored the brand awareness dimensions, Study 3 contributes to this chapter’s overall research question by examining whether a city’s brand influences the favourability of the place image among talent. As such, this final study tested the influence of the brand on the general perception of a place, and whether the presence of a brand helps to influence this perception.

To explore this question, this study used three different versions of a survey that presented images of the ten cities in Ontario (Table 7). These cities were selected due to their size and due to the presence of similar style images of the urban landscape. Similar imagery for each city was used with care taken to ensure prominent landmarks were removed to limit bias and influence in the respondent answers. Finally, three versions of

the survey were created: first a control group survey that contained only the imagery of the city; second a place brand intervention survey, which contained the imagery but also the city's logo; and thirdly, a brand and name intervention, where the city's name was also included in the image shown to the participants.

For this study, it was expected that the presence of the brand cue and name would positively influence perceptions, which would be reflected in the ratings. As a result, two hypotheses were developed:

H5: Cities with the brand association (logo) will be rated more positively than the control group.

H6: Fully identified cities will be rated more positively than those with just the logo present.

It was expected that more information would influence how the city was perceived.

4.7.1 Data Collection and Analysis

Respondents were randomly placed into one of the three survey groups and were shown imagery for five of ten cities (see Appendix C3). Placement into groups and the selection of images shown were controlled to ensure balance where each group had approximately the same number of participants assigned to it and images for each city were shown at equal rates. Based on the images shown to them, respondents were asked to rate their favourability of the cities on a 7-point Likert scale. To not bias the results, the images presented were selected to ensure that no obvious clues to which city it was and that a similar style of image was presented for each city.

The results of the survey were analyzed two ways to evaluate H5 and H6. First, a series two-way analysis of variance tests (ANOVA) was used to compare the ratings of

the control group against the brand association group, and again to compare the brand association intervention against the rating of fully identified cities. ANOVA tests if there is statistically significant variation between means of different groups ($H_0: \mu_1 = \mu_2$ versus $H_A: \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$), in this case whether there were broad patterns and differences in the levels of favourability between the control and intervention groups. Secondly, for each individual city, a t-test difference in means was used to compare the ratings of the control group against the brand association group, and again to compare the brand association intervention against the rating of fully identified cities.

4.7.2 Study 3 Findings

Study 3 had 843 respondents, 51% of whom were male and 49% were female. As with the previous two studies, respondents were most commonly in their third year of study, though this study had a larger percentage of first year students (28%) than the previous two studies. Again, the participants came primarily from social sciences (42%), business and management studies (22%), engineering and natural sciences (18%), health (9%), with the rest comprised of other disciplines (7%).

Overall, there was a repeating pattern where the control group had the highest favourability rating, and the brand intervention actually produced a lower favourability score (Table 4.7). For both hypotheses, however, the null hypothesis could not be rejected, suggesting that the brand intervention did not impact the rating of the city in a positive way. The ANOVA analysis (Table 4.8) showed no significant variation between groups, while the difference of means tests actually showed that the control group was typically rated highest (only Toronto and London had the average rating by the control

group lower than the average rating of the brand intervention). This suggests that the branding that cities in Ontario are doing is hurting how they are being perceived.

Table 4.7: Favourability ratings of control and intervention groups based on imagery of cities in Ontario

City	Favourability Rating			Difference of Means	
	Control	Brand	Named	Control – Brand	Brand - Named
Barrie	6.25	6.04	5.93	0.21**	0.11
Brampton	5.10	4.73	4.62	0.27**	0.11
Burlington	5.68	5.39	5.09	0.29**	0.30**
Hamilton	4.65	4.59	4.25	0.06	0.24**
London	5.58	5.61	5.16	-0.03	0.45***
Mississauga	5.69	5.42	5.17	0.27**	0.25**
Sudbury	3.76	3.46	3.21	0.30**	0.25**
Toronto	4.70	4.94	5.09	-0.24**	-0.15
Vaughan	5.70	5.50	5.27	0.20*	0.23*
Windsor	4.84	4.56	4.20	0.28**	0.36***

* sig. at $\alpha = 0.01$; ** sig. at $\alpha = 0.05$; *** sig. at $\alpha = 0.001$

A second interesting finding from the difference of means tests was that seven of the fully identified cities differed from brand intervention in a significant (but negative way). This demonstrates that perceptions and knowledge of the city go beyond what is associated with the place brand efforts (what information is associated with the logo).

Table 4.8: ANOVA comparison of differences in the favourability ratings of the control and intervention groups for each city

Control Group vs Brand Intervention

Source of Variation	SS ¹	Df	MS ²	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	0.147	1	0.147	0.276	0.605	4.413
Within Groups	9.58	18	0.532			
Total	9.72	19				

Brand Intervention vs Fully Identified City

Source of Variation	SS	Df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Between Groups	0.250	1	0.250	0.451	0.509	4.413
Within Groups	9.991	18	0.555			
Total	10.242	19				

¹ sum of squares; ² mean of squares

4.8 Discussion and Conclusions

The goal of this research was to examine the question *does place branding influence place knowledge?* And through doing so, explore whether place branding efforts by cities in the Province of Ontario, Canada were resonating with talent – both in terms of awareness and image. Through the theoretical context that connected the concept of branding with the concept of place, there is the potential for branding efforts to influence place knowledge, and by extension its equity or sense-of-place. This sense-of-place becomes the equity that influences the decision-making of talent. However, for this to occur, the brand must not only create a favourable place image, but also be strong enough to influence brand awareness. Without this image, recognition, and recalling it will be nearly impossible for a place branding effort to shape the perceptions of a city among a target audience.

Based on the findings of the three studies, current place branding efforts appear to be ineffective at impacting the core or minimum requirements needed for successful branding. The findings demonstrate that Ontario's cities are having marginal success at best in fostering brand recognition, are unable to have their brands recalled, and appear to have minimal or negative influence over the place image through their branding efforts. As a result, it is difficult to say that city branding efforts in Ontario have been effective. This is particularly notable in light of the amount local governments in the province have spent – with branding efforts having been identified as costing over 1% of annual city budgets. Localities such as Toronto (\$CAN 4.5 million in 2004), London (\$CAN 200,000 in 2013), and Town of Innisfil (\$42,000 from 2008 to 2012) are all recent examples of city branding efforts, all of which were focused around logo and slogan development.

Since both place awareness and place image dimension of the brand are weak, the overall sense-of-place developed from the brand – the connections that individuals have through interactions with brands and their related material – is low, indicating that these cities are failing to accrue positive brand equity. In fact, due to the lack of brand resonance it is likely more accurate to say that these cities have no equity, and from a brand perspective are essentially placeless. As a result, it is unlikely that these branding efforts will be effective in helping to shape the perspective of target audiences (i.e. talent) and have limited impact in strengthening place-based factors (i.e. satisfaction, attachment, loyalty) that are important influencing factors in decision-making about where to live and work.

Interestingly, the study does find that increased exposure to the place brand does improve brand awareness. This suggests that place branding has the potential to be a meaningful part of city image development strategy. From a phenomenological perspective, the connections between an individual and a place can be developed through intense experiences, or slowly over time through continuous interaction. Place branding falls into the latter category, as individuals are likely to encounter the brand over time. However, by acting as a constant reminder and manifestation with a place, this continuous presence can begin to shape how these cities are viewed. The findings here suggest that cities – who are often inward facing in terms of who their brand is communicated to – need to begin to extend their branding efforts, looking outward to access new sections of the target audience, who are largely unaware of their place. Place branding does have the potential to shape sense-of-place and attract talent, however, it is ineffective in its current usage by local governments.

Place branding is often viewed by city governments as ‘the great equalizer’, a ‘silver bullet’ solution that allows cities of all sizes and contexts enter the public consciousness and become able to attract and retain talent and other mobile economic resources. However, the results from Ontario indicate that the place branding efforts are actually further contributing to uneven development, as the largest and most prominent cities are the ones that have the highest levels of brand awareness, further entrenching these cities as the winners in the jockeying for position. Smaller and more peripheral cities appear unable to significantly alter their positioning, and as a result are unlikely to improve their ability to attract talent and break free from the threat of economic decline. Conceptually, this makes sense as the larger cities will have greater branding budgets, allowing greater levels of brand communication, causing more interactions with the brand, allowing for greater place connections to be developed.

However, for smaller cities the overall weakness is lack of brand awareness, as population size does not appear to be related to whether their brand and their city is viewed positively. This suggests that ultimately, it is the lack of place and brand awareness that acts as a limiting factor in accessing their desired target audiences.

So where do cities go from here? In Ontario, as in other regions, cities are continuing to use place branding as an urban and economic development strategy, however, it must be questioned whether the correct approach is being used. Even though this empirical study only looks at the logos and slogans – and therefore refers to one facet of branding – the results demonstrate that a more critical view of place branding approaches is needed by city governments. As with other scholarship on place branding (see Anholt & Hildreth, 2005; Govers, 2013), the focus of place branding cannot simply

be on the logo or visual identity. This study empirically reinforces that focusing on the logo alone (as is the case for much of Ontario's city branding efforts) is likely to have minimal impact, and therefore is a misuse of public funds. Beyond public funds there is the heavy cost of human resources – with the process of developing place brands lasting from about a year (such as London, Toronto, Brampton, and Port Hope) to almost four years (such as Innisfil). Most importantly, these cities see place branding as a 'silver bullet' solution and appear to be pinning their hopes that a redressing will alter their local development trajectory. However, they are overly reliant on visual identities as the cornerstones of their place branding efforts, which this research has shown to produce limited awareness among talent and by extension other target audiences. As a result, policy must begin to focus on developing a more holistic place brand, and find a way to communicate it, rather than just through a visual identity. By utilizing place branding in a more robust way, there is the potential for cities to better leverage their local strengths, communicate with a wider audience, and create the potential to be more competitive in attracting mobile economic resources in an increasingly competitive global economy.

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CHAPTER FIVE

MANUSCRIPT 2: PLACE BRAND PERCEPTIONS AND DECISION-MAKING AMONG TALENT

5.1 Introduction

Does place branding of cities influence how talent perceives them? What factors or characteristics are most influential in effective place branding? And does it influence where talent chooses to live and work? In this context, branding broadly represent a set of tools meant to manage both use and exchange relationships. This management is meant to act as a mediator and facilitate the communication of information about a product and position it against competitors in the mind of a target consumer audience. Through the networks of associations created by the branding efforts, products can be positioned in favourable position amongst a myriad of competitors. It is understood that strong and positive brand associations influence brand and product knowledge, which can influence consumer decision-making (Keller, 1993).

Places are no different. Indeed, the place-as-product analogy has emerged within both place branding (Cleave & Arku, 2017; Kavartzis & Ashworth, 2005) and geographical contexts (Goodwin, 1993; Goss, 1993). The implication is that places can be marketed – shaped, packaged, and positioned – to facilitate exchange relationships and promote use relationships with a consumer, influencing the perceived personal or social utilities of a place, as well as the perceived value that is sacrificed to locate there.

Particularly within a local economic development context, cities and their governments

are increasingly aware that they need to manage use and exchange relationships to attract and retain increasingly mobile economic resources – people, businesses, and investment.

Because of its increased prevalence as a tool of urban governance – and to attract talent – this research quantifies whether place branding efforts have utility in influencing talent perceptions and decision-making. This chapter presents the findings of two studies which interconnect to explain the influence that branding has on perceptions of places and the subsequent influence on decisions by talent to live and work there. The overall question guiding the research is: *does place branding influence perception and decision-making?*

Returning to the questions posed at the beginning of this article – which act as the key sub-questions that provide structure to this research, this study examines the role that place branding has in influencing the perceptions and decision-making of talent, by addressing the three key questions posed above, which form the main research questions for the study. To achieve this, talent – university educated students about to enter the workforce – were surveyed on their perceptions of ten cities in the Province of Ontario, Canada. This study adopts a robust and exhaustive methodology through the construction of a comprehensive multidimensional scale through exploratory factor analysis, used to develop a conceptual model – evaluated by confirmatory structural equation modeling – that describes the form that city branding takes, its influence on sense-of-place and its impact on talent decision-making. The hypothesis of this research is that place branding influences sense-of-place, which in turn influences decision-making.

The findings of the study present methodological, theoretical, and practical contributions. First, the development of the methodology and analysis of

multidimensional scales has, to date, been limited with the concept of place; drawing from work in psychology (Churchill, 1979) and acculturation/consumer studies (Cleveland & Laroche, 2007) this chapter presents a new method for quantifying sense-of-place, including scale development and validation. Second, it presents a new theoretical model of the relationship between branding, sense-of-place, and talent decision-making – answering structural and holistic questions of place branding’s effectiveness. Finally, it presents practical implications for cities – identifying the key areas and approaches that they should focus on to effectively manage their exchange and use relationships with talent to help attract and retain them.

5.2 The Rise of Place Branding

The rise of place branding policy can be contextualized as one outcome of the broader shift to entrepreneurial forms of local government, where governance is increasingly marketing-led. Within the broader frame of entrepreneurial governance, cities in advanced economies are codifying place-based brands and developing formal strategies to improve their image. The goal of this change in government perspective is due to the increased pressure to attract and retain all forms of increasingly mobile economic resources, spurred on by globalization, the emergence of new sites for production and accumulation, and, more generally, the greater mobility that allows people, businesses, and capital to flow across political boundaries at both regional and global scales.

For cities in most advanced economies, this increased awareness of the importance of branding creates an interesting proposition, an avenue to (re)position

themselves to be more competitive in a political-economic landscape that has seen the erosion of traditional economic sectors and the rise of creative and knowledge-based economies. As a result, there is increased jockeying for position between cities to attract and retain well-educated and highly-skilled labour (Lawton et al, 2013; Mellander et al, 2011; Niedomsyl, 2004, 2007; Zenker, 2009). Serendipitously, this need for talent-class fits well with potential outcomes of place branding. Branding facilitates psychological experiences, alters perception over time, through interactions with the brand (Allen, 2007). The brand helps to explain the benefits and value that the place offers to the target audience, as “unless one has lived in a particular city or has a good reason to know a lot about it, the chances are that one thinks about it in terms of a handful of qualities or attributes, a promise, some kind of story” (Anholt, 2006: 18). For talent – who are more likely to include emotional considerations in their decision-making process compared to businesses and investment – strong branding and marketing can help to foster strong psychological connections to a place, increasing the odds of deciding to live or work there.

Cities and other places are being re-contextualized as products for consumption by a desired target audience. If perceptions of a place can be shaped in the mind of the audience, there is the potential to drive favourable patterns of consumption – which in the case of cities and their economies refers to the decision for mobile economic resources to come or remain. Place branding refers to the application of marketing instruments to promote and develop regions, cities, towns and districts (Boison et al, 2018; Eshuis & Klijn, 2012). These instruments may involve communicative instruments such as advertisements, place-brands, or social-media. But place branding is more than just

promotion; it also involves product development through policies to improve places and their management (Ashworth & Voogd, 1994; Braun, 2012).

Place branding also has a contingent nature: it can act as a banner for local initiatives and help provide direction for future development. Indeed, the brand of an urban area can act as tool to coordinate all the public and private interests and give a context in which all the development within a community occurs. This perspective on place branding “challenges the widely-held assumption that the relationship between place branding and place identity is fundamentally reflective, arguing instead that this relationship is inherently generative” (Mayes, 2008: 124). This suggests that cities can actively shape their brand – and the resulting sense-of-place that is associated with it through careful development, management, and promotion of elements within their city.

Capitalizing on this, place branding has become widely used by cities within their local economic development to both shape place-making policies and to attract mobile economic resources (Cleave et al, 2017a; Kavaratzis & Kalandides, 2015; Zenker, 2009; Zenker et al, 2013a). Research into branding policies have identified a wide spatial distribution of policies, with high levels of branding being identified in Canada and the United States (e.g. Cleave & Arku, 2014; Harvey & Young, 2012; Sadler et al, 2016), in Asian and Middle Eastern cities (e.g. Khirfan & Momani, 2012), and in Europe – for instance, in surveys by Braun (2012), where approximately two-thirds of practitioner respondents in the Netherlands indicated their community participated in some form of branding program.

5.3 Exploring the Research Domain – Identifying Major Gaps

There is need for this research into the influence of place branding. Despite the increased use of place branding as a key local economic development approach in attracting talent, there are several key areas that require further exploration. First, *how does branding influence talent's perception and attachment to place?* Fortunately, within a geography-context, the concept of sense-of-place provides a construct for understanding both how and the extent of how places are understood, the associations and connections that people have with them, and their psychological attachment to places. In this regard, sense-of-place becomes the key mediator between the efforts of a city to manage its exchange and use values and how this is received by the target consumer.

Building on the first lacunae, the second area of question is: *what are the key factors that help facilitate this relationship between the brand and the target consumer?*

The place branding research domain has seen the development of many models designed to explain the key feature places leverage to connect with their audience. This includes Kavartzis' (2005) tertiary model of brand communication, Ashworth and Voogd's (1994) geographic marketing-mix, Zenker (2009) and Zenker et al's (2009, 2013a) four-factor creative class model, and Hubbard and Hall's (1998) entrepreneurial city model for place communication. Indeed, sense-of-place can be viewed in the context as the outcome of the network of associations related to place among talent and branding the approach to attenuating this network. However, it remains unclear which specific factors are important. Cities appear fixated on logos and slogans, which have been criticized for their limited potential for influencing anyone, as places are complex amalgams of beliefs,

reputations and prior knowledge, and factors out of the brand creator's control.

Therefore, how does place branding break through, if at all?

Thirdly, and simply, *does branding make a difference?* A key issue in place branding research has been identifying effectiveness or efficacy (Cleave & Arku, 2017). This includes quantifying place branding's impact on perceptions of place, as well in its influence on decision-making. There have been a few studies that have attempted to quantify place branding's effectiveness on altering perceptions (e.g. Lawton et al, 2013; Mellander et al, 2011) decision-making (e.g. Niedomsyl, 2004, 2007; Zenker et al, 2013a), but none that explore these in a holistic way or consider the role of sense-of-place.

5.4 Linking Branding with Sense-of-Place

This research links conceptual understandings of place branding and sense-of-place together to create a model that explains the relationship between the two. Cleave and Arku (2017) argue that the outcome of place branding efforts within consumers is analogous to sense-of-place – as the mental processes of cognition form knowledge of place, shaping the mental map (Kavaratzis, 2004) of the network of associations (Zenker & Braun, 2010) that allows for the distillation of a complex reality and provides meaning, order, understanding, and value to those who interact with it. It is understood that place branding can be accessed and interacted with prior, during, and following an individual's interaction with a place, and therefore acts to crystalize perception and influence decision-making.

A conceit of this research is that the sense-of-place that is described here is not itself organic in development as individuals transect or interact with the landscape naturally - as phenomenology proponents such as Tuan (1996) or Relph (1970) would prefer – but instead, describes a more carefully curated space that is meant to stimulate connection and drive consumption (i.e. determining where to live). This situates place branding squarely within a capitalist system, similar to how other urban spaces have been carefully co-opted and calibrated (see Davis, 1990; Goss, 1993). While there is clear Marxist critique of this use of place branding, cities are also embedded within this system of capitalism and view the need to drive consumption as vital to the development of their local economies.

A further connection between place branding research and sense-of-place can be found when potential outcomes are considered. A sense-of-place influences place attachment, loyalty, aesthetics, satisfaction, enjoyment, desire and positivity – which are also antecedents of place branding image. In both cases, these characteristics can influence consumer decision-making. In this regard, a stronger sense-of-place relates to greater psychological attachments, making it more likely that the place will be viewed as a positive place to live or work, ultimately influencing the decision for individuals to commit to it.

5.5 Building on Sense-of-Place: Developing the Conceptual Model

Place branding centres on people's perceptions and images and puts them at the heart of orchestrated activities, designed to shape the place and its future. Indeed, managing the place brand becomes an attempt to influence and treat the perceptions of

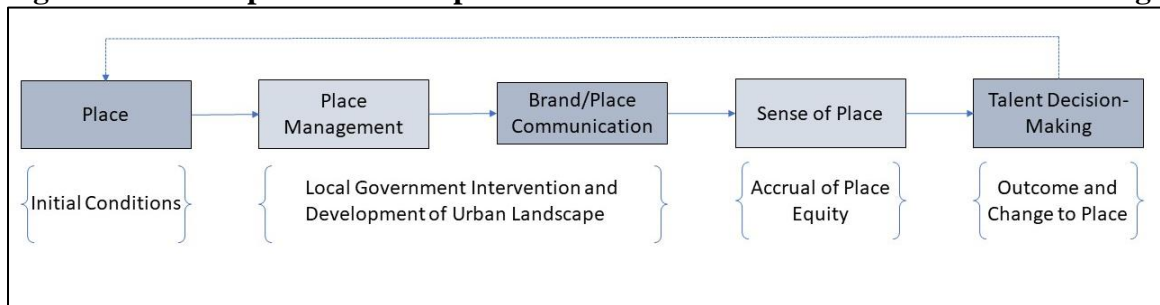
the way they are perceived in a way that is favourable to the present circumstances and future needs of the place. For cities this is about framing the mental maps that organized networks of associations and connections with its character and offerings. A key question is, how are these connections curated?

There have been a number of conceptual and empirical models that have been developed to explain how place brands should be formed, including: Ashworth and Voogd's (1994) geographic marketing-mix, Florida's (2012) three T's of economic development, Mellander et al's (2011) model on place aesthetic, Zenker's (2009) four factor model on attracting the creative class, Hubbard and Hall's (1998) entrepreneurial model on place communication, and Kavaratzis (2004) tertiary model on place communication. Synthesizing the models, there are some clear commonalities. Direct promotion – such as advertising, logos, and slogans – are a key feature of any place communication; however, as Anholt (2005) and Cleave et al (2016) have argued, this does not represent the strongest or most influential approach to place communication, as these methods are often superficial, abstract, and present incomplete information.

Beyond this direct promotion, place brands represent an amalgam of urbanity, urban design and the urban environment (including architecture, infrastructure, and the natural environment), actions of local government and city stakeholders, the local culture and social offerings, as well as recreation opportunities. A key element of this is that since these are meant to communicate an intangible image about the city, what becomes most important are how these elements are perceived and internalized by a target audience, and not necessarily the 'on the ground' realities. Based on other studies (see Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Cleveland & Laroche, 2008; Zenker, 2009; Jacobsen, 2012)

perceptions of these city characteristics would be organized into underlying and unobserved latent factors, with multiple observable items (i.e. urban design, tolerance, branding efforts) associated together. A second implication is that this range of non-traditional brand components suggest that local governments have potential to manage places to help attenuate what elements become the most prevalent in its promotional efforts. Building off an existing identity, this place management represents the first stage in the model that ultimately connects branding with consumer decision-making (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Conceptual model of place brand influence on audience decision-making



While this place management creates the framework for a wide variety of city characteristics and offerings that are communicated, there remains a gap between this and sense-of-place. However, marketing literature (see Keller, 1993; Yoo et al, 2000) provides an interface. Ultimately the brand strength and positivity – the key elements to give it equity and set the product that it represents apart from competitors – influence brand knowledge. The stronger and more positive the image that is created by the branding effort, the more favourable the brand knowledge. This process is analogous to the creation of sense-of-place. As a result, the place management efforts help shapes the strength and positivity of the city in the mind of consumers – influencing their sense-of-

place (Figure 5.1). In this regard, brand image strength and positivity become the observed variables for the latent sense-of-place.

Sense-of-place becomes place equity, as more intensely positive senses of place allow cities the opportunity to forge stronger place attachment, loyalty, aesthetics, satisfaction, enjoyment, desire and positivity. The greater the equity, the more effectively the city will be able to differentiate itself and communicate its exchange and use benefits to the target audience. The ultimate implication of this – the final phase of the model – is that the sense-of-place equity influences consumer decision-making, for example, influencing where talent chooses to live and work.

5.6 Methodological Approach

A key issue of this research is that it involves putting a number on a place – which within a human geography context presents a potentially sticky situation, as places are intrinsically complex and viewed differently by different groups or people. As a result, quantifying place and its impacts on decision-making is rare. However, direction can be drawn from both marketing literature on acculturation (see Cleveland & Laroche, 2007) and emerging place branding research (see Jacobsen, 2009, 2012; Zenker et al, 2013b) to build a framework from which this research was built. It provides unique value, however, as it is the first example of research to consider sense-of-place as the key interface between branding efforts and decision-making. To achieve this, a comprehensive, multi-staged study was developed to exhaustively identify the key observable variables related to perception of place, as well as the underlying latent variables.

Following the rigorous development process described by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), Churchill (1979), Cleveland and Laroche (2007), and Nunnally (1967) a robust iterative procedure was developed to create a scale for measuring sense-of-place (as related to place branding). This research occurred over three phases: Preliminary Phase, Study 1, and Study 2.

Together, this research allows for the evaluation of the study's three key research questions: *How does branding influence talent's perception and attachment to place? What are the key factors that help facilitate this relationship between the brand and the target consumer? And does branding make a difference?* Underlying these questions is the hypothesis that branding does influence sense-of-place, and that sense-of-place in turn influences talent decision-making.

5.6.1 Study Area and Study Group

This research is situated in the Province of Ontario, Canada which presents an interesting and relatable study area, allowing for findings to have broader implications for urban and economic geographic research. This is, in part, because Ontario is a classic case of transitional economies previously based around manufacturing to one centred around knowledge and creative-based industries (Cleave et al, 2017; Vinodrai, 2013). As a result, cities in Ontario as elsewhere in the advanced world are in intense competition to attract and retain highly-skilled workforces. Additionally, Ontario has gone through considerable neoliberal restructuring over the past two decades, with political power and responsibility being spatially fractured and downloaded from the provincial government to local governments (Arku, 2013; Bradford, 2007; Sancton & Young, 2009). This

increased responsibility to provide services to residents, while also being increasingly in charge of local economic development trajectories has spurred the rise of entrepreneurial forms of governance, which privilege creative solutions to facilitate the transition from traditional to new economies. At the forefront of this change in approach is the acknowledgement for the attraction of talent to support the new economy.

Indeed, appreciation of the need for talent is not new (see Florida, 1999, 2002), and the rise of courtship of the creative class has been prevalent by city governments in Ontario and globally. However, in this mad dash to understand what attracts talent to cities, research has predominantly been focused on groups that have already entered or established themselves within the workforce. Instead, this study considers university educated individuals about to enter the talent pool. Students have been shown to act as a strong proxy for established workers (Darchen & Trembley, 2010; Smith, 2003), as well as key facilitators of cutting edge research needed for advanced economies (Bramwell & Wolfe, 2008). Additionally, because students are just entering the workforce they have greater mobility to move, as well as the potential to be more greatly influenced by branding efforts in creating place attachment and desire to relocate to a particular place. To access this study group, students from the University of Western Ontario, London were surveyed. Western is a top-level research and training institute that attracts top domestic and international students enrolled across eleven faculties. In 2017 there were 35,291 students enrolled at Western, 12% of whom are international students. The university is also part of the network of U15 Research Intensive Universities, which is the organizations engaged in the highest level of research activity among higher education organizations in Canada.

5.7 Preliminary Study: Setting the Research Domain

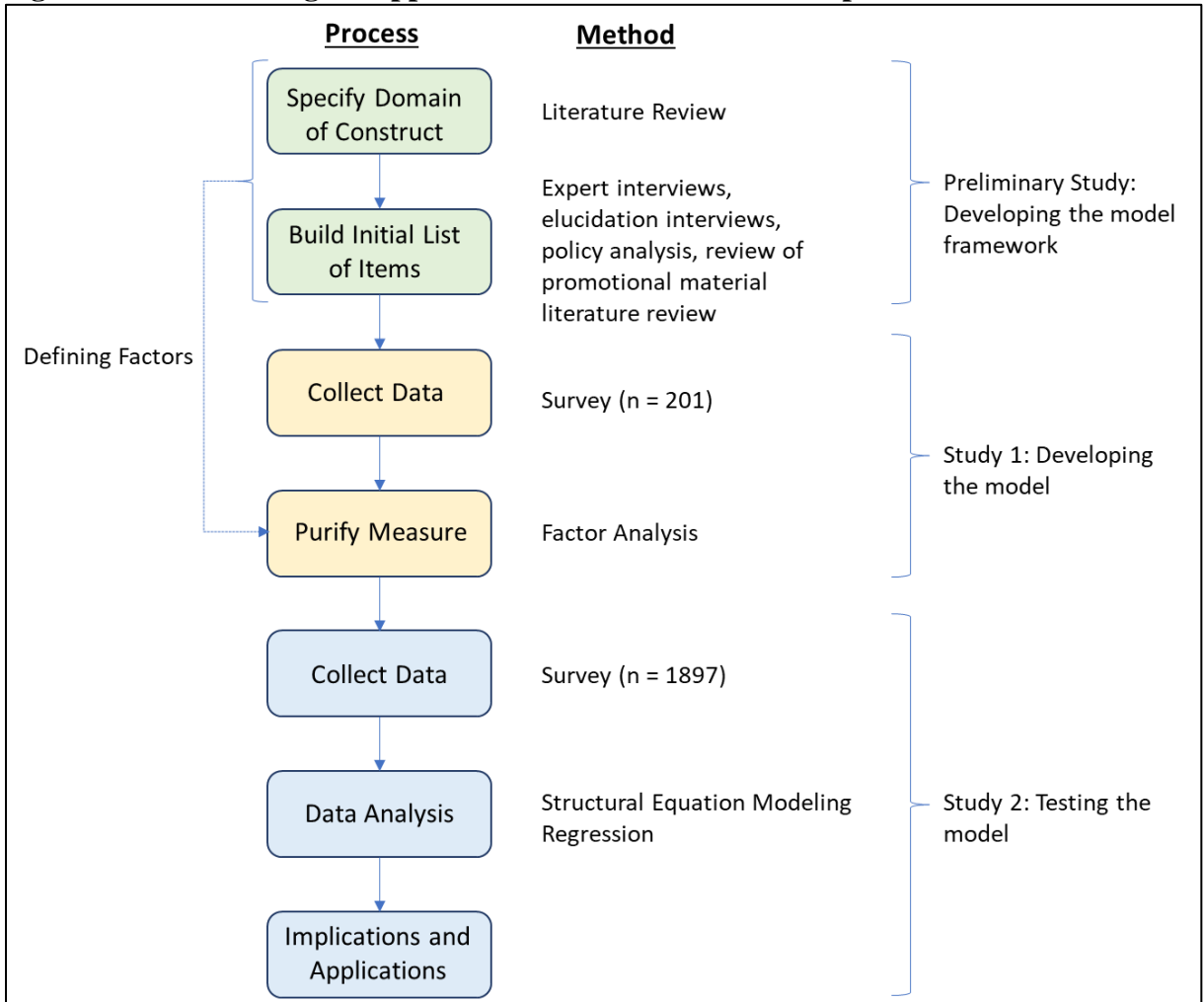
The preliminary phase involved determining the domain of the research and how it would be measured (Figure 5.2) and was accomplished through an exhaustive review of relevant literature, drawing from sources in place branding and marketing, economic development, business and marketing, social geography, and urban and economic geography literature. From this the construct of sense-of-place was defined. As previously discussed, there is a strong relationship between place brand image and sense-of-place. Place brand image has often been heavily influenced by perceived positivity and strength (Anholt, 2005; Cleave et al, 2017a). As a result, these two observed variables – place image strength and positivity - were used to define the latent sense-of-place.

This exhaustive review also served as the jumping off point for the scale development process to identify items that could be used to identify both place image strength and positivity. Following the item generation approach described by Cleveland and Laroche (2007), the list of items was developed from a careful examination of previous examination of quantitative and qualitative studies related to human geography (e.g. Alkon & Traugot, 2008; Chow & Healy, 2008; Gustafson, 2001; Manzo, 2005; Harvey & Young, 2012), place branding and marketing (e.g. Cleave & Arku, 2017; Inch & Florek, 2008), and economic development (e.g. Florida, 2002; Osgood et al, 2012). The list was supplemented through: twenty-five in-depth interviews with economic development practitioners in Ontario (one per city), fifteen elucidating expert interviews with talent – who were asked to identify potential items, and finally a thorough review of municipal economic development and place branding strategy documents from 41 cities

in Ontario. In total, this combined process identified 221 items, which were then analyzed for repetition, clarity, and ambiguity, and ultimately reduced the total items down to 101.

Drawing on relevant literature and information gathered for this preliminary study, seven factors were theorized prior to the start of analysis and were labelled as follows. *Promotional Efforts* referred to a group of items related to direct advertisement and branding efforts (logos and slogans) used by the city. This is consistent with Kavaratzis' (2004) secondary channel of place communication. *Recreation and Natural Environment* broadly refers to outdoor entertainment activities offered by the city, as well as the natural environment and greenspace available for these activities to occur in. *Cultural Offerings* includes items such as the perceived diversity and multiculturalism of the city, as well as the availability of relevant cultural activity groups (i.e. ethnic organizations). The *Urbanity* included the design of the city, its atmosphere or energy, but also the population size and density – all characteristics that impact how urbane or the lifestyle associated with living in that city. The factor *Living* includes perceptions on cost, quality and availability of housing, as well as the perceived overall cost of living in a city, while *Economy* teased out perceptions related to the availability of relevant and good jobs, as well as the direction the local economy is headed. Finally, *Social Offerings* captures perceptions on whether the city has opportunities for talent to meet new people, have a thriving social scene, as well as nightlife and other social activities that fall outside standard recreation.

Figure 5.2: Methodological approach – scale and model development and validation



5.8 Study 1: Developing the Structural Model

5.8.1 Methodology and Data Collection

Following Churchill's (1977) rigorous stepwise procedure the second phase of the research involved the collection of data on the initial pool of items through a pilot survey (n = 201). This study group was 51% female and 49% male and were on average in their third year of study. The study group members were most commonly enrolled in geography (42%), with the rest coming from management studies (20%) sociology (15%), political science (13%), business (10%). This group of students is different from

the groups that completed surveys in Chapter Four and later in this chapter (Study 2), ensuring that no bias was introduced from respondents completing multiple surveys on the same topic.

This survey was completed in hard copy. Responses were then analyzed using exploratory factor analysis (more specifically, principal component analysis with varimax rotation; see Costello & Osborne, 2005) to identify latent factors. A scree test based on a graphical approach to identifying natural breaks of eigenvalues was used to identify the factors retained, with seven kept and eighteen eliminated. A second requirement was that all eigenvalues of retained factors were required to be greater than the standard cut-off of 1.0. This was designed to further purify the refined item list through exploratory analysis as only the 28 variables associated with a latent factor were retained (see Study 1 for results). In this first stage of the research, respondents were queried on their perceptions of the City of London, Ontario (population 388,615), where Western University as an institution is based.

5.8.2 Study 1 Findings

Based on the list of 101 items identified in the pre-study, the principal component analysis identified 34 items that were grouped into seven latent factors. Only items with factor loads greater than 0.4 in a single factor were retained, consistent with work by Peterson (2000). Additionally, a correlation matrix of all items was used to check for items that did not differ in the semantic understanding by participants. Six pairs of items were identified as having significant correlations and were combined by calculating the means of each pair (this approach has been used previously by Zenker et al, 2009,

2013b). This reduced the item pool to 28 distinct items. All seven factors had eigenvalues above 1.0 threshold (Byrne, 2015; Cleveland & Laroche, 2007). For each of the seven factors that emerged the Cronbach alphas, or the internal consistency, was high (all alphas > 0.80). Along with the Cronbach alpha value for each factor that was retained, the average variance extracted (AVE) was within expected norms (all AVE < 0.50). Together this suggests that there was convergent validity within the latent variables. In addition, there was divergent validity as there were no items that were cross-loaded between two retained factors (load factors about 0.30 associated with two or more factors). Finally, squared correlations were below the AVE indicating discriminant validity.

A summary of the outcomes of the factor analysis conducted in Study 1 and the factor loadings for each item is found in Table 5.1. Synthesizing the findings of Study 1 with the previously developed conceptual model, a proposed structural equation model was developed (Figure 5.3). It is clear, however, that the perceptions of talent surveyed in this study do not fully align with the models of place communication previously developed. For example, the *Promotional* factor of this model captures both elements of the secondary and tertiary segments of Kavaratzis' (2004) model for place communication. Additionally, this initial model contains greater specificity than those of previous studies (notably, Ashworth & Voogd, 1990; Mellander et al, 2011; Zenker, 2009; Zenker et al, 2013) which contain four or fewer factors. As a result, this study introduces a realignment of key items into previously unidentified factors, suggesting that the perceived use value of cities is derived through multiple channels.

An additional implication of this initial study is that items associated with city branding often extend beyond what is associated with branding efforts (i.e. logos, slogans, advertisements). Instead, there is support in these initial findings for the more

Table 5.1: Composition of latent variables derived from exploratory factor analysis

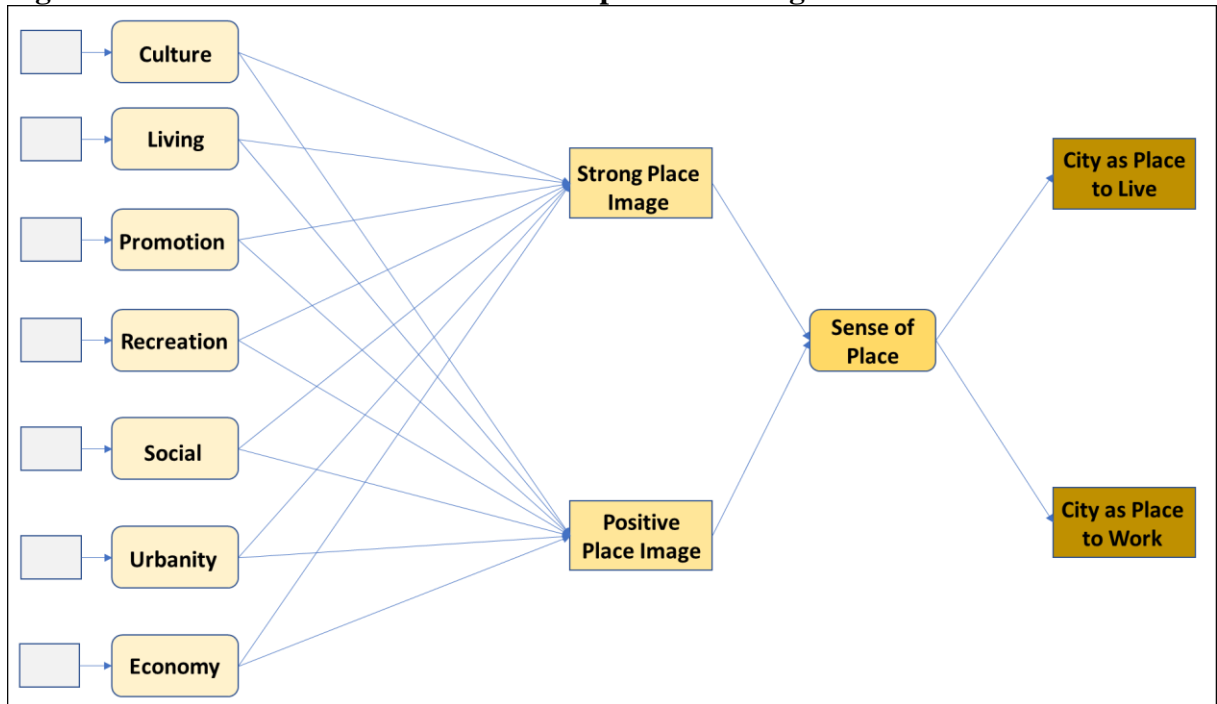
Item	Prom.	Rec.	Cult.	Urban.	Econ.	Housing	Soc.
Logo or Slogan	0.78						
Traditional Advertising	0.73						
Online Content	0.55						
News Coverage	0.48						
Outdoor Recreation Activities		0.84					
Organized Rec Activities		0.81					
Greenspace		0.73					
Access to water		0.66					
Beauty of the Natural Environment		0.54					
Diversity and Multiculturalism			0.90				
Cultural Organizations			0.85				
Cultural Opportunities			0.79				
Urban Design				0.86			
Population size and density				0.80			
Energy, Atmosphere, or Buzz				0.71			
Urban Image of the City				0.62			
Current Economic Conditions					0.75		
Employment Opportunities					0.68		
Quality and Availability of Jobs					0.63		
Future Economic Conditions					0.51		
Overall Cost of Living						0.70	
Cost of Housing						0.62	
Quality of Housing						0.50	
Businesses that Operate in the City						0.42	
Population of Similar Age							0.81
Vibrant Nightlife							0.75
Good Place to Make Friends							0.65
Number of Singles							0.57

Latent variables and associated items were extracted through PCA with Varimax-Rotation N = 201; Only factor loads of 0.40 or greater are shown

complex and holistic approaches to branding argued for in previous examinations of city actions. However, while these factors are alluded to within city promotional material (i.e. their logos and promotional videos), they rarely actually incorporate them into their

broader economic development or urban development initiatives. This suggests that large portions of the brand – the network of associations that guide the perception of place and the usefulness of the city – are currently outside of what the city can, or attempts to, control in their talent attraction initiatives.

Figure 5.3: Theoretical structural model of place branding influence on talent



Note: The boxes to the left of the latent variables are abstracted representations of the items that together form the factor. In this research all factors had four items that loaded into them, with the exceptions of Recreation (five items) and Culture (three items)

5.9 Study 2: Testing the Model

Study 2 combines with the findings of Study 1 and the conceptual model developed previously (Figure 5.1). The result was a structural model that: a) linked the initial pool of items with latent factors; b) defined the relationship between the latent factors with the observed dimensions of sense-of-place; c) presented a latent sense-of-place measure; and d) delineated the structure between sense-of-place and the observed perceptions of cities as places to live and work. The ten cities investigated (Toronto,

Mississauga, Hamilton, Brampton, London, Markham, Windsor, Vaughan, Kitchener, or Ottawa) represent key urban centres within the province which are jockeying to attract talent, as well as providing a geographical spread across the study area.

Study 2 examines the validity of the model that was developed and applies the findings of the construct to examine the influence of place branding and sense-of-place on talent decision-making. In addition, the proposed structural relationships are examined to determine whether these paths represent significant connections between observed items and latent factors (See Figure 5.3).

For this stage of research, a larger pool of respondents (n = 1897 responses were included in the final study) were asked to assess their perceptions of one of the five study cities within Ontario. The survey was hosted online, and participants were randomly assigned the city they assessed. Within the study group, there was an even split of male and female students, with 93% of the respondents indicating that they had previously lived in one of the study cities. As with Study 1, the participants were most commonly in their third year of study and came primarily from disciplines of geography (19%), sociology (14%), natural sciences (13%), political science (12%), management studies (12%), business (11%), engineering (9%), health (7%), and other (3%).

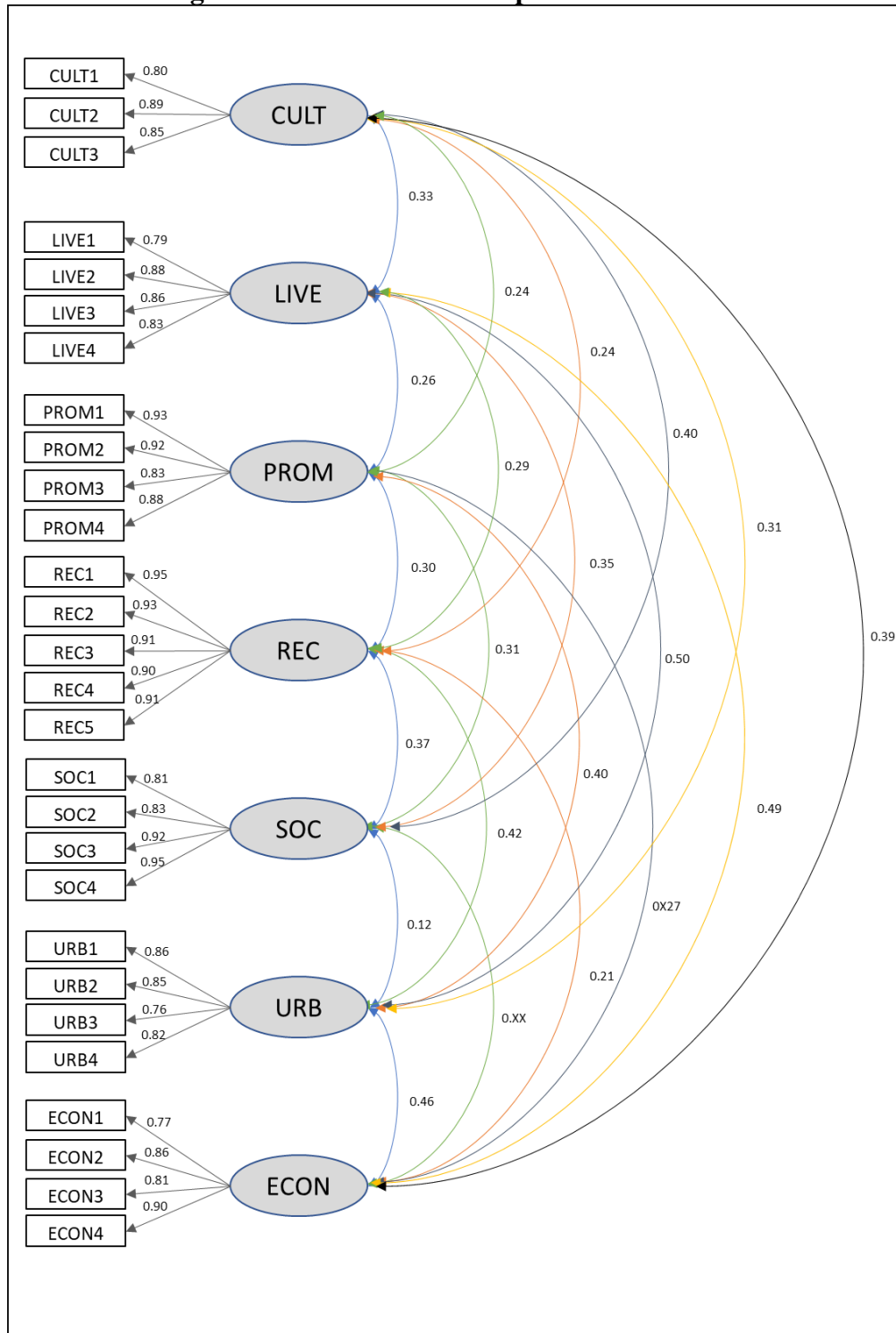
Study 2 examines the overall fit of the model finalized in the previous section (Figure 5.3) through confirmatory analysis using structural equation modeling. In addition, each of the structural relationships within the model were examined for significance. Following the approach proposed by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a two-step approach tested the model's validity and reliability, using both latent variables and place image variables (see Figures 5.4 and 5.5), with the findings guiding the

development of the final structural equation model (see Figure 5.6). All 28 items of the developed scale were subjected to this confirmatory factor analysis, to allow for further scale purification and to establish the construct validity and reliability of the scale items generated and test the overall suitability of the conceptual and final models.

5.9.1 Study 2 Findings

Overall, the first order model (see Figure 5.4) exhibited strong goodness-of-fit as the standard evaluation criteria were all within an acceptable range (GFI = 0.81; IFI = 0.92; TLI = 0.95; CFI = 0.93). In addition, the root mean residual (RMR) was 0.0489 which is below the 0.05 threshold identified by Byrne (2016), which can be interpreted as the model explaining correlations within a standard error of 0.0489 (Hu & Bentler, 1995). Goodness-of-fit was further measured using the CMIN/DF (Wheaton et al, 1977) with the calculated value of 4.77 falling below the upper benchmark of 5.00 (see Arbuckle & Wothke, 1999). Finally, a Root Mean Squared Error of Approximation (RMSEA) of 0.067 falling within the acceptable range of 0.00 to 0.08 that indicate a good model fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; MacCallum et al, 1996). As a result, the model is a good fit explaining the relationship between survey items and the latent factors.

Figure 5.4: Defining structure and relationships of latent variables



Within the first order model stage, both measured and error terms did not suffer from any substantial cross-loadings, standardised residuals were all less than the upper

bound of 2.58 (Byrne, 2001), convergent validity was supported with all parameter estimates greater 0.50 (Kline, 1998), composite reliability for each latent factor were above 0.80, and the average variance extractions were suitable, falling in the range of 0.55 to 0.72 (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Correlations, and Reliability Estimates

	CULT	LIVE	PROM	REC	SOC	URB	ECON	CR	AVE
CULT	1.00							0.87	0.60
LIVE	0.33	1.00						0.81	0.69
PROM	0.34	0.36	1.00					0.89	0.70
REC	0.14	0.21	0.31	1.00				0.81	0.55
SOC	0.20	0.37	0.26	0.44	1.00			0.83	0.63
URB	0.41	0.40	0.37	0.16	0.12	1.00		0.85	0.72
ECON	0.29	0.43	0.33	0.11	0.22	0.43	1.00	0.86	0.66

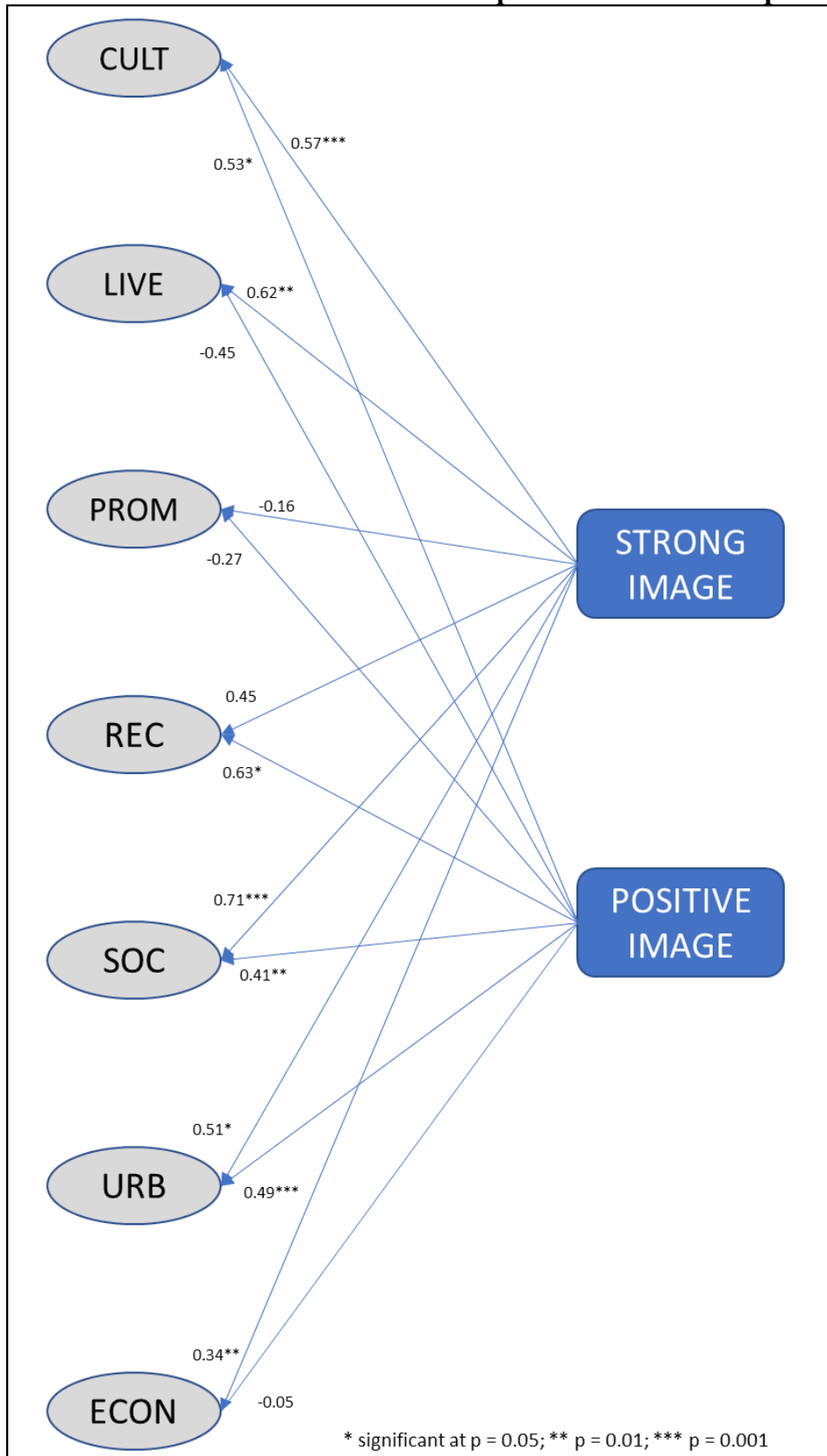
CR is composite reliability; AVE is average variance extracted

The image favourability and strength model (see Figure 5.5) that introduced the elements of brand strength and favourability displayed a weaker goodness-of-fit (GFI = 0.72; IFI = 0.86; TLI = 0.85; CFI = 0.89). In addition, the RMR = 0.087, CMIN/DF = 8.731, and RMSEA = 0.128. Based on these diagnostics, the developed model is not a good fit in explaining the structural relationship between the latent factors and the two dimensions of sense-of-place. Within the findings of the model, there are several notable outcomes that constrain the model. First, the *Promotional Efforts* factor was negative. It should be noted, however, that the path regression weight was not significant (at $\alpha = 0.05$) for both place brand image strength and positivity, therefore no conclusive determinations could be made on if traditional promotional efforts actually had a detrimental effect on the talent perception of place. Instead, it can be concluded that *at minimum* promotional efforts had no statistically significant positive impact on perceptions of place. Similarly, the path weights for *Recreation* were non-significant for the relationships with image strength, while *Living* and *Economy* were both negative and

non-significant for brand image. For each of these paths, the squared multiple correlation was low (below 0.20; indicating that there was little explanation of the variance and an indication of potential for high levels of error), and therefore were removed from the analysis.

When these non-significant paths (which also produced standardized residuals above 2.28), the final model (see Figure 5.6) demonstrated strong goodness-of-fit (GFI = 0.91; IFI = 0.95; TLI = 0.92; CFI = 0.94; RMR = 0.049, CMIN/DF = 4.872, and RMSEA = 0.062). To support the structural equation modeling, the model was examined through a series of multiple regression analysis. The seven-factor model produced an R-Square of 0.533 for place brand image strength and 0.492 for positivity. Of note, the coefficients for *Promotional Efforts* were again negative and the relationship was not found to be significant. Multiple regression on the final model (five factors for image strength, four for image favourability) demonstrated limited degradation, as both refined models explained approximately 45% of the variation in the two observed dimensions of sense-of-place. These explained variabilities are a strong result based on the complexity of cities as well as the construct of sense-of-place. A second set of multiple regression analysis investigated the relationship between the dimensions of sense-of-place and the perception of the cities as places to live and work. The regression analysis produced R-Squares of 0.508 for perception of the cities as a place to live and 0.443 for cities as a place to work. Again, due to the complexity of cities and decision-making this explanation of variability speaks to the strength of the model and the conceptualized relationship.

Figure 5.5: Structural model of the relationships between latent and place variables

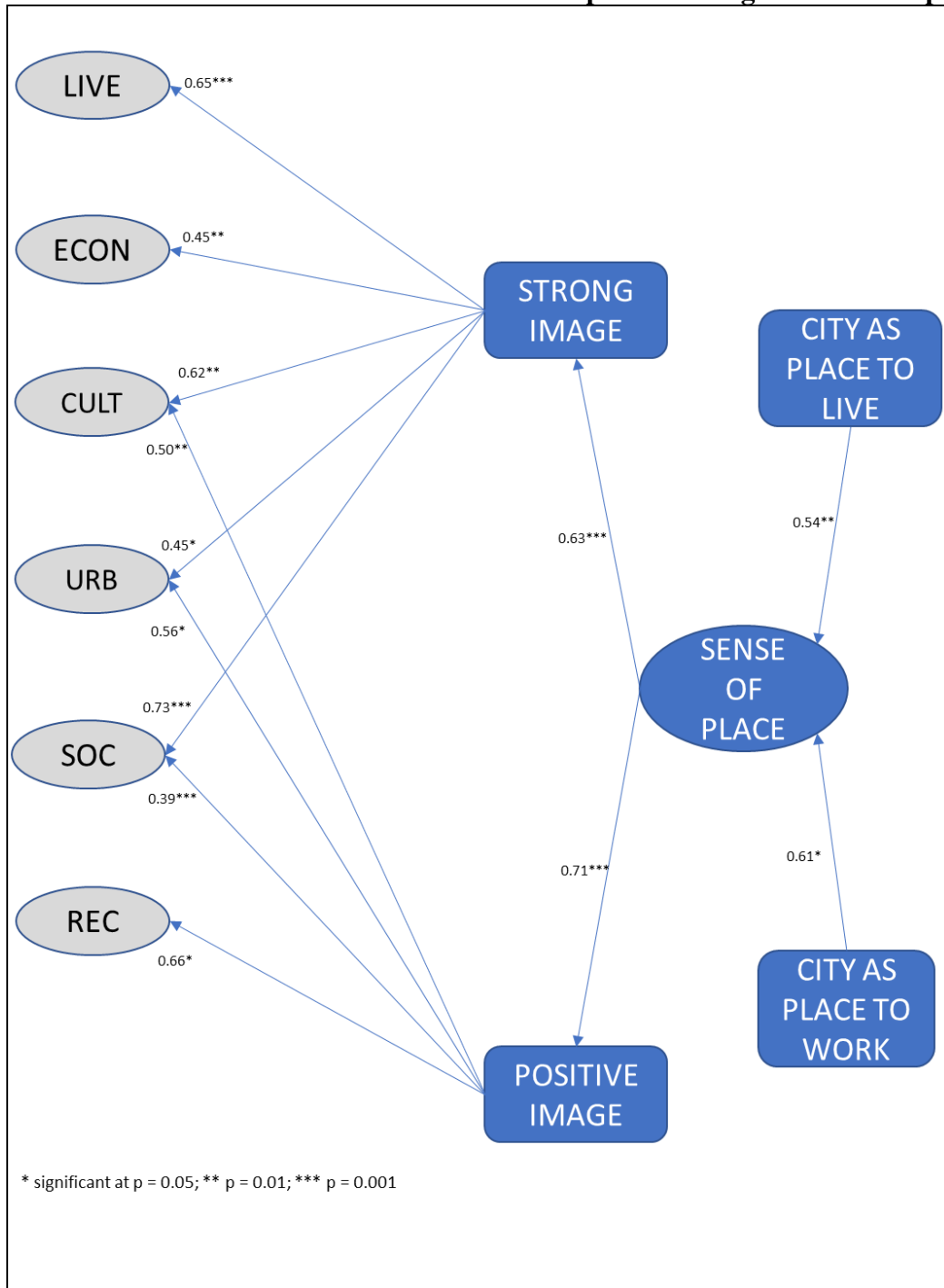


A key outcome of the model development and testing is the finding that traditional promotional efforts – such as logos, slogans, and advertisements have a limited role in altering perceptions of place. As noted earlier, this is an important finding as this is where cities place most of their promotional efforts (see Anholt, 2005; Cleave et al, 2017; Merrliees et al, 2009; Pasquinelli, 2010; Power & Hauge, 2008; Sadler et al, 2016). This further supports the understanding that cities need to take a more holistic approach to both their promotional and development approaches to improve their chances of attracting and retaining talent.

The findings from the model, however, also provide clues to other areas that cities should focus on to maximize how they are perceived and improve their chances of attracting and retaining talent. The perceptions of the local economy were identified as being negative influences of both place brand image strength and positivity. Additionally, since future employment is typically expected to be in a narrow range of jobs, overall strength of the economy may have little overall impact of perception compared to specific employment opportunities within a niche field.

Interestingly, recreation and natural environment – which are hallmarks of promotional videos and other city branding material also have a non-significant (and slightly negative) relationship with place image strength, while a positive relationship with positivity. This implies that the perceptions of recreation opportunities improve the quality in which places are perceived, but not the intensity of this perception. An inverse relationship is found with the factors *Economy* and *Living*, where there is a significant relationship in the influence on image strength but none on how positively the city is perceived. A likely explanation can be found in the high cost of housing currently found

Figure 5.6: Final model – the structural relationship of branding and sense-of-place



in Ontario’s cities, where there has been a steady rise in housing prices over the past decade. While it may strengthen the overall perception of the city, it also makes it less desirable – or achievable – as a place to live.

In summary, three of the factors identified through Study 1 (*Cultural Offerings*, *Social Offerings*, and *Urbanity*) have a positive impact on sense-of-place, while three (*Economy*, *Living*, and *Recreation*) have mixed impacts, and one (*Promotional Efforts*) has no (or at best a negative impact) on perceptions of the place brand image. However, the resulting sense-of-place has both significant and positive influence on talent decision-making as it influences their perceptions of cities as places to live and work. Together, results of structural equation modeling and the multiple-regression analysis demonstrate that perception of city factors has a strong influence on both sense-of-place and decision-making, suggesting that place branding – when done correctly and leveraging the right elements of local character – has the potential to both attract and retain talent.

5.10 Discussion

The overall question that this research sought to answer was *does place branding make a difference?* In the context of this study, this refers to whether branding efforts by cities – through both formal and informal channels – influenced how talent perceived cities in Ontario, and whether this affected the desirability of these cities as places to live and work. The underlying hypothesis was that branding would influence perception or sense-of-place, which, in turn would influence decision-making. Ultimately, based on the findings of this study it can be concluded that place branding does make a difference. To contextualize and discuss the findings, the more specific research questions will be addressed.

Does place branding of cities influence how talent perceives them? The findings of this research demonstrate that indeed, place branding does make a difference in how

places are perceived, understood, and valued. From this sense-of-place can start to be formed through the initial phases of interaction with the place brand, and then are strengthened through further direct interaction. If the brand is used as the guidepost for spatial and economic planning, there is strong potential for the brand to make a considerable impact on how talent perceive the city. This research also provides a new approach to understanding and investigating sense-of-place and how this connection is formed among groups like talent, as there are key factors that are most likely to influence the shape and strength of a city's image. As a result, sense-of-place can be linked with equity, where greater place and equity differentiate and strengthen a city's position against its key competitors. The greater the sense-of-place or equity, the greater the connection and potential for having utility. Ultimately, place branding can make a difference.

What factors or characteristics are most influential in effective place branding?

The results of this research indicate that perceptions of place can be best explained through a six-factor model (with *Promotional Efforts* removed). Interestingly, this falls in between Zenker's (2009) four-factor model relating branding and citizen satisfaction and Merrilees et al (2009) ten-factor model. By splitting the difference between the two, this model provides more specificity than simpler models, while also provides a less complex conceptualization than Merrilees et al (2009).

From the final model (Figure 5.6), there are several key characteristics that need to be considered. Traditional promotional activities have long been critiqued for having a limited impact on changing image perceptions or decision-making. However, the findings of this research demonstrate that they may have a *negative* impact on perceptions (though

this relationship is weak and not statistically significant). So, while cities privilege this approach – for political expediency due to it being a fast and tangible course of action – it is more likely to be counterproductive in the long term. There are two potential reasons for this: first, that cities are generally uncreative in their branding efforts, with considerable homogenization of brands (Pasquinelli, 2010; Power & Hauge, 2008; Sadler et al, 2016) as a result, the brands are not actually differentiating or positioning cities in a way that separates them from their competitors. Second, branding efforts in Ontario and elsewhere have been noted of being very general and not specifically tailored to attracting segments of the audience. As a result, this mis-specification of city brands and promotional efforts is not engaging the audience in a meaningful way, and therefore not communicating the potential use values that the city has to offer.

The model, however, does demonstrate that there are significant areas where a place's brand or reputation can shape perception of talent – particularly the social, cultural, and urban feel of the city. This model for talent differs from conceptual models (i.e. Ashworth & Voogd, 1994; Florida, 2002, 2012; Hubbard & Hall, 1998) which focus on overarching urban governance themes within place promotion and talent attraction efforts. The findings of this research also present an alternative to prominent place branding models by Kavaratzis (2004) which emphasize the urban environment and action of government, Jacobsen (2012) that considers the prestige of a place, or Zenker (2009) and Zenker et al (2013) which group urbanity and diversity into a single factor. Instead, this model pulls apart culture, social offerings, and the urban feel of the city into separate factors, as such, it provides a more nuanced conception of what influences place perception. Of further note, this model indicates that talent (rather than more narrowly on

the creative class, which most other research focuses on) are less swayed by economy, costs, and recreation -which previously have been central understanding of what drives perception and decision-making.

Does place branding ultimately influence where talent chooses to live and work?

Within this study, sense-of-place is used as the measure of how talent perceives cities. This provides an approach that is consistent with geographic understandings of space and place (e.g. Cleave & Arku, 2017; Goss, 1993; Gustafson, 2003; Tuan, 1996), but also with measures of brand equity (Keller, 1993) and place brand equity (Jacobsen, 2009, 2012). The stronger the sense-of-place, the stronger the place equity. As with products, the greater the equity the greater the likelihood of being perceived positively, standing out from competitors, and ultimately being invested in. Within this research, it is evident that there is a similar relationship between the construct of sense-of-place and the observed perceptions/decisions of cities as places to live and work. This study shows that as sense-of-place improves, so does the likelihood of talent finding benefit and choosing to live and work there.

Notably, the results of this study – where the model explains approximately half of the variability in perceptions of place are consistent with both Zenker et al (2009, 2013) and Merrilees et al (2009), which suggests a potential upper bound on the influence or explanatory value of place branding. The research indicates that additional factors have a strong impact on influencing talent perceptions as half the variability remains unexplained; however, a potential – and likely – explanation is that this fall outside the purview of place branding efforts and instead is influenced through other forms of interaction. From a geographical perspective, drawing on phenomenology, it is likely that

this sense-of-place is being developed as individuals experience the city and develop ethereal and intangible understandings and emotional attachments.

This suggests that place branding – while having some influence on shaping perceptions – has limits to the extent that it can shape how talent feel about a place. Therefore, while this research demonstrates that it is an effective way for cities to influence talent it is not the only method, and perhaps not the most important one. This finding is important for cities, as local governments invest a significant amount of public funds in developing and maintaining branding efforts. The City of Toronto has spent approximately \$CAN 4 million per year on branding (Cleave et al, 2017), which is similar to the €5 million annual marketing budget of Berlin (Zenker et al, 2013), while Singapore has also spent over \$US 20 million on marketing campaigns (Jacobsen, 2009). Unfortunately, to date, there have been a lack of proper success measurements as well as lack of clear direction on what factors cities should focus their efforts on enhancing and promoting. As a result, it is not clear whether cities are spending money effectively or efficiently. This research provides sense-of-place (measured through image strength and positivity) as a simple metric for measuring influence; however, it also indicates that cities and their governments need to be careful in crafting their brand strategies. Traditional approaches need to be replaced by more holistic branding efforts. But ultimately it needs to be understood that place branding provides a set of tools for increasing the chances of improving perception and economic standing (i.e. attracting and retain talent) but do not represent a silver-bullet or panacea or replacement for other forms of urban and economic development policies.

5.10.1 Future Research

This research represents a first and an important step in the development and application of a model and method for examining the influence of place branding in talent attraction and retention. Moving forward, there are two key areas of future research. First, this research presents findings pooled from cities within a region – meant to provide diversity in the size and geographical distribution of the cities. While the model presents an overall explanation of the connection between branding and perception, it is possible that there may be different ‘flavours’ of sense-of-place when examined at the individual city level. It is known that different cities in Ontario have prioritized different place branding approaches within their economic development frameworks, varying from London which has a limited approach to Kitchener and Waterloo which uses branding as a guide for urban development and is heavily integrated into their economic development planning. As a result, there may be slight differences between cities – and changes that occur across space – that lead to different factors having different levels of influence in different cities.

Second, the issue of teasing influence or effectiveness of any economic effort is difficult. This study took the tact of using perception of cities as places to live and work as a proxy for decision-making. However, future research should strive to connect this model with ‘real-world’ changes in talent attraction and retention to determine the efficacy of place branding efforts. This will help provide a clearer understanding of what factors drive talent attraction and retention and the role that place branding can play in it.

5.11 Implications and Conclusion

This article makes several important and novel contributions to scholarship and local policy. First, it provides a robust methodology for exploring the influence of branding on sense-of-place, and in turn sense-of-place's impact on talent perception and decision-making. The development and validation of a multidimensional scale for the measurement of place image perceptions provides a new avenue of exploration for both place branding and geographic research, particularly the latter where attempts to quantify individual and group connections with place are scarce. In addition, this research puts forward a new approach, where sense-of-place – rather than one of its many antecedents – is used as the key interface between city development and promotional efforts and the perceptions of talent. This allows for a more holistic relationship with place to be explored, rather than emphasizing an individual dimension. In particular, this presents a heretofore unexplored conceptualization for place branding research – where sense-of-place actually becomes the equity that influences whether consumers (in this case talent) chose to invest (in this case live and work). As a result, this scholarly contribution, a re-situating of place branding into geographic context, provides a new context for investigating how places manage exchange value, and the influence on the perceived use values developed within their target audience.

A key question of any research is its generalizability, and this study which was situated in the Province of Ontario, Canada allows for the key findings to have resonance in other advanced economies. The cities in the study, as well as in other locales globally are in a constant competition to attract and retain talent to supply workforces increasingly focused on advanced technology, knowledge, and creative economies. As a result, cities

and regions are increasingly courting well educated talent, recent graduates. This research presents a framework for understanding the key factors that are important to this talent group in how they perceive places and determine where to work and live. Ontario, its cities, and its talent are standard and representative of typical urban areas in advanced economies, so the lessons learned in this jurisdiction can be applicable to other locations. Cities – through formal and informal means – can shape perception and influence decision-making. However, this takes a form that is different from the approach that most cities have typically used. Namely, direct promotion and traditional branding may have a negative impact on how talent perceive cities, potentially reducing the chance of them making the decision to live there (though it should be noted that this relationship was not identified as statistically significant, so no definitive conclusions can be drawn except that it was shown to not have a significant, positive influence). As a result, cities and their governments are better off focusing on social and cultural offerings, and the urbanity of their locale to make the largest impact on talent attraction and retention.

While place branding does not guarantee the successful attraction and retention of talent, this research provides a new conceptual and empirical framework that provides guidance on where to focus effort. As cities continue to commit more time, effort, and resources into their place branding efforts, they need to take increased care to ensure they are promoting the correct mix of elements to most effectively connect, communicate value, and position themselves to be attractive to talent.

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CHAPTER SIX

MANUSCRIPT 3: PLACE PERCEPTIONS AND DECISION-MAKING AMONG IMMIGRANTS

6.1 Introduction

Although a recurrent concern of local authorities for quite some time (Braun et al, 2014; Neidomysl, 2004, 2007; Ward, 1998), few studies have explicitly examined place branding and immigration in a comprehensive way. Emphasis in place branding research and practice generally appears to be on intra-regional talent and resident attraction. As a result, its role in attracting inter-regional migrations (or international immigrants, as they will be referred to from here forward) remains underexplored. Importantly, it is unclear what city branding approaches or dimensions effectively promote or position the city to immigrants, and whether it has any effectiveness on how cities are perceived as places to live and work. An underlying assumption of this research – and much place branding effectiveness research – is that a more positively and prominently positioned city is more likely to attract attention and influence the decision-making of a target audience.

The need to attract immigrants is an important one for cities in advanced economies, as they represent a key source to augment the local workforce through the attraction of highly-educated and skilled workers (Lewis & Donald, 2010), overcome the endgame of the demographic transition and the resulting slow growth or population decline (Hall & Hall, 2008; Neidomysl, 2004), deal with ageing populations which put pressure on the tax-base and the shifting supply and demand of services that accompany such demographic changes (Andersson, 2004; Stockdale, 2004), strengthen the local tax-

base due to the separate issue of downloading of government power and service provision responsibility (Arku, 2013), and address local shortcomings and inability to retain homegrown workers (Hansen, 2010). While these issues are relevant to communities of all sizes and geographical contexts, they are particularly pressing for small and mid-sized cities in advanced economies who have been strained from changing population and economic realities.

This research seeks to evaluate the question: *how does place branding influence immigrant place perceptions? And does this impact where they live?* More specifically, this study examines the role of place branding and whether it is a contributing factor when determining where to live within a country after a decision has been made to immigrate to that country. This research contributes to place branding literature as well as provides an investigation of latter-stage decision-making within the immigration process. Using the case of immigrants living in the City of London, Ontario a seven-factor model of place branding influence was tested through the analysis of 739 surveys to determine its impact on place image and perception of the city. Through ANOVA and multivariate regression models, the perceptions of the immigrant views on London and four key competitor cities (Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, and Waterloo) were tested and compared to identify what place branding factors – if any – are most influential in shaping perceptions and evaluations of cities. Focusing on a population within a single city and contrasting it with key competing markets within the region allows for a critical examination of which place branding factors stand out in their role in influencing where they choose to live. In doing so, this chapter extends previous research by employing an approach that allows for the identification of specific migration flows at the previously

underexamined context of intra-regional decision-making for inter-regional immigrants and identify how place branding influences this migration.

6.2 The Need for Immigrants – the Canadian Context

Canada has historically relied on immigration to drive population growth, access needed workers, and support the economy, this reliance has intensified in recent years. In fact, some have argued that Canadian immigration policy has by default become a national population policy (Ley & Hiebert, 2001). Nearly three-quarters of the population growth that occurred in Canada between 2011 and 2016 (the years of the last census) was from new immigrants who had permanently settled in Canada, and nearly all net labour force growth is accounted for by immigration. Indeed, nearly a quarter of Canada's population is now comprised of immigrants and permanent residents (Statistics Canada, 2016). Asia (including the Middle East) is the top source continent of recent immigrants in the country. In 2016, the majority (62%) of newcomers were born in Asia, however, Africa is now the second largest region for migration (13%) moving ahead of Europe (8%; Statistics Canada, 2016).

At the national level, Canadian immigration policy is framed primarily as a response to the changing global political-economy, prioritizing Canada's need to maintain its standing in the global market and then to help create an economic advantage in order to increase its international competitiveness (Buzdugan & Halli, 2009). To this end, well-educated and high-skilled immigration is privileged, as it provides a cheaper and less resource intensive pathway to enhance Canada's economic growth, by increasing the level of human capital (i.e. high levels of education and work experience and good

command of English and/or French) without having to educate the new arrivals (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002; Buzdugan & Halli, 2009). Thus, Canadian immigration policy has been heavily tied to the needs of the Canadian labor market, with skilled workers giving priority over family class immigrants and refugees due to their high human capital and the economic independence (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2006). This preference is reflected in the composition of recent immigrant arrivals, with the majority (60%) admitted under the economic category, while 27% admitted through family reunification, and 13% admitted as refugee category. Instead, this type of migration appears to occur primarily within intra-regional migration (Gottlieb, 2003; Nedomysl, 2004; Walmsley et al, 1998), suggesting that lifestyle factors such as quality of place, culture, and natural environment may help immigrants determine their ultimate destination after arrival in the country.

While human capital is considered particularly important in the context of Canadian immigration at the national level, this perspective has also trickled down to local governments. For local governments in advanced economies, immigration is understood to be an important economic issue, a sentiment and strategic economic development priority held by most cities in Ontario (68%) who cite immigration attraction and retention as a vital local priority. For instance, the City of London (2016: 15) strategic economic development policy document identifies:

Immigration has also taken on more significance to the economic expansion of London. With an aging population and low rates of natural population growth, more and more of the country's cities and regions will need to rely on immigration as a way to sustain employment growth.

In Canada and other advanced economies, many small and mid-sized cities face stresses due to changes in patterns of population growth and distribution, increased

primacy of large cities within regional contexts, and changing economic bases. Cities in closer spatial proximity to these large cities may become stressed satellite cities that are able to maintain some semblance of their population base, they act as feeder cities to major metropolises (Merrilees et al, 2012). However, for cities further out, there has been a pattern of decline as the population – and more specifically the talent within the labour force – are bled away with workers and students relocating to major cities with their significant employment, social, cultural, and educational opportunities. This is particularly troublesome for small and midsized cities that have experienced the transition from traditional to the new economy and are no longer able to rely on unskilled labour or large-scale manufacturing as a source of employment. Instead, there is a need for well-educated and highly skilled individuals of which these cities are fighting over (Donald et al, 2003; Florida, 2002; Wolfe & Gertler, 2001).

6.3 Place Branding – A Solution?

To better promote their cities and attract new residents and workers, local governments are increasingly relying on place branding initiatives. This increased appreciation for place branding policy can be contextualized as one outcome of the broader shift to entrepreneurial forms of local government, where city governments are codifying place-based brands and developing formal marketing strategies to improve their image (Cleave & Arku, 2014). A key force driving this change is the need to maintain economic standing in an increasingly competitive global economy, where there is greater mobility that allows people to flow across political boundaries at both regional

and global scales. The same political-economic context that have shaped Canada's immigration policy at a national level influence local government approaches.

Place brands have been defined as the networks of connections and associations held by a target audience that shape their perceptions and attachment with a city (Braun et al, 2014; Keller, 1993; Zenker et al, 2013a). Place branding, therefore, becomes the process of creating the framework for these associations – what city elements and attributes are available and how they are communicated to the target audience. This, however, creates an interesting proposition about what brands and branding represent. Kavaratzis (2004) in discussion of a tertiary model of place communication, identifies three pathways in which a city works to foster and attenuate the network of connections: primary channels, which include built, economic, social, cultural, and natural environments, government attitude and action; secondary channels which include traditional branding efforts (i.e. logos and slogans), advertising, and other promotion; and tertiary channels which include word-of-mouth and how the city is presented in different forms of media.

This diverse set of pathways in which a city can promote itself has several implications. First, place branding is not limited to traditional branding methods which only represent one form of communication, and instead are comprised of an amalgam of the urban environment. While cities are adopting formal place branding strategies, the broader economic and urban development strategies also shape how the city positions itself. Second, the positioning of the city can also be influenced by non-government sources, including media, word-of-mouth communication in the tertiary channel, as well as some primary channel sources such as social and urban design factors that local

governments may have limited control over. Third, because of the importance of primary channels of communication, decisions about current and future urban policy inherently have place branding implications, even if it is not explicitly acknowledged or understood by cities, as it has implications on the components and topology of the network of associations at the core of place brands. The implication is that place branding can be both implicit and explicit, intentional and unintentional, and acknowledged or not – and within complex environments like cities all these types of place branding can occur concurrently.

Cities have relied on place branding to attract mobile economic resources, such as residents and talent, however, there are few examples of this approach explicitly emphasizing the attraction of immigrants. Instead, emphasis appears to be primarily on domestic talent (Hansen, 2010; Lawton et al, 2013; Mellander et al, 2011), entrepreneurs (Jacobsen, 2009; Zenker et al, 2013), and the creative class (Zenker, 2009). Immigrants – who are typically highly-skills and well-education overlap with these groups – and are assumed to be attracted by the same branding efforts. The question is: *what elements are important?* Drawing on relevant literature on place branding and place communication (see Ashworth & Voogd, 1990; Boison et al, 2011; Cleave & Arku, 2014, 2018; Hall & Hubbard, 1996; Inch & Florek, 2008; Inch & Sun, 2013; Jacobsen, 2009, 2012; Kavartzis, 2005; Lawton et al, 2013; Mellander et al, 2011; Merrilees et al, 2012; Neidomysl, 2004, 2008; Stock, 2009; Turok, 2009; Ward, 1998; Young & Lever, 1997; Zenker, 2009; Zenker et al, 2013), as well as examination of local urban and economic development policies, promotional material, and city documents a seven-factor model of place communication was developed. In summary, the seven key factors identified are:

Promotional Efforts (PROM) refers to a group of items related to direct advertisement and branding efforts (logos and slogans) used by the city (Cleave & Arku, 2014). In particular, this is consistent with Kavaratzis's (2004) secondary channel of place communication.

Recreation and Natural Environment (REC) broadly refers to outdoor entertainment activities offered by the city, as well as the natural environment and greenspace available for these activities to occur in (Neidomysl, 2004; Zenker, 2009).

Local Culture (CULT) includes items such as the perceived diversity and multiculturalism of the city, as well as the availability of relevant cultural activity groups (i.e. ethnic organizations; Insch & Sun, 2013; Zenker et al, 2013).

Urbanity (URBAN) includes the design of the city, its atmosphere or energy, but also the population size and density – all characteristics that impact how urbane or the lifestyle associated with living in that city (Lawton et al, 2013; Mellander et al, 2011).

Housing (HOUSE) includes perceptions on cost, quality and availability of housing, as well as the perceived overall cost of living in a city (Florida et al, 2011; Niedomysl, 2005; Zenker et al, 2013b).

Local Economy (ECON) teases out perceptions related to the availability of relevant and good jobs, as well as the direction the local economy is headed (Cleave & Arku, 2014; Jacobsen, 2009, 2012).

Social Offerings (SOC) captures perceptions on whether the city has opportunities for talent to meet new people, have a thriving social scene, as well as nightlife and other social activities that fall outside standard recreation (Lawton et al, 2013).

Together, these factors present a comprehensive model that explains the way that cities intentionally and unintentionally attempt to position themselves for immigrants as a positive place to live and work. The more positively or more strongly these elements are perceived by the target audience, the more likely strong psychological connections will be formed that will drive forms of place investment such as migration (Allen, 2007). However, due to the lack of research on place branding influence on migrants, it is unclear the exact attributes of a city that are meaningful if branded, and to what extent this influences immigrant decision-making, particularly as there is likely a mis-alignment of the brand and the audience needs and expectations. The remainder of this chapter will

use the framework developed here to explore the role of place branding on immigrant decisions of what city to live in, focusing on the city of London, Ontario.

6.4 Methods

6.4.1 Study Area

To evaluate the role of place branding in immigrant attraction, data was collected through surveys of migrants living in the City of London, Ontario. London is a mid-sized Canadian city with a population of 383,822 (Statistics Canada, 2016), located approximately between Toronto, Ontario and Detroit, Michigan. London represents a prototypical mid-sized city in an advanced economy – beset by economic issues through the decline of traditional manufacturing in the first part of the twentieth century, and experiencing relatively slow population growth (a 3.9% increase in population between 2011 and 2016, less than key regional competitor, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo which experienced a 5.5% population increase, the City of Toronto at 6.2% growth, the provincial population increase for Ontario of 4.6%, and the national growth of 5.0%; see Statistics Canada, 2016). Despite this slow overall growth, between 2011 and 2016, the immigrant population in London increased by 9% from 76,585 to 83,770 (Statistics Canada, 2016), with immigrants accounting for 41% of the population change in the city.

In addition, London struggles to attract and retain young, well-educated, and highly-skilled workers, regularly losing them to larger regional and international competitors (Clemens & Buzzelli, 2015). As a result, London – like many small and midsized cities globally – is at constant risk of falling behind the markets, as they jockey with for position on the global stage. Attracting highly-skilled and well-educated

immigrants, therefore, presents cities like London the opportunity to grow their local population and labour force. This sentiment is reflected in the city's strategic economic development, which notes:

London's population growth over the last decade while steady, has trailed many communities closer to the GTA. The city has been challenged to increase its population through direct immigration and generally speaking has an older population than many comparative communities. If unchanged, this positioning may limit London's long term economic prosperity. Attracting and retaining immigrants in London is critical to the city's competitiveness (London, 2016: 11).

In addition, the City of London (2016: 16) have an explicit appreciation for the importance of place branding, stating:

A city's image or place brand plays a key role in economic development marketing, contributing to the differentiation of an area and outlining the unique value proposition of the community to businesses, visitors and residents.

While there is an appreciation for both immigrant attraction and place branding they are not explicitly linked in the strategic economic planning, and indeed there is little formal outlining of the city's approach to branding. As a result, the city's brand is significantly influenced through implicit branding efforts, such as the decision to position the city as a destination for immigrant; or through unintended outcomes of London's broader economic development policymaking, such as the focus on live, work, and play (emphasizing culture, social offerings, and recreation).

6.4.2 Data Collection

The data was collected through online and hard-copy surveys distributed through local networks of migrants in London, including key immigration training and assistance centres, ethnic associations, and cultural activity groups (see Appendix C.6). Summarized in Table 6.1, the survey measured seven factors of city perceptions through a 28-item

questionnaire as described in Chapter Five. All items were measured using a Likert scale with a range from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 7 (“strongly agree”). To avoid item context effects, all items were presented in random order for each participant (Schwartz, 1999). Due to high Cronbach’s alphas (all above 0.70), indicating high internal consistency, the survey responses were consolidated into single values for each factor. Each factor was operationalized through as an unweighted mean of its constituent items. Additionally, the respondents were asked to rate their perceptions of the place brand image along two basic dimensions – in terms of both positivity and strength/power. These two factors were measured along a 7-point Likert scale. Finally, participants answered questions on demographic variables such as age, family status, migration and educational background.

The respondents were asked to complete the survey providing their perceptions of the City of London, Ontario (n = 353) as well as for one of four other major cities in the province which was randomly assigned: Toronto (n = 102); Ottawa (n = 96); Hamilton (n = 90); or Waterloo (n = 95). By asking for perceptions of multiple cities, it allowed for a greater overall sample (n = 739) as well as for comparisons between perceptions of the different cities to be made. In the study group, 33% indicated they were from Asia and the Middle East, 45% from Africa, 9% from Europe, and 13% from the Americas. 56% were male, while 44% were female. In addition, the group was overall well educated, with 65% indicating they had a university degree or higher, and an additional 13% having completed other post-secondary education. Finally, 94% indicated that London was the first place they had lived in Canada, and on average had been in the city for 7 years (with a standard deviation of 6 years).

Table 6.1: Summary of the latent factors and constituent items of the seven-factor model operationalized in this study

Factor	Item
Traditional Promotional Efforts (PROM)	Logo or Slogan Traditional Advertising Online Content News Coverage
Recreation and Natural Environment (REC)	Outdoor Recreation Activities Organized Rec Activities Greenspace Access to water Beauty of the Natural Environment
Cultural (CULT)	Diversity and Multiculturalism Cultural Organizations Cultural Opportunities
Urbanity (URBAN)	Urban Design Population size and density Energy, Atmosphere, or Buzz Urban Image of the City
Local Economy (ECON)	Current Economic Conditions Employment Opportunities Quality and Availability of Jobs Future Economic Conditions
Housing (HOUSE)	Overall Cost of Living Cost of Housing Quality of Housing Businesses that Operate in the City
Social Offerings (SOC)	Population of Similar Age Vibrant Nightlife Good Place to Make Friends Number of Singles

6.4.3 Analytical Approach

The responses of the survey participants were analyzed three ways. First, one-way ANOVA was used to test if there was statistically significant variation between means of the favourability of each part of the seven-factor model for each city. This was used as an initial test to determine if there was variability in the responses and if there was homogeneity in the variances. This latter test is important, because the proper specification of ANOVA with uneven group sizes requires homogeneity of variance.

Second, using a series of ANOVA contrast tests, group differences were analyzed for the five cities included in this study within the seven factors of the conceptual model for city branding. This approach allows for the means of each factors for the different cities to be compared with one another; comparing a group of four cities directly by considering the variance from the remaining group (summarized in Table 6.2; see Zenker, 2009).

Table 6.2: Cases of comparison for the ANOVA contrasts

Case	Cities Compared	Considering the variance of
C1	Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton, Waterloo	London
C2	London, Ottawa, Hamilton, Waterloo	Toronto
C3	London, Toronto, Hamilton, Waterloo	Ottawa
C4	London, Toronto, Ottawa, Waterloo	Hamilton
C5	London, Toronto, Ottawa, Hamilton	Waterloo

Third, a multivariate regression model was used to first delineate the relationships between the seven explanatory factors and the response variables of brand image strength and positivity. These response variables were developed from a review of the literature and provide a simple method for measuring the impact of the brand, where stronger and more positive brand positioning will lead to the city being viewed in a more favourable manner. For the brand to resonate and influence a target audience it needs to be viewed positively (Hansen, 2009) but also needs to be well established, communicated and understood (Hospers, 2011).

The outcome of this analytical approach is that it allows the examination of how different cities within the same region are perceived by migrants, what factors are most important to them in how they perceive place brands. These findings provide a context for understanding both immigrant decision-making as well as what cities can do to attract these groups.

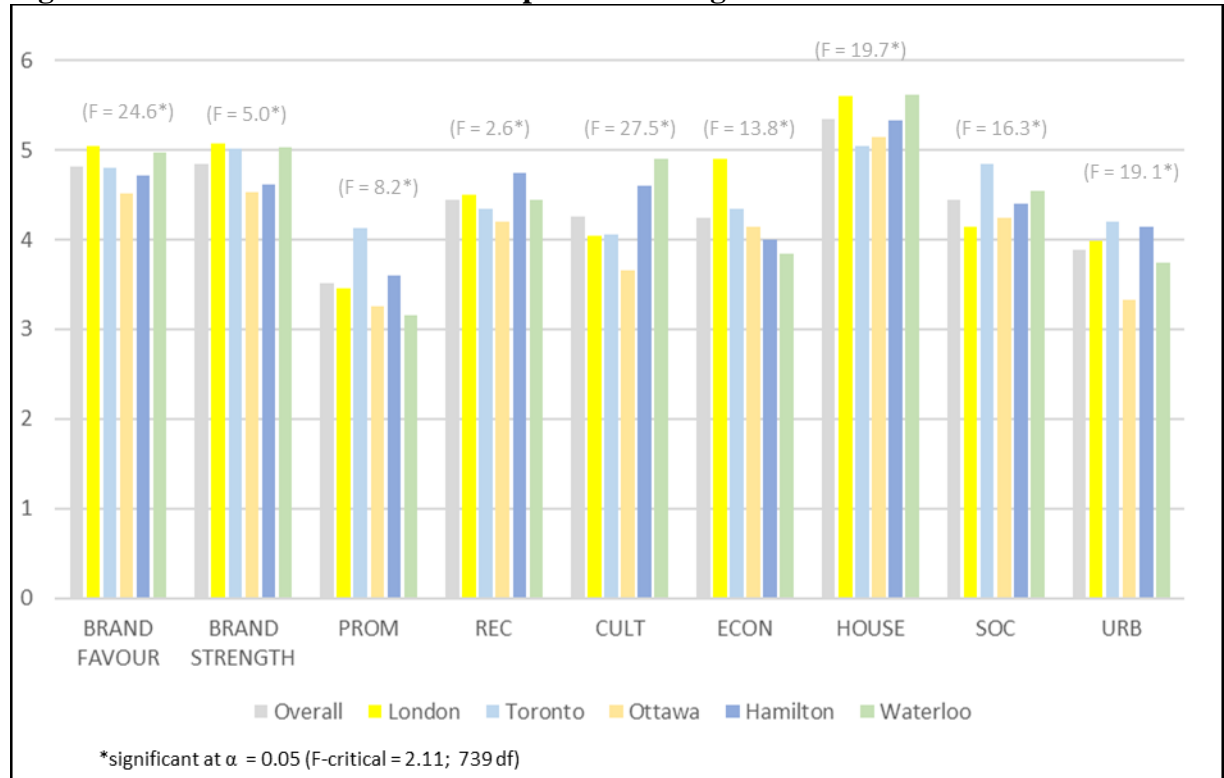
6.5 Results

Figure 6.1 summarizes the means of each element of the seven-factor model separated by city and presents the result of the one-way ANOVA, to determine if there is variation between the perceptions of each city. As Figure 6.1 shows, there are differences in the magnitudes of the means for each factor overall, as well as in the means when examined for each city. Interestingly, the brand favourability and strength for London were the highest-rated by the respondents among the five cities. Since the respondents had all previously chosen to live in London, an implication is that the positive and strong image is closely associated with the attraction and retention of immigrants who are determining where to live between a group of cities within the same region. Of further note, housing was viewed most positively among the factors, while traditional branding and promotion was the least favourable. Overall, the one-way ANOVA indicated that there was variance among the means for each city, meaning there are potential differences in the way that each city in the study was perceived compared to its competitors. Additionally, the results of Levine's statistic for each factor showed that there was homogeneity within the variances.

To compare how London and the other cities were perceived in terms of the key place branding elements in the seven-factor model, group differences were analyzed using a series of ANOVA contrast tests (Table 6.3). Means for the different groups are shown in Figure 6.1. Supporting the descriptive statistics previously presented, when the difference in the mean of the responses for London were contrasted against the pooled means for the four other study cities the means for favourability (0.31) and brand strength

ratings (0.29) were shown to score higher for London. In fact, London was the only city to be positive when compared to the pooled average of competitor cities.

Figure 6.1: Difference of means of respondent ratings for each latent variable



For the factor measuring traditional promotional measures, only Toronto (0.64) having a mean that significantly contrasted those of the other cities. For the remainder of the cities, the perceptions of traditional promotional activities were either non-significant or negative. As a result of the average favourability of perceptions about London’s promotional activities – as its mean was significantly lower when contrasted against the means of other cities – it can be interpreted that traditional promotional activities had little impact on the final determination of immigrants on where they were going to live. Of additional note, there were two factors – economy and housing – where London had the only positive perception compared to the mean of the other cities (Table 6.3). This is contrasted by the perception of London as having unfavourable social offerings, urbanity,

and cultural offerings – which are often viewed as important factors in attracting domestic talent and the creative class but appear less important in shaping the decision-making of immigrants in selecting to live in London.

Table 6.3: Summary of ANOVA contrasts for each attribute

	IMG1	IMG2	PROM	REC	CULT	ECON	HOU.	SOC	URB
C1	0.31**	0.29**	-0.18	0.03	-0.11	0.43***	0.41***	-0.22*	-0.26*
C2	-0.02	0.20*	0.64***	-0.06	-0.17*	0.11	-0.30**	0.38**	0.33**
C3	-0.36***	-0.40***	-0.20*	-0.23*	-0.55***	-0.11	-0.21*	-0.19*	-0.37**
C4	-0.13	-0.30**	0.07	0.25*	0.29**	-0.16*	-0.04	-0.09	0.30*
C5	-0.20*	0.22*	-0.33*	0.01	0.54***	-0.27**	0.14	0.10	-0.10

This shows the difference in means of the city isolated in each case (see Table 6.2) and the pooled mean of responses for the other four cities; Contrast of means for each city; * significant at $p = 0.05$; ** $p = 0.01$; *** $p = 0.001$; IMG1 = brand favourability, IMG2 = perceived brand strength

While the ANOVA analysis allowed for comparisons of the factors across the study cities, it does not allow for specific determination of the factors that influence brand perceptions. Table 6.4 summarizes the results of the multiple regression analysis, modeling the influence that the seven-factor model has on brand image favourability. This model accounts for 31.5% of the variability in favourability of the place brand. Four factors, economy ($\beta = 0.223$), housing (0.169), urbanity (0.152), and recreation/natural environment (0.145) were found to have a significant positive association with favourability, with the three remaining factors having no significant relationship.

Table 6.5 summarizes the multiple regression model along the second dimension – how strongly the place brand resonates, in which the model explains 33.5% of the variability. Again, economy (0.220) and housing (0.245) were found to have significant positive relationships, along with culture (0.113). Interestingly, for both dimensions of the brand, traditional promotional methods had weak but slightly negative relationships, suggesting they had little impact on how the final place brand was received.

Table 6.4: Bivariate regression model comparing the influence of latent variables on perceived brand favourability

Unstandardized Coefficients			
Model	B	Std. Error	T
PROM	-.027	.064	-0.419
REC	.145	.074	1.960*
CULT	.046	.045	1.019
ECON	.223	.062	3.597***
HOUSE	.169	.047	3.618***
SOC	-.142	.075	-1.902
URB	.152	.054	3.740***

* significant at p = 0.05; ** p = 0.01; *** p = 0.001

Table 6.5: Bivariate regression model comparing the influence of latent variables on perceived brand strength

Unstandardized Coefficients			
Model	B	Std. Error	t
PROM	-.102	.070	-1.455
REC	.229	.286	0.672
CULT	.113	.050	2.269**
ECON	.220	.091	2.242**
HOUSE	.245	.051	4.785***
SOC	-.080	.082	-.968
URB	.021	.059	.356

* significant at p = 0.05; ** p = 0.01; *** p = 0.001

6.6 Discussion and Conclusion

The findings of this study show that the place branding does influence the perceptions of different cities, and that certain elements that a city can use to position itself against competitors will influence the decision to live there. London had the most favourable and strongest brand image among the immigrants surveyed, with the strong implication being that this played a significant role in positioning London against its regional competitors as the best place to relocate. In addition, from this study it is clear that perceptions on the local economy and the likelihood of gaining employment, as well

as finding affordable and good quality housing were the two factors that consistently found to have a significant positive influence, with the regression analysis showing that these factors influenced the perceptions of the brand overall. A similar conclusion can be drawn from the results of the ANOVA analysis, where these perceptions of the local economic and housing separated London from its competitors.

As a result, economy and housing can be assumed to be the two that are most influential in attracting international immigrants, while more traditional factors for attracting talent become less important. Employment and affordable cost of living are consistent with key local attributes that economic immigrants are looking for when determining where to live (Bevelander & Pendakur, 2014; Tastsoglou & Preston, 2005). This is further supported by the respondents who indicated the main reasons for moving to London was for employment (75%). As economic immigrants are the most common class – and the most sought after by cities to support local economies – these results suggest that cities trying to attract them should position themselves as good locales to find jobs and having affordable cost of living.

This presents an interesting counterpoint to research and practice on attraction of other highly-skilled, talented, and creative groups which have found that factors such as urbanity and diversity seem to be the most important factors for attracting the creative core to a city (Florida et al, 2011; Lawton et al, 2013; Lewis & Donald, 2010; Mellander et al, 2011; Zenker, 2009; Zenker et al, 2013a). Instead, the findings of this study are more in line with Zenker's (2009) assertions about the non-creative class who prioritize cost efficiency most readily. As a result, while immigrants fill a similar role in the local economy as highly educated and creative domestic workers, the findings of this study

demonstrate that they represent a different class of economic resource than domestic talent and the creative-class and have different factors that are priorities in their evaluation of cities and decision-making. For cities, this means that a single general branding effort cannot be used to attract these different groups, and instead the city must carefully consider what factors are developed and promoted depending on who the target audience is. The implication is that cities need to have adaptiveness in their brand strategy to be able to connect with their desired target audience. While an overall city brand must be coherent, it also needs to be flexible enough to be able to position for different groups. In the case of London, the branding and economic development strategy indicates the desire to position the city to attract both domestic talent and international immigrants. Therefore, it needs to be adaptive to promote the cultural and social elements that attract the talent, while still being capable of positioning the city favourably in areas of the economy and housing. Since there is no contradiction between these brand elements, it simply becomes a matter of attenuating different factors in the broader network of elements and associations that form the city's brand.

Another implication of this study is that it demonstrates that traditional branding efforts, logos and slogans, are not effective methods for communicating or positioning a city or attracting economic resources (see also Anholt, 2005; Boison et al, 2018; Cleave et al, 2017; Govers, 2013; Hansen, 2009; Kavaratzis, 2004; Stock, 2009). For cities, which often rely on logos and slogans as the key parts of their branding (Cleave & Arku, 2015) the findings of this study indicate that a change in strategy is needed with a re-conceptualization of what place branding is. Instead, these findings of this study demonstrate that primary channels of place communication (Kavaratzis, 2004) were the

key ways in which perceptions, knowledge, and understandings of London were developed and therefore should be the areas local governments recognize as the key areas where place branding can occur.

While the City of London acknowledges the importance of place branding and that it needs to be more substantive than a logo in their strategic plan, it fails to delineate the primary channels of communication it could leverage. Though the city delineates the need to attract immigrants they do not specifically explore how to connect this with place branding or other economic development efforts. As a result, the city is failing to maximize the efficiency of their branding activities. The lesson learned from London is that local governments need specificity in their place branding and broader economic development strategies which specifically articulate branding's role in larger development, so that the city is positioned advantageously to improve the chances of being effective at influencing a target audience.

To change this, the act of policymaking and the decision to focus on attracting immigrants needs to be understood by cities as an inherently an act of place branding, as it sets the framework for how cities will promote and position itself and who their target audience is. Therefore, while economic and housing issues are not obvious in their role in place branding, they become key factors in positioning the city, so these elements need to be understood as brand elements, as decisions made by the city to support or attenuate these factors will influence how it promotes and positions itself, as well as how it is perceived. The implication is that much of what cities are currently doing is unintentional or unintended, and moving forward there needs to be a strategic shift that allows branding initiatives to be more explicitly considered within all policymaking.

Ultimately, this research showed that place branding – at least in terms of how unintentional city actions position the city – influences how cities are viewed by immigrants, and by extension, economic and housing dimensions of city brands appear to have the ability to guide decision-making. Since this research focused on the perceptions of migrants in one city – London – and compared them to the other likely potential destinations for immigrants in Ontario, the factors that separated London can be isolated as some of the key determinants of where immigrants chose to live. This presents a unique way of accessing the decision-making aspect and allows for real-world, rather than conceptualized phenomenon to be considered. Since the average length of time the study group had been in London is approximately 7 years, that for the majority it was the first location in Canada that they had lived, and that 80% indicated that their perception of London had not changed, the perspectives of the study group can be viewed as an excellent proxy for recent immigrants – particularly as accessing immediately arrived immigrants can be extremely difficult.

There is opportunity for future research on several fronts, including gaining the perspectives of individuals who just immigrated to Canada, as well as by focusing on the perspectives of immigrants in other cities to identify whether the two key dimensions here are unique to London, or if they are ubiquitous. Ultimately, London, Ontario is a fairly un-unique city, and shares many political and economic commonalities – both challenges and opportunities – with other midsized cities in advanced economies. Therefore, the lessons learned from this study of London can guide understanding of factors that impact late-stage immigration decision-making in other geographical contexts.

6.7 References

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CHAPTER SEVEN

MANUSCRIPT 4: PLACE BRAND INFLUENCE ON DECISION-MAKING

7.1 Introduction

Where businesses choose to locate is a subject of great interest. In a macro sense, knowing where firms operate is needed to understand the spatial structure of the global economy. Furthermore, within the broad context of globalization and a capitalist political-economy, understanding the decision-making process that determines where firms choose to locate helps explain the flows of increasingly mobile economic resources. At a more micro scale, understanding this decision-making process is equally important, as firms want to know the optimum locations to locate offices, plants, and related operations. Similarly, city and regional planners want to know the attributes firms look for to improve their position amongst competing areas to attract and retain these firms. In this context, understanding business location decisions can help provide an explanation of the current and potential health of the economy.

Despite all the interest, there remains considerable obfuscation over what attributes of municipalities' environment influence business location decision-making (see Carlton, 1983; Cleave et al, 2016; Guimarães et al, 2003). A myriad of attributes have been suggested as important in guiding business decision-making, including: human capital (Dunning, 1988; Florida, 1999, 2002; Graf & Mudambi, 2005), agglomerations (Porter, 2000, 2008), cost of business and profit maximization (Brown, 1979), universities (Audretsch et al, 2005; Bramwell & Wolfe, 2008), research and development intensity (Malecki, 1987, 2004), education (Guimarães et al, 2003), labour

costs (Carelton, 1983), integration into the economy (Dunning, 1998), infrastructure, and quality of life (Rondinelli, 2001; Lewis & Donald, 2010). Within North American context, others mentioned incentives, tax breaks, and bonuses for firms (Buss, 2001; Devereaux et al, 2007; Gertler, 1990; Leigh & Blakely, 2013; Osgood et al, 2012).

However, despite the wide range of attributes that have been suggested as being key influencers in firm location decision-making, there are several remaining questions and issues. First, the modeling and explanation of decision-making are made by rational actors. This assertion, however, has been questioned by some scholars including, Anholt (2006: 18) who argues that “all of people’s decisions, whether they are as trivial as buying an everyday product or as important as relocating a company, are partly rational and partly emotional. No human activity is exempt from this rule”. In this context, implicit or tacit knowledge (see Polanyi, 1966) of a city has the potential to create previously unexplored dimensions to location decision-making. Connecting with the geographical concept of place, emotional and psychological connections may lead to embedded senses of prestige, attachment, or loyalty which can influence the way a city is valued as a place to operate.

Second, and related, is the rise of place branding and promotion efforts in the attraction and retention of firms, which with few exceptions has been widely ignored in studies of firm location, despite the emerging understanding of its importance within local economic development strategy (see Cleave et al, 2016; Jacobsen, 2009, 2012; Pike et al, 2006; Pike, 2011, 2013). Extending beyond tangible attributes – such as incentives or human capital – the construction of place perceptions and place attachments have become popular among city officials and local economic development practitioners in

attempts to attract and retain footloose firms. In this case, the development and promotion of place brands to mean sell a city with the goal of differentiating it and positioning it favourably to appeal to consumers is not different from techniques used in traditional marketing practices. Thus, place branding can be contextualized within attraction models, where the city becomes a product to be packaged and sold (Leigh & Blakely, 2013). Despite some emerging research to analyze place brand image influence on businesses (Scatton & Schmitz, 2016) or the interaction between businesses and place promoters (Gentric et al, 2014; Lecat, 2008), place branding is rarely empirically studied from the perspective of having a potential effect on the location decision-making process.

Finally, and more methodologically, previous approaches to firm location decision-making have conceptualized the process as non-compensatory approach and consider attributes in isolation or as a rigid set, rather than in a compensatory way considering how the attributes interact and ‘trade-off’ with each other to provide a desired set of conditions. Different attributes have different perceived utilities, and therefore, a key research question is: what are the relative importance of the utility these attributes provide to firms?

To address these three research gaps, this chapter considers the question: *does place branding influence business location decision-making?* Drawing on human geography, marketing, and place branding perspectives, the hypothesized answer to this question is that *place makes a difference* and that this difference will manifest in differences in the attributes firms prioritize and to the extent in which they are prioritized.

To investigate this research question and hypothesis, a survey of 659 firms located in two municipalities in the Province of Ontario, Canada was conducted through

adaptive choice-based conjoint analysis (ACBC). The two areas in which the study was situated – the City of London and the Regional Municipality of Waterloo – represent key economic centres within the province. The Regional Municipality of Waterloo an upper tier regional government that encompasses the three cities of Waterloo, Kitchener, and Cambridge, together forming the leading high-technology clusters in Ontario, which is Canada's largest province and the centre of its greatest concentration of economic activity (Lucas et al, 2009). Waterloo has a positive brand and reputation within the province for having a strong local economy, built around high-tech and knowledge economy (Bramwell et al, 2008; Nelles, 2005; Wolfe, 2009). London – a single tier city – provides a counterpoint, as it has an economy built around traditional manufacturing and insurance – both of which have seen significant decline since the late 20th century (Bradford, 2010; Cleave et al, 2017), and as result have a comparatively weaker brand reputation and negative perception when contrasted against Waterloo (Cleave et al, 2017; Wolfe, 2009). Using these two municipalities with different brand strengths and reputations, the assertion that perception and brand can alter firm location decision-making make a difference is tested.

There are several key implications for this work. First, the use of ACBC introduces a new methodological approach for examining business location decision-making, allowing for the examination of how attributes that influence decision-making work in conjunction with each other. This allows for the identification trade-offs between attributes, producing a more nuanced but robust understanding of why and where firms choose to locate. Second, this research extends analysis beyond traditional, tangible attributes to consider how tacit knowledge and connections to place influence decisions.

In doing so, this re-contextualizes both place branding and the location decision process into a geographical framework. A final key outcome, related to the other two, is the re-framing of place, place branding, and tacit knowledge of cities as a construct or ‘halo-effect’ and through ACBC explores how this influences the trade-offs in location decision-making. To date, this effect has primarily been examined at the national level, so this analysis also provides an examination of whether these constructs occur at smaller spatial scales.

7.2 Political Economic Context of Place Branding and Firm Decision-Making

The broader political-economic context in which cities’ economic development policies, place branding, promotional efforts, and firm decision-making are situated is well studied (see Arku, 2015; Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Gertler et al, 2000; Harvey, 1989, 2007; Hall & Huubard, 1996; Jessop, 2002; Kiel, 2001; McCann & Ward, 2011; Peck & Tickell, 2002; Wolfson & Frisken, 2000). In fact, they represent different sides of the same coin; that is, firms having increasing mobility to migrate globally and place branding an effort by cities to attract these footloose economic resources. For cities and firms, globalization, neo-liberal policymaking, and the rise of entrepreneurial forms of local urban governance have created a paradoxical set of challenges and opportunities. What is evident is that the impacts and outcomes of these challenges and opportunities are spatially uneven.

Economic globalization has resulted in shifts in production patterns that have hurt some cities while benefiting others. Over the past forty years, the emergence of trans-national corporations, the loosening of borders and trade barriers through free trade

agreements, and the construction of global transportation and telecommunication infrastructure have created a political-economic landscape over which footloose economic resources and firms can flow. The most prominent examples of this increased mobility are seen in the erosion of traditional large-scale manufacturing from cities in advanced economies to emerging markets in less developed countries. This spatial fix – or global reorganization of manufacturing from central to peripheral locations – is often explained as firms minimizing transportation, labour, and overall operation costs, taking advantage of global differentials (Wolfson & Frisken, 2000). In some advanced economic regions, the common response by all levels of government to this increased mobility of large firms has been the offering of tax and financial incentives. However, some scholars are critical of such approach, with Malecki (2004) arguing that this form of local economic development leads to markets jockeying for position, with most cities and regions taking the ‘low-road’ of unsustainable spending to attract firms. In the essentially zero-sum framework of the global economy, this approach led to both a key divide between successful and struggling areas, but also the danger of local governments spending themselves into bankruptcy.

A response by local governments is an emphasis on local entrepreneurial ecosystems with focus on the development of firm attraction and development (Audretsch, 2015). Indeed, there has been increased recognition and acceptance of the importance of this entrepreneurial ecosystem within emerging knowledge, creative, and technology-based sectors (Florida & Melander, 2015; Gonzalez-Pernia & Pena-Legazkue, 2015). However, even though these firms are increasingly viewed as vital cogs of local and regional economies (see Audretsch et al, 2015) can locate and migrate

wherever they choose. Smaller firms appear more likely to be influenced by factors beyond costs and financial incentives, with many factors being identified as important determinants of the best places to locate, including: economic factors (Dunning, 1998), costs (Brown, 1979; Carelton, 1983), clustering of related firms (Porter, 2000), the quality of the workforce (Dunning, 1988; Graf & Mudambi, 2005), quality of life and place (Lewis & Donald, 2010) and the overall research environment (Audretsch et al, 2005; Bramwell & Wolfe, 2008; Malecki, 1987, 2004). While larger firms are more likely to have systematic approaches to site selection and location decisions, smaller firms are likely to be less formal in their decision-making. Cleave et al (2016) note that less than half of firms use some form of site selection process when determining where to operate. As a result, places that can position themselves in a positive light may have an opportunity to be viewed by firms as a good place to do business.

An approach that cities have begun to emphasize in their business attraction efforts that may present an avenue for promoting and attracting these firms – particularly ones with less formal site decision-making processes – is place branding. The increased adoption of place branding in economic development efforts by cities is embedded within the emergence of ‘the entrepreneurial city’ (Hall & Hubbard, 1996) and neoliberal policy programmes in American and European cities (Hackworth, 2007; Greenberg, 2008). In North America, for example, Gertler et al (2002), Kiel (2001), and Sancton (2000) identify the spatial redistribution of power from upper to lower levels of government. Wolfson and Frisken (2000) argue that the reluctance of state and provincial governments to tax appropriately or develop structures for regional economic development approaches, while simultaneously reducing their financial support for municipal services, have forced

municipal governments to explore ways to strengthen their tax base. As a result, local governments are responsible for attracting firms of all sizes (Peterson, 1995), selling themselves as the location of greatest economic advantage (Cleave et al, 2016).

7.3 Place Branding, Knowledge, Constructs, and Firm Decision-Making

Place branding represents an approach for municipalities to manage the exchange relationship with businesses through the creation of a positive place image that communicates the economic advantages of the municipality. It is the way a city communicates the value it represents and position itself against its competitors. This re-contextualizes cities as products (Goodwin, 1993; Goss, 1993; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005), with the implication that places can be shaped, packaged, and positioned – marketed – to facilitate exchange relationships (Keller, 2010; Leigh & Blakely, 2013).

Place branding itself draws heavily from traditional product branding and marketing, where it is understood that strong and positive brand associations influence brand equity and product knowledge, which can influence consumer decision-making (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993). While often focused on logos and slogans (Anholt, 2006; Cleave & Arku, 2014), understandings of place branding have expanded to become more holistic. In the end, every action of residents and government, the current urban landscape, development, and history all inform the place brand image. This network of associations is what positions the city favourably against its local, regional, and global competitors. It is through the attenuation of this network that place brand equity is generated. The stronger the place brand equity, the greater potential for a city to be viewed as an optimal place to locate and do business.

But how would this equity manifest itself? Cleave and Arku (2017) have suggested that there are strong parallels between this place brand equity and the concept of sense-of-place, where stronger connections to places allow for greater attachment and potential for investment there. This draws on the phenomenological interpretation of place and meaning creation, where connections and understandings of places are developed through interaction (Relph, 1970). In the context of place branding's influence on firm location decision-making, this equity or sense-of-place that connects the city and firm is reframed as tacit knowledge. This presents an interesting dichotomy, as while place branding efforts are often an attempt to codify knowledge through symbolic forms of representation, the outcome – the sense-of-place or connection between a city and firm – is far more tacit, where the understanding is ethereal and difficult to fully explain or conceptualize (see Polanyi, 1966; Reber, 1995).

Gertler (2003), building on Polanyi (1966), describes tacit knowledge as a prime determinant of the geography of economic activity, through the process of learning-through-interacting, which tends to reinforce the local over the global. While Gertler (2003) and Howells (2002) frame tacit knowledge as a problem of firm innovation, the argument can be extended – indeed, it can be used to explain the way firms understand place brands and form connections with place. For Polanyi (1966), context is important since knowledge can only be exchanged through the sharing of a common context suggesting that for places to have a meaningful brand, it must connect with target audience using a common and appropriate language.

Tacit knowledge can only be acquired through experience, through the repeated interaction between a place, its brand, and the business. Knowledge, however, is

imperfectly accessible to conscious thought (Nelson & Winter, 1982), leading to levels of action that are not open to full deliberation (Hodgson, 1988), with the tacit dimension of knowledge existing in the background of the decision-makers consciousness (Gertler, 2003; Maskell & Malberg, 1999). This aligns with Anholt's (2006) explanation of decision-making, where the tacit knowledge of a place, manifested through the sense-of-place or place brand equity, works with the rational – codified, explicit knowledge – to influence decision-making.

If firm interactions with the brand can help foster this tacit knowledge, how would it manifest in the firm decision-making? In fact, marketing and early place branding literature might provide a clue. Country-of-Origin branding and influence has been well researched and explored over the past five decades (see Phau & Prendergast, 2000). Of relevance is the idea of Country-of-Origin brands acting as 'halos' or constructs for a product (Han, 1989). Expanding, the Country-of-Origin brands can act both as a halo construct that influences product attribute quality beliefs, and as a construct that summarizes beliefs about product and its quality (Han, 1989; Heslop & Papadopoulos, 1993). The halo and summary construct effects are important in how individuals understand and categorize knowledge into higher order units, allowing information to be activated and retrieved from memory during an evaluation or decision-making process. This is not dissimilar to associative memory theory, which Keller (1993) and Zenker and Braun (2010) argue information is deposited in nodes within a network of associations. Together, these constructs and their ability to code, store, and access knowledge influence attitudes of the product and purchase intentions (Han, 1989). For the former, the knowledge of a place – both codified and tacit – creates an understanding that

becomes associated with all aspects of the place, including the key elements that influence location evaluation and decision-making. A positive halo of a municipality, therefore, can change how it is perceived as a place to do business. A key underlying concept is that abstract information – or tacit knowledge – is recoded into higher order units (Han, 1989; Simon, 1974), which are easier to store in memory and act as a referral where attributes about the brand are not explicitly examined but instead the evaluation constructs are. The stronger and more positive the construct, the better chance it must be evaluated positively against competitors (Aaker, 1996). Ultimately, the idea of halo constructs is that the associated images and knowledge formed influence beliefs, and the beliefs influence attitude and decision-making.

In the context of this study, the halo constructs of cities and their brands play the same role in influencing firm location selection. Extending Han's (1989) halo model, place brands create the interface between the city and the firm and create a sense-of-place or tacit knowledge, which is built over time, ultimately acting as a centre for disseminating the positive attributes of the city. The brand helps summarize the tacit knowledge into a higher order unit, which then becomes an influence in the trade-off decision-making that firms undertake when determining where to locate. A second outcome is where the brand acts as a halo where perceived attributes or positive strengths of the city become understood as the realities of the local business environment. For the subset of firms that do not do a formal site selection process, construct and halo effects of the place branding effort have the potential to strongly influence how cities are perceived as sites to do business.

7.4 Methodology

The overall research question guiding this study was *does place branding influence business location decision-making?* With the accompanying hypothesis that it does influence how firms perceive places as potential locations to operate as well as in the actual location decision-making. But how would this influence manifest? The foundation of this study is that the decision-making process is not driven by the influence of a rigid set of attributes, but rather in the trade-off of attributes that have their own perceived utilities. Additionally, it is understood that the construct or halo that a place can have does influence the perceptions of business location decision-makers. The construct effect is the manifestation of tacit knowledge, of a city and in an ideal situation fills in potential gaps or overcomes potential weaknesses based on previously unexplored attachments or understandings. In theory, constructs work both ways – positive and negative. In a negative construct, certain attributes may become even more important if a city is to be considered. As a result, this research tests three research hypotheses:

H1: the construct influence of different cities will result in different attributes being identified by business decision-makers as important;

H2: a place with a positive image and construct will see key attributes prioritized less, as their value is already tacitly known and understood; and

H3: a city with a negative construct among decision-makers will see key attributes prioritized more to overcome potential negative associations.

Ultimately, any difference caused by the construct or halo effect can be seen as the influence of place branding.

To evaluate these hypotheses – and the broader research question – a survey was conducted of 659 firms in London (pop. 383,822) and Waterloo (pop. 535,154), two municipalities in the Province of Ontario. There are several advantages of situating the

research in two jurisdictions within the same province, including the ability to limit the influence of broader political-economic forces, as both cities are likely to be influenced to similar degrees (Cleave et al, 2016; Reese & Sands, 2007). Ontario also severely limits the ability of cities to provide bonuses or incentives to firms, therefore situating the study in this area helps remove a key driver of firm decision-making, allowing for focus on non-financial factors.

Many of the issues facing the Province of Ontario and its cities are ones occurring in other advanced economies, therefore, it represents an interesting and relatable study area, allowing for findings to have broader implications for urban and economic geographic research. This is, in part, because Ontario is a classic case of transitional economies previously based around manufacturing to one centred around knowledge and creative-based industries (Cleave et al, 2017; Vinodrai, 2013). Additionally, Ontario has gone through considerable neoliberal restructuring over the past two decades, with political power and responsibility being spatially fractured and downloaded from the provincial government to local governments (Arku, 2013; Bradford, 2008; Sancton & Young, 2009). This increased responsibility to provide services to residents, while also being increasingly in charge of local economic development trajectories has spurred the rise of entrepreneurial forms of governance, which privilege creative solutions of which place branding is among the most prevalent (Cleave et al, 2017).

However, place branding efforts and perceptions of cities are not homogenous over space, and although located in close spatial proximity, the cities of London and Waterloo have considerably different outlooks. The City of London itself has somewhat a negative connotation as a declining city, having lost a considerable amount of its

economic base as the economic landscape of Ontario transitioned away from traditional manufacturing (Bradford, 2010). Additionally, the current branding strategy of the city has been identified as obsolete in the most recent strategic planning efforts by London's city council (Cleave et al, 2017). In contrast, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo presents an example of a city with a strong brand and reputation, with branding focused on attracting human capital, entrepreneurs, creativity, and high-tech firms. Additionally, Waterloo has a strong reputation for its business environment and local economy, first buoyed by the presence of Research in Motion and the recent establishment of Google office; and beyond these flagship firms, there is a strong environment for small and mid-sized firm development.

As a result, the difference in branding and reputation should lead London and Waterloo to have different constructs, which should influence both the attributes considered and the utility of these attributes when firms consider them as places to locate.

7.4.1 Adaptive Choice-Based Conjoint Analysis

To investigate the influence of the place branding on firm location decision-making, an adaptive choice-based conjoint analysis (ACBC) approach was used. Broadly, conjoint analysis is a common marketing methodology for evaluating the value systems of a target audience (in this case decision-makers within firms responsible for the location decision-making) and identifying how trade-offs among competing places are made (Boesch & Webber, 2012; Green & Srinivasan, 1990; Kotri, 2006; Orme & Chrzan, 2017). Drawing from marketing research, ACBA is focused on trying to find out what a desired audience wants and values. As Boesch and Webber (2012) note that respondents

are often asked what product attributes are most important to them, or what their "ideal" levels of various product attributes are. Traditional approaches, such as through questionnaires and regression modelling – which is a cornerstone of location decision-making research as well – are not entirely satisfactory, with ambiguity teasing out the importance and interaction of attributes (Hinnen et al, 2015; Orme & Chrzan, 2017).

Alternatively, conjoint analysis allows defining customer needs more accurately than is possible by using simple-questionnaires. This allows access to subjective ratings – rather than factual data – and the subjective trade-offs among decision-makers when evaluating a place to be explored. Rather than ask about the importance of attributes individually, the research setting attempts to duplicate actual decision making in a real market, where the customer's task is to rank the different product alternatives that are offered and select the one that creates the most value (Kotri, 2006). In the context of this study, the approach is similar, as the ACBC is used to examine how firms make trade-offs in determining where to locate between competing places.

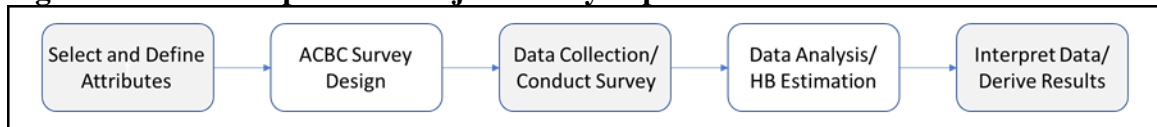
Although conjoint analysis has been widely used in marketing to evaluate consumer preferences it has rarely been used in place branding research (see Zenker et al, 2013 for an example of brand anchored conjoint – which significantly differs from ACBC – influence on talent), and never for its influence in business decision-making. This research utilizes the ACBC approach, which has been applied in several non-place branding studies (Boesch et al, 2013; Boesch & Webber, 2012; Heinzle et al, 2013; Hinnen et al, 2015). The two key benefits of this approach are: (1) the use of a data collection technique that forces the respondent to consider trade-offs among desirable alternatives; (2) a computational method through Hierarchical Bayes Estimation which

determines part-worth importance or utility (Hinnen et al, 2017; Johnson & Orme, 2007; Orme & Chrzan, 2017). The advantage of ACBC is that it aims to mimic the decision-making processes that influence real world choices as closely as possible, as they adapt the design of the choice experiment to the specific preferences of each individual respondent (Orme, 2006; Hinnen et al, 2017).

Since the overall goal of the study was meant to quantify the influence of place branding on business decision-making, a control-intervention design was used. The study was divided into three groups that used similar surveys. The control group was asked to identify and determine the utility of key decision-making attributes in a general sense with no place or city context given. This survey group was meant to give a set of baseline utility or importance values. The other two survey groups were given a place brand intervention, for either London or Waterloo, and the respondent was asked to explore the trade-offs in the decision-making process in the context of locating a firm in that city. The surveys that each group received were the same, with the exception of the information related to the place brand intervention.

Within the parameters of this overall study design, the ACBC surveys were designed, following the method outlined by Baier and Brusch (2009) and Orme and Chrzan (2017). Broadly, the ACBC survey was multistep, asking respondents to evaluate attribute levels directly, and then to make paired comparisons between profile descriptions (Johnson & Orme, 2007). To achieve this, this methodology took a five-step approach, allowing for a robust study design and extensive investigation of the influence of place branding in location decisions (Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1: Main steps in the conjoint analysis process



(adapted from Boesch & Weber, 2012; Briar & Bruschi, 2009)

7.4.2 Study Design

Step 1 – Select and Define Attributes. Murphy et al (2000) suggest that the conjoint attributes should only include those most relevant to potential consumers (i.e. firms and their key decision-makers) and those that can be influenced or manipulated by the producer (i.e. the city and its government). For this study, an initial set of attributes was developed based on a review of location-decision and place branding literature (see Cleave et al, 2016; Vuignier, 2018), as well as interviews with site selectors and local economic development officials. The result was a set of twelve attributes representative of the main factors that have been identified as being important in firm location decision-making (summarized in Table 7.1).

Step 2 – Survey Design. In the first section of the surveys the respondent answers a "Build Your Own" (BYO) question to introduce the attributes and levels, as well as to let the respondent indicate the preferred level for each attribute (Boesch & Weber, 2012; Briar & Bruschi, 2009; Orme, 2006). For simplicity, and due to a lack of clear measures or easily defined levels, each of the attributes was divided into two levels – whether it was of high or low importance in location decision-making. Due to the potential complexity of ACBC approaches with many attributes, respondents were asked to select only the four most important factors to them in their location decisions and to indicate the level (whether the attribute was viewed favourably – something important to the firm that might attract them to a place – or as a feature that may negatively influence their

evaluation). This approach ensured that only the most relevant factors were included in the trade-off analysis.

Table 7.1: Summary of key study attributes included in the ACBC survey

Attribute	Description
Economy	Local economy strength and market potential – including factors such as current market conditions, historical trends and future developments; as well as the ability of the local economy to sustain itself, grow and be resilient to external shocks
Clustering	Clustering and presence of similar firms – particularly in similar economic sectors.
IP Protection	Intellectual property protection – government protections that allow products and processes to be patentable, allowing for firms to accelerate the transformation of inventions into industrial processes and products and retain intellectual ownership of their innovations
Logistics	Logistics (i.e. connectivity to other markets that allow for the receiving and distribution of materials and products) and supporting infrastructure (i.e. roads, rail)
Land	Cost and availability of land – including purchase prices, rent rates, and property taxes
Workforce	Quality of the local workforce – including having highly-skilled and well-educated workers that match the needs of the firm
Costs	Costs of operating the business and the perceived ability for profit generation
R&D	R&D environment – presence of a strong research sector, including high knowledge concentration, government support to drive innovation and product development (i.e. business incubators/accelerators), and partnerships with universities and other research institutes
Quality of life	Quality of life and place – including recreational, social and cultural offerings, as well good quality housing
Social Climate	Social and political climate – including levels of tolerance and social perceptions, density of civic organizations, as well as the political climate at local, regional, and national scales
Safety	Security and safety – including perceptions of crime and ability to protect property
Other	Other key factors defined by the firm

Based on answers to the BYO questionnaire, the pool of the four most important attributes were included in the second section of the survey where the respondents were asked screening questions based on whether the combination of attributes and levels would be considered ‘a possibility’ or ‘not a possibility’ as place to locate. Respondents were shown three options at a time and up to five iterations based on their responses.

These responses were used to adapt each survey and optimize its final stage - choice tasks. In this final stage of the survey, the respondents were shown a series of choice tasks presenting the surviving attribute combinations (those marked as a ‘possibility’ in the screening phase) in groups of three. The goal of this phase is for the respondents to evaluate the different options and select the one they feel is most suitable. The winning concepts from each set of three options then compete in subsequent rounds of the tournament until the preferred concept is identified. This phase of the survey requires $t/2$ choice tasks or decisions by the respondent to identify the overall winner (where t is the number of concepts marked as ‘a possibility’ in the screening phase). The purpose of this last phase of the survey is to engage the respondents in a choice-based conjoint that identifies the trade-offs made between attributes in the evaluation and decision-making process, and the development of data to estimate part-worth utilities and importance scores using Hierarchical Bayes Estimation (Hinnen, 2017; Okechuku, 1994; Orne, 2013).

Step 3 – Conduct Survey. The ACBC data collection was conducted through an online survey. Over 6000 invitations to participate were directly emailed to businesses located in London and Waterloo, with contact information collected through online business directories. Additionally, the survey was widely promoted and disseminated through online newsletters published by business associations and economic development offices located in each city. Those who participated in the survey were assigned into one of three groups – a control group that was asked about key decision-making factors in a general sense with no place or city mention. The other two surveys contained a place brand intervention for either London or Waterloo, and the respondent was asked to

consider the decision-making process of locating a firm in that city. Altogether there were 659 respondents with 235 assigned to the control group, 222 assigned to the London group, and 203 assigned to the Waterloo group. All three surveys, therefore, were above the minimum recommended sample size of 200 needed to obtain reliable results from conjoint analysis (Quester & Smart, 1998).

Step 4 – Data Analysis. The output of the ACBC was analyzed through a multinomial logit model using Hierarchical Bayes Estimation. In particular, individual-level part-worth utilities were estimated for each firm based on their observed choices in the ACBC survey. Part-worth utilities indicate the relative desirability of an attribute level (Hinnen et al, 2017). These part-worth utilities were then converted into percentages, which isolate the importance or contribution of each attribute in the decision-making process (Orme, 2010).

Step 5 – Interpret Data and Derive Results. The importance scores calculated for each individual were then pooled into three groups – the control group, those that filled out the London survey, and those that filled out the Waterloo survey. The average importance score for each attribute was calculated. T-tests were then used to compare differences in the importance of the attributes between the control and intervention groups. The use of t-test in this analysis was done to determine if the intervention of a place brand and the related construct influenced perception and decision-making in a statistically significant way.

7.5 Results

Of the firms surveyed, 56% were located in London, while 44% were located in the Waterloo Region. Overall, the average firm employed nine workers and on average the firms in the study have been in operation for eight years. Across the study groups, the firms participating in the study operated in a range of sectors including traditional manufacturing and fabrication (35%), high-tech (30%), and creative or knowledge-based sectors (22%). Finally, 8.3% of the firms indicated they operated in multiple cities. This provides a general summary of the study group firms; however, Table 7.2 shows that there is some minor variation between the three study groups; overall, their compositions are similar allowing comparisons between them to occur. Table 7.3 provides a breakdown of firm distribution across the two study areas, rather than by study group.

Table 7.2: Characteristics of firms categorized by assigned study group

	Control	Waterloo	London
Number of Firms	234	202	223
Average Firm Age	9 years	5 years	8 years
Average # of employees	8 employees	8 employees	10 employees
% operating in multiple cities	11%	3%	8%
Key sectors			
Traditional ¹	37%	33%	34%
Advanced ²	32%	29%	31%
Creative ³	20%	24%	23%
Other	11%	14%	12%

¹traditional manufacturing and fabrication; ²high-tech and advanced manufacturing; ³creative or knowledge-based sectors; firms were categorized based on a broad scheme based on their industry sector

Table 7.3: Characteristics of study firms categorized by current firm location

	Waterloo	London
Number of Firms	290	369
Average Firm Age	5 years	11 years
Average # of employees	8 employees	10 employees
% operating in multiple cities	3%	8%
Key sectors		
Traditional ¹	28%	42%
Advanced ²	38%	22%
Creative ³	27%	17%
Other	7%	19%

¹ traditional manufacturing and fabrication; ² high-tech and advanced manufacturing; ³ creative or knowledge-based sectors; firms were categorized based on a broad scheme based on their industry sector

7.5.1 Influence of Place Branding – Attribute Frequency

Table 7.4 summarizes the relevance of each attribute in the decision-making process, measured by the frequency in which it was identified by the firms as a key factor in firm decision-making. For the control group, the four attributes most frequently identified were Economy (14%), Workforce (14%), Quality of Life (14%), Logistics (11%). Interestingly, costs and profit motivations were lower (7%). An initial implication of this finding is that while profit motivation does remain one of the factors that guide decision-making, it is less relevant than the final location decision than other factors such as the strength of the local economy and workforce quality.

Table 7.4: Summary of the prioritization of city attributes by each study group

Attribute	Control	Waterloo	London
Economy	14%	12%	17%
Clustering	9%	8%	12%
IP Protection	3%	1%	1%
Logistics	11%	14%	9%
Land	8%	12%	6%
Workforce	14%	11%	15%
Costs	7%	12%	9%
R&D	5%	3%	10%
Quality of life	14%	11%	11%
Social Climate	5%	4%	2%
Safety	4%	7%	4%
Other	4%	5%	3%

A key assumption guiding this research is that the influence of place brands and tacit place knowledge would influence the key attributes prioritized in location decision-making. When the responses of the two intervention groups are examined there is evidence of the effect of place perception and knowledge. When presented with place brand stimuli, there were differences in the rates of importance. While the same four attributes were also the most frequently identified (with cluster presence also prioritized for London and land commonly identified as important for Waterloo), there are several interesting results that demonstrate the impact of the branding. For example, for firms asked about Waterloo the strength of the economy or the research and development environment was prioritized less frequently than the control group. The opposite was observed for firms asked about London, where these attributes were prioritized more frequently. This is consistent with what would be observed based on the hypothesis guiding the study – where the knowledge about a place, stimulated by the brand intervention, acts as a construct.

Waterloo has the reputation of having a stronger economy compared to London, built off of the long history of the high-tech. As well, more recently Waterloo has accrued the reputation of being very entrepreneurial and having a strong research environment. This then manifests itself in the way firms prioritize key attributes. For example, the control group, where there is no place connection or association (i.e. no halo construct) represents a ‘truer’ or baseline series of city attribute prioritizations. With no halo shaping the perceptions of firms the findings show that the local economy has a prioritization rate of 14% (i.e. 14% firms prioritized as key in their decision-making). Alternatively, it is tacitly understood that Waterloo has a strong local economy, and

therefore firms decide that it is less important to prioritize that in their decision-making. Since they already have a perception of the Waterloo being a good place to operate the business this becomes engrained within their decision-making. This is seen in the results, as economy prioritized only 12%. The gap between the control and the intervention group can be interpreted as the impact of the halo-effect.

Finally, the firms in the London intervention group (i.e. asked about a municipality with a weaker and negative reputation) demonstrate that encoded negative perceptions of the place alter to what extent attributes are prioritized. To overcome the negative reputation firms indicated that there was greater prioritization of key local economic attributes. This is seen in the prioritization rate for local economy being 17%. Again, this difference from the control group is interpreted as the outcome of halo that London has – in this case a negative one. This suggests that firms need more convincing of the strong local economy to be swayed to alter their perceptions of London as a place to locate.

7.5.2 Influence of Place Branding – Attribute Utility

Along with the attributes that were prioritized, the second key factor that place branding was hypothesized to influence was how the utility or importance of the attributes were prioritized in the decision-making process. Table 7.5 gives an overview of the perceived utilities of each attribute as estimated by the Hierarchical Bayes model for the control and intervention groups. For the control group, quality of life, logistics, other (i.e. firm specific attributes such as proximity to a key upstream supplier or presence of a university), and economy, all having the highest utility score. While these four were on

average the most important attributes considered by firms in location decision-making, they again demonstrate that firms look for more than just incentives or cost minimization, and instead consider a range of factors. This supports the assertion of this study – that firm decision-making is not focused on a single or limited and rigid set of factors, but instead a complicated series of trade-offs.

Broadly, the findings presented in Table 7.5 present a similar pattern to the prioritization of attributes, where there is a detectable influence of the place brand. As with prioritizations the control group represents the attribute importance of a ‘generic’ or baseline city that has no knowledge, associations, or halo. As a result, the responses of the control group can be interpreted to be uninfluenced utility of each attribute. As Table 7.5 demonstrates, there are differences in the utilities between the control group and the intervention groups. These differences are again interpreted as the influence of the brand and the associations and connections firms have with places.

Table 7.5: Estimated average attribute utilities across for each study group

Attribute	Control	Waterloo	London
Economy	9.0%	8.5%	10%
Clustering	8.5%	7.5%	8.25%
IP Protection	6.5%	6.0%	5.25%
Logistics	10.5%	11.75%	9.5%
Land	6.75%	7.0%	6.0%
Workforce	8.5%	6.5%	7.5%
Costs	7.5%	8.5%	7.25%
R&D	8.25%	6.75%	9.0%
Quality of life	11.25%	11.5%	11.25%
Social Climate	5.5%	5.5%	8.25%
Safety	8.0%	8.25%	7.5%
Other	9.75%	12.25%	10%

Interestingly, the findings of the study show that the perceptions of London and Waterloo generally contrasted with each other. Waterloo was found to have more strongly perceived in areas of Economy, IP Protection, and R&D. Alternatively, London

was found to be more strongly perceived in the areas of Logistics, Land, Costs, and Safety. Clustering and Workforce were the few attributes where both municipalities outperformed the control group by having a lower utility score – likely caused by both cities having a strong university presence.

Indeed, this assertion of trade-offs and the hypothesis that place image and knowledge acts as a construct that influences decision-making are further supported when the outcomes of the ACBC and Hierarchical Bayes modeling of the intervention group responses are examined and compared to the control group. As Table 7.5 summarizes, there are again observed differences between the groups that are consistent with the way the cities and their brands act as halo construct. For example, compared to the results of the control group, the utility of the economy attribute among the Waterloo intervention were found to be lower (8.5% for the intervention group; 9.0% for the control group). In contrast, the utilities for the same attributes were higher within the London intervention survey group when compared to the baselines determined through control study (10%). This indicates that there are positive associations and reputation that Waterloo holds as it relates to its local economy – likely moored by its longstanding reputation as a centre for high-tech industry and the presence of large firms such as Research In Motion. However, in other areas Waterloo has a weaker perception – for example, based on the utility scores cost has a higher score (8.5%) compared to London (7.25%) or the control group (7.5%). This means that firms considering Waterloo need increased evidence or reassurance of issues related to cost than compared to the evaluation of a generic city (i.e. the control group), and in fact, London is viewed even more favourably. The outcome of this is

interpreted as associations and knowledge of the cities leading firms to perceive that London has lower costs and therefore it is less of a concern in the final decision-making.

The results of the t-test (Table 7.6) show that the differences detected between the control and intervention studies were statistically significant, implying that there is a small but meaningful influence that place branding and the associations it creates have on firm decision-making. Overall, the halo effect appeared to influence the majority of attributes in some way (i.e. either positively or negatively), as only IP Protection, Quality of Life, Safety, and Other had no significant differences found among the three study groups.

Table 7.6: Measuring differences in the estimated utility scores between the control and intervention groups

Attribute	Control - Waterloo	Control - London	Waterloo - London
Economy	3.06*	-2.41*	-2.12*
Clustering	3.73*	-1.96*	-1.96*
IP Protection	0.96	0.49	0.49
Logistics	-0.37	3.45*	3.45*
Land	2.32*	2.29*	2.29*
Workforce	6.54*	-2.71*	-2.71*
Costs	-0.17	1.96*	1.96*
R&D	2.1	-2.82*	-2.82*
Quality of life	1.2	0.16	0.16
Social Climate	0.91	-3.07*	-3.07*
Safety	0.68	0.54	0.54
Other	-0.76	1.15	1.15

* significant at $\alpha = 0.05$; +ve indicates that the attribute is perceived to be more prioritized; -ve indicates that the item is less prioritized

There were several areas where the construct appears to have benefitted London influencing firm decision-making in a statistically significant way, while conversely negatively influenced perceptions about Waterloo. Specifically, logistics and land had a positive construct for London and a negative one for Waterloo. A likely explanation is that London is the main urban centre in southwestern Ontario and is seen as having considerable room for expansion. Alternatively, Waterloo is part of a contiguous network

of large urban centres, so is not understood to be the main logistic centre or having room for expansion.

A final consideration is that there may be a second level of construct or halo effect influencing some of the decision-making. Several of the attributes – intellectual property protection, quality of life, social climate, and security showed no difference in the level of prioritization (Table 7.4). Similarly, there was no statistically significant difference in the calculated utilities between the control and intervention groups (Table 7.6). This suggests that cities and their brands do not act as constructs in these dimensions. A potential explanation is that a higher spatial scale construct – either the provincial or national image – is acting as a moderating factor. Firms within the political region may internalize issues such as safety and political stability, and therefore specific city brand interventions do not significantly shift understanding as it is more closely related to other places at other geographic scales. As Boison et al (2011) note, place brand identities and images are the result of the layering of multiple spatial identities. It stands to reason, therefore, that place image constructs may also be a similar amalgamation. The implication is that the trade-offs and the perceptions of place may not be influenced by the city alone, but also other spatially relevant branding efforts. This adds a further dimension to the factors that influence firm decision-making and suggest factors similar to the nation branding (Papadopolus, 2004) and country-of-origin branding may in some form influence firm location decision-making. As a result, the tacit knowledge or place-based connection a firm has with a place may not just be generated by the city and its branding efforts but embedded within a much more complicated structure of image making, knowledge generation and transfers.

7.6 Discussion

The main goal of this research was to evaluate the question *does place branding influence firm location decision-making?* To answer this question, the influence of place branding was contextualized as the tacit knowledge that firms had of a city, built through interactions with the place brand and the development of connections and attachments through a sense-of-place. The result of this was the understanding of places through a construct or halo effect, which influenced the qualities and strengths associated with the place. Building on this context, three related research hypotheses specifying that the construct of a city would influence the attributes identified by firms as being important; and more specifically, that a place with a positive image and construct will see key attributes prioritized less, while a city with a negative construct will see key attributes prioritized more to overcome potential negative associations.

The first hypothesis – that the construct influence of different cities will result in different attributes being identified as important – appears in the initial identification of key city characteristics that were important in firm decision-making. The evidence of the construct appears in the difference between the baseline values provided by the control group compared to the choices of the intervention groups. From this, it is clear that the perception of the city played a role in the factors that were prioritized. A similar pattern was identified in the evaluation of the two other research hypotheses – that a place with a positive image and construct will see key attributes prioritized less, as their value is already tacitly understood, while a city with a negative construct will see key attributes prioritized more to overcome potential negative associations.

For example, it has been noted that the City of London has a poor reputation or brand perception as it has faced continual stress over the past three decades from the pressures of economic restructuring. Bradford (2003, 2010) notes that London faced decline of financial services in the 1990s due to the emergence of North American free trade and a major decline in manufacturing (a loss of 41% of the workforce) in the economic recession of the 2000s. This perception acts as both an overall halo, where the city is perceived as a difficult place to operate a business. In addition, the dimensions of the tacit knowledge that have formed constructs can also be identified. It is clear that the perceptions of the poor economic market of the city, its perceived limited research-base, and the labour force are all areas that have become chunks of knowledge that influence what firms prioritize. Therefore, to make the final decision to operate in London, firms would need greater evidence (based on the greater prioritization) that the city has the correct conditions. In contrast, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo has a much stronger halo image and constructs frame the city in a more positive light, making the economic-related attributes slightly less of a priority as it has already been internalized that the city is strong in these areas. The implication is that place perception and image become important and can strongly influence the way firms evaluate each city.

This ultimately suggests that perception is more important for firms in their evaluations of cities than the actual realities of the place. The halos are built on the tacit knowledge that firms build through their interactions with the city and its brand. In this regard, how the city is interpreted and understood can become as important as the current conditions of the city. Interestingly, this research also demonstrates that this construct effect works on smaller spatial scales that commonly examined, as Han (1989) and

Heslop and Papadopolous (1993) have focused more on the halo created at national levels. However, this shows that other geographic contexts and scales are equally able to form this connection and influence.

Placing the findings of this research in a broader perspective, the finding that place constructs influence evaluation and decision-making have several implications. First, within the context of globalization it is understood that firm-based tacit knowledge is sticky (Gertler, 2003), suggesting it is embedded in specific geographic locations. It should be no different for city-based tacit knowledge that is created through the place branding efforts and communication of the place. This stickiness of place brands allows for spatially variable, uneven dispersion of investment, where places perceived to have the strongest images and most optimal alignment of local characteristics will become the main sites for investment and capital accumulation.

Within the global system of capitalism, there are two key implications for this. First, it suggests that cities are not always path dependent and have the ability to shape how they are perceived, which over time may put them in a stronger position against regional and international competitors. While this does suggest that certain jurisdictions – such as large cities with pre-established reputations – will have an advantage, this research presents evidence that this is not *fait accompli*. Second, this research demonstrates that place branding is a potential alternative to local economic development approaches such as tax-breaks, incentives, and bonuses. As Malecki (2004) and others have argued, these approaches are examples of ‘low-road’ economic development and a race to the bottom among cities, where economic development has become an exercise in

outspending competitors. Place branding, however, refocuses emphasis on the promotion of local factors.

While not a silver-bullet solution to all of a city's issues or guaranteed path to success, place branding focuses more on place-based development (Bradford, 2010) to solve issues. In particular, this approach has the opportunity to be successful when employed as a more holistic approach to development (Ashworth & Voogd, 1994; Kavatzis, 2004) where the branding acts as a guide for local urban development (Govers, 2013). By understanding what firms are looking for, the branding efforts – which ultimately encapsulate almost all action or development within a city – can rehabilitate and positively reposition a city in the landscape of competitors. The Regional Municipality of Waterloo presents a good example of this. Contrarily, poor promotion, imaging, or lack of strategic planning to change perceptions can lead to malaise, poor perceptions, and ultimately difficulty being perceived as providing utility – as is seen in the City of London.

Additionally, place branding and the need to understand the factors that firms are looking for is important as city governments are becoming increasingly entrepreneurial and focused on cultivating entrepreneurial ecosystems based around small and mid-sized firms. This emergence of Schumpeterian economic development fits in well within the changing economic landscapes where the new economy is emerging (Audrestsch et al, 2015). The implication is that cities need to understand what factors and approaches best communicate locational advantages to the entrepreneurs and firms that are emerging within this environment. If, as this research shows, costs and profits are not the only factors driving location decision-making than being perceived in a positive light and

being tacitly understood as a good place to do business are increasingly important to cities. As a result, there is potential synergy between new governance approaches, new economic development approaches, and new firms that form the basis of the local economy.

A final contribution of this research is that it re-contextualizes the theory and methodology used in consumer marketing research and tests its viability in economic geography. To do this, it first required a re-imagining of firm location decision-making, placing it closer to the decisions made around product purchasing. This requires the examination of how firms are traded off in importance based on their interaction with each other or because of the geographical context in which they are situated. Instead of examining the influence of attributes in a structured way through a narrow set of attributes, the trade-off analysis allows for more factors to be considered. This approach has the advantage of greater realism and a closer modeling of actual decision-making, since respondents are choosing among concepts which are relevant and are able to quantify interactions among attributes. Conceptually, this approach is well understood – firms locate in large centres such as Toronto or New York despite the higher costs because of other perceived advantages that are geographically sticky – and this approach allows for the elucidation and evaluation of these context specific factors. The adaptive choice conjoint analysis approach allows firms to weigh different attributes in their decision-making, focusing on importance based on their own choices and perceptions.

In conjunction, the Hierarchical Bayes estimation of individual-level part-worth utilities and overall attribute importance provides a methodologically robust approach to quantifying the factors that go into decision-making, while also allowing for the

evaluation of place brand interventions. It also presents an opportunity for future research, as the individual level results allow for market segmentation analysis. Finally, market segmentation analysis was conducted, to determine whether there were differences in the trade-offs of firms in different sectors, sizes, ages, and locations – allowing even greater specification in the influence of place branding intervention by more narrowly identifying the groups most influenced.

7.7 Conclusion

Where businesses choose to locate is a subject of great interest. In a macro sense, this research presents a new method for understanding how the different characteristics of a city are perceived and how they work in association with each other to influence how firms evaluate the city as a place to locate. In addition, the introduction of examining the role of place branding and the resulting place knowledge it creates helps to align the issue of firm migration with actions of increasingly entrepreneurial local governments that are increasingly attempting to package and promote their city. As a result, this chapter presented a new method for understanding the decision-making process of firms as well as providing an avenue to help explain the flows of increasingly mobile economic resources and the structure of regional and global economies.

This research provides an opportunity to help firms and city officials. The majority of firms do not use a formal site selection strategy, the conjoint analysis with individual level utility estimation provides a structured method for firms to evaluate the attributes that are most important to them, as well as their relative importance – allowing for a better understanding of which places are best aligned with their needs and provide

the optimal place to locate. Similarly, city and regional planners want to know what combination attributes firms are looking for – and what the structure of this mix is – to improve their position amongst competing areas to attract and retain these firms.

Ultimately, the contribution of this research is to present a better understanding of how firm decision-making operates and how place branding, tacit knowledge, and the geographical concept of place influences this. There are several important implications that emerge from this research – that knowledge and perception of place are important, and that place branding does influence how cities are perceived and evaluated. Indeed, the tacit knowledge and connections to place that play an important role in guiding decision-making can be developed through sense-of-place. However, a key consideration is that this research suggests that firms are not fully rational and instead are influenced by perceptions of how a place is – as evident by the impact of the halo constructs identified in this research. For cities there needs to be consideration that their image is important but perhaps only along certain dimensions based on the target audience. Indeed, instead of focusing on logos or symbology branding needs to be a strategic policy that guides development and improves knowledge and understanding of the city in key areas to most effectively shape the perceptions of the firms.

7.8 References

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CHAPTER EIGHT

DISSERTATION OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY

8.1. Introduction

This dissertation examined whether place branding was an effective strategy for cities to *influence awareness, perceptions, decision-making of mobile economic resources (i.e. talent immigrants, and businesses) to ultimately determine whether place branding was a useful strategy in attracting or retaining these groups.* This chapter provides an overview of the dissertation by summarising the key research findings and linking them to the research context and problem introduced in Chapter One. The first section provides a summary of the findings of the dissertation based on the context outlined in Chapter One. It provides a thematic integration of the four manuscripts and indicates points of intersection and divergence of findings. The next section provides discussion on the overall contributions of the dissertation. This is followed by the limitations of the study and dissertation concludes with potential directions for future research.

8.2. Contextualizing the Findings

As was the case of New York City in the 1970s, core cities in advanced economic regions like those in the Province of Ontario, Canada have been buffeted by external shocks. Since the 1980s these shocks have ranged from macroeconomic changes in the global economy, to technological advancements and environmental changes, to spatial redistributions of political power within core economic regions. A common local

outcome for these core cities in advanced economies, stimulated on by the changes and challenges occurring globally, was the rapid decline of traditional economic sectors (i.e. manufacturing) that had previously been the foundation of local economies. In response, there was considerable pressure to reposition local economies to promote more knowledge-intensive activities (Gertler & Wolfe, 2004; Pike et al, 2006; Wolfe et al, 2006), and there was a conscious attempt to forge a new community identity and also create a different economic path (Wolfe, 2009). Following the example of New York nearly fifty years ago (see Greenberg, 2008), place branding has become a vital strategy for local governments as a form of strategic management policy to respond to the political-economic shocks that cities have experienced.

In this regard, the Province of Ontario and its cities had enjoyed a privileged economic position built primarily around manufacturing and other traditional economic sectors for most of the twentieth-century. However, since the 1980s global economic restructuring and the rise of neoliberal policy making in the province, cities and communities across Ontario have experienced major declines in the number of firms in mature, labour-intensive industries (Bradford, 2010; Wolfe & Gertler, 2001). Concurrently, the spatial restructuring of power (Brenner, 1998; Brenner & Theodore, 2002) has left local governments in Ontario increasingly responsible for crafting their own local economic development strategies (Arku, 2013). It is within this dramatic change that cities in Ontario were now primed to adopt place branding as a local development policy – as it provided a pathway to forging new community identities and alter local economic trajectories. As Cleave and Arku (2014) and Sadler et al (2016) have catalogued, place branding has been used extensively (i.e. nearly 90% of cities have a

formal place branding strategy, and 90% of municipalities overall use some form of place branding).

As outlined in Chapter One, however, there is still considerable ambiguity over whether place branding strategies have achieved their intended effects, helping cities adapt and address this economic change. Indeed, preliminary research into place branding proved inconclusive in causally connecting migration patterns with local branding efforts (see Niedomysl, 2004, 2007). However, more recent focus of place branding has been on its role in forming brand or place equity (e.g. Florek, 2012, 2015; Jacobsen, 2009; Jørgensen, 2014; Zenker & Martin, 2011; Zenker et al, 2013). These previous studies have demonstrated that place branding does influence the perceptions of a target audience.

However, there are several limitations to these studies. First, they generally only consider the influence of place branding from one angle – image perception and its role in shaping equity. As a result, a fundamental part of brand knowledge, the brand awareness (see Keller, 1993), is lost. Second, the research in equity considers what elements influence equity (see Lawton et al, 2013), narrow factors such as place aesthetics (see Mellander et al, 2011) or citizen satisfaction (see Zenker et al, 2013), rather than broader attachments and connections to place. Finally, there is a lacuna in the existing scholarship where the influence of place equity on decision-making of a target audience remains unexplored.

This dissertation provided both new theoretical context, methodological approaches and research findings that assist in unravelling the role place branding has in attracting three groups – talent, immigrants, and businesses; of which the latter two have

received sparse academic interest (and talent is often explored through the preferences of the creative class; see Florida et al, 2011; Lawton et al, 2013; Zenker et al, 2009).

While the theoretical frameworks of globalization, neoliberalism, and the rise of entrepreneurial governance are well established in place branding research, this dissertation argues that the human geography concepts of place and sense-of-place offer a useful theoretical and conceptual lens for conducting empirical research that aims to understand place brandings influence within issues of economic resource attraction and retention. This framework allowed for a novel empirical exploration of the role of place branding in creating place equity (i.e. in this context referring to sense-of-place) but also the expansion of the scope of the research to examine inputs to equity (i.e. place brand awareness; key brand elements) and outputs (i.e. place evaluations and investment decision-making). Within this new framework, Table 8.1 provides a summary of the wide range of themes addressed in this pursuit. It shows the key findings from the empirical studies and summarizes some of the salient arguments advanced in the specific manuscripts and the dissertation. Although many of the findings are cross-cutting between the four manuscripts in the dissertation, some are peculiar to the individual manuscripts.

The most important finding to emerge from this thesis is the establishment that place branding can influence perceptions of cities and that in turn the place equity that is accrued can influence the evaluation of places and the ultimate decision to invest (i.e. to live, work, or operate in the city). The findings in three of the four manuscripts demonstrate some relationship between branding and place equity (Manuscript 1 does not), with the salience of this finding grounded in the triangulation undertaken in this

thesis at a macro level, through the comparison of different study groups (i.e. talent, immigrants, and businesses) as well as across a range of cities. Although all the manuscripts demonstrated some connection between place branding and equity and are summarized in Sections 8.2.1 to 8.2.4, the issue of brand awareness in Chapter Four (Manuscript 1) and relationship between Chapters Five (Manuscript 2) and Six (Manuscript 3) especially deserve further elaboration.

Chapter Four considers the issue of place brand awareness. Overall, its findings demonstrate that place branding focused on visual identities (logos and slogans) has weak brand awareness among talent. And additionally, these simple place branding efforts can have a negative influence on the perceived image of the city. Together these suggest that this form of logo-based branding has limited or negative impact, as a poor image and weak awareness will limit the ability of the brand to produce any form of positive equity. Although logos and slogans were not directly examined in Chapters Five and Six (among talent and immigrants), this finding was supported as traditional branding was a non-significant or slightly negative factor in shaping place equity when contrasted against other brand elements. In short, logos and slogans are not effective in changing the economic trajectory of a city.

While place branding's influence from logos and slogans was limited, this contrasts the findings of the remaining three research chapters where a positive, significant relationship was found. This diversion is likely due to the examination of a simple place brand approach (see Anholt, 2005) in Manuscript 1, and a complex brand approach in the subsequent three. This difference in findings between the influence of simple and complex branding strategies is prescient. As Chapter Three noted, cities

Table 8.1 Summary of the dissertation’s key research, findings, conclusions, and implications

Summary of Empirical Studies

<p>Manuscript 1: Place Brand Awareness Among Talent</p> <p>Key Issues: brand awareness, place knowledge, and place equity; measuring effectiveness and efficacy</p> <p>Data and Methods: Study 1 – brand recognition survey (n = 344), chi-square and bivariate regression; Study 2 – brand recall survey (n = 666), chi-square and bivariate regression; Study 3 – brand image survey (n = 843), ANOVA and t-tests</p> <p>Key Findings (see below): (1), (2), (6), (9)</p>	<p>Manuscript 2: Place Brand Perceptions and Decision-Making Among Talent</p> <p>Key Issues: brand image, place equity, decision-making outcomes; measuring brand equity and effectiveness</p> <p>Data and Methods: Preliminary Study – interviews (n = 40), content analysis, scale construction; Study 1 – survey (n = 201), exploratory factor analysis (principal components analysis), scale purification; model development; Study 2 – survey (n = 1897), confirmatory factor analysis (structural equation modeling), model validation</p> <p>Key Findings (see below): (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (6), (9)</p>	<p>Manuscript 3: Place Perceptions and Decision-Making Among Immigrants</p> <p>Key Issues: brand image elements, place equity, decision-making; measuring equity, effectiveness, and brand adaptiveness</p> <p>Data and Methods: survey (n = 739); ANOVA contrast, multiple regression</p> <p>Key Findings (see below): (1), (2), (3), (4), (5), (7), (9)</p>	<p>Manuscript 4: Place Brand Influence on Business Location Decision-Making</p> <p>Key Issues: place equity, decision-making and evaluation; measuring effectiveness</p> <p>Data and Methods: Adaptive choice-based conjoint survey (n = 659); intervention study; Hierarchical Bayes estimation and part-worth utility estimation, t-tests</p> <p>Key Findings (see below): (3), (4), (8), (9)</p>
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Table 8.1 (continued)

Key findings and associated arguments:

<p>(1) Emphasis on visual identity – The common manifestation of place branding policy by local governments is the development of logos and slogans. However, the findings of this dissertation show that there is limited place brand awareness (Manuscript 1), that traditional branding efforts do little to shape the perceptions on cities or building place equity – or in fact have a slight negative influence (Manuscripts 1,2,3).</p>
<p>(2) Place branding efforts influence place equity – the findings of this dissertation (see Manuscripts 1, 2, and 3) show that place branding is effective in influencing place equity, manifested in the way that cities were perceived by the target audience. The research found that the influence can be both positive in influence (Manuscripts 2 and 3) and negative (Manuscript 1) depending on what place branding elements the audience is exposed to. This pattern was consistent across both talent and migrants.</p>
<p>(3) Place branding and place equity influence decision-making – the findings of this study demonstrate that the influence of place branding is effective in influencing place equity, and when positive will influence the way places are evaluated for decision-making of a target audience. This pattern was consistent across talent, migrants, and businesses, and was found in both pre- and post-decision investigations (Manuscripts 2, 3, and 4).</p>
<p>(4) Different forms of place branding – while logos and slogans represent the main way that cities implement their place branding efforts, there is broader acknowledgement that the way that a city positions itself through multiple formal and informal channels, implicit and explicit brand actions, and intentional and unintended actions all work in coordination to form the brand image of the city and position the city in the mind of the target audience (Manuscripts 2, 3, and 4).</p>
<p>(5) Place branding efforts are not adaptive – using the example of human capital attraction, cities believe that the same branding strategy will attract both domestic talent and international immigrants by emphasizing quality of life and place issues consistent with the creative class thesis. However, it is shown in this research that immigrants (particularly economic immigrants) are more concerned with economic issues in determining where they live and work. Therefore, current branding strategies are not currently adapting to optimize positioning among multiple target audiences (Manuscripts 2 and 3).</p>
<p>(6) Place branding influence on talent – see Sections 8.2.1 and 8.2.2; in brief, logos and slogans do not generate strong brand awareness, however, other city characteristics (i.e. cultural and social offerings) do influence how cities are perceived. And this perception is associated with evaluations of cities as places to live and work (Manuscript 1 and 2).</p>
<p>(7) Place branding influence on immigrants – see Section 8.2.3; immigrants are influenced by the way the city is positioned and this affects both the perceptions of the city brand and the decision-making of where to live (Manuscript 3).</p>
<p>(8) Place branding influence on business – see Section 8.2.4; in summary, place branding influences sense-of-place and the tacit knowledge businesses have of a city. This can be both positive or negative, but creates a detectable halo effect. This influence alters which elements are most important in location decision-making and the extent to which they are prioritized.</p>
<p>(9) Does it work? Ultimately, this research finds that place branding – when done correctly – does have the ability to shape perceptions and influence the decision-making of the target audience. However, it must extend beyond logo and slogan development.</p>

generally focus on logos and slogans as part of their place branding efforts. As a result, the findings here suggest that this approach is unlikely to produce any tangible effect in warding off the impacts of external political-economic shocks. The key implication, which is understood in place branding research but remains elusive in place branding practice, is that brand equity (and the associated economic outcomes) is not generated from the logos and slogans of a city, but rather the broader positioning that occurs through integrated and comprehensive branding approaches (and unintended side-effects of city development and actions).

Building off this key finding in Chapter Four, the other three research chapters considered place branding from a more holistic and comprehensive point of view. This mirrors the discussion of Chapter Three, which demonstrated that cities in Ontario have a conceptual understanding of what is required for place branding, as more complex delineations were presented in their economic development documents (even, as discussed, this is currently not what is being done in practice). However, the findings of this dissertation suggest that it is not simply enough to take a complex approach – there needs to be specificity in the brand to adequately access the target audience. Chapter Five and Six compared the perceptions of talent and immigrants using the same 28-item multidimensional scale. Comparison of the two groups showed that different latent factors were the key drivers of place perception, as immigrants were influenced more by the economic and housing dimensions of a city's brand, while domestic talent were influenced most prominently by urbanity, social, and cultural elements. The key implication when contrasting these results is that the same branding strategy will not be effective for both groups, and instead there needs to be adaptiveness. This means that

depending on the target audience, different elements network of associations needs to be attenuated. As Chapter Three and Six discussed, however, this is not the direction that cities are taking in their economic development strategies, as immigrants and talent are generally grouped together in the same attraction and branding strategies.

For cities, this means there is potential for branding to be effective in influencing perceptions, but it needs to be adaptive to the target audience. However, as Cleave et al (2017) argue, the brand also needs to be coherent to have utility. Using the contrast of talent and immigrants, a city could develop a broader human-capital attraction strategy which encompasses both groups and provides strategic direction for development in multiple dimensions. Within this umbrella brand, the talent and immigrant brand attraction strategies can be formed – attenuating different local characteristics. This allows for more overall consistency of the branding strategy, while being flexible enough to optimize positioning for multiple groups.

As discussed in the introduction to Chapter One, the overall question this research sought was to determine: *is place branding successful in building awareness and place equity, and shaping decision-making of target audiences?* This question was answered across the four research chapters which are summarized here (see Table 8.1).

8.2.1. Research Manuscript 1 (Chapter Four)

This chapter considers the issue of place brand awareness and its role in developing place knowledge and equity. The chapter frames the issue of place branding as one of local governance and economic development. Indeed, the chapter described how place branding initiatives are increasingly being implemented by local governments

as lynchpins of their broader economic development strategies to attract and retain economic resources. However, these place branding initiatives are often costly in terms of capital investment and human resources and have been criticized for failing to achieve the goals of place branding. As the chapter discusses, in both government and academic circles there is little evidence that place branding can fulfill the role that it is used.

This chapter explores a fundamental concept of place branding – do these efforts to brand, market, and promotion of the city resonate and remain with an audience? For a brand to be effective ‘short-hand’ for a place allowing for favourable and strong associations and connections, the audience must be aware of it and capable of remembering it. To investigate whether place branding does influence talent, this chapter presents findings on three studies examining core areas of place branding: recall, recognition, and image. Together these form the basis for place knowledge, which can be considered analogous to sense-of-place. This framing of the issue allows the simultaneous examination of place branding effectiveness, while re-situating the issue from a marketing context into a geographic one.

Overall, this study finds that branding efforts have failed to penetrate the target audience, with low rates of recognition and recollection, as well as having a negative impact of overall place image, knowledge, and sense-of-place. As a result, it is apparent that current place branding efforts – that often focus on the logo and visual identity – is failing to achieve the core requirements of place branding. If there is low awareness, then there is limited potential to shape sense-of-place.

However, the study also showed that greater exposure to the place brand did increase awareness (i.e. people who had lived in that city), suggesting that logos and

slogans are more effective in resonating with an internal audience (i.e. talent retention) than an external one (i.e. talent attraction) as they become a symbol that crystalizes the sense-of-place that talent have about places that they know.

8.2.2. Research Manuscript 2 (Chapter Five)

This second research chapter also examined the influence of place branding among talent, however, it moves past the simple branding of the previous chapter and instead examines the role of more comprehensive branding and its influence on equity, and in turn the relationship between place equity and decision-making. As discussed in the chapter, talent represent an important group to examine, as cities are increasingly interested in attracting and retaining well educated talent that forms the basis of their transforming economies. There has been considerable effort on the part of cities to develop branding and marketing efforts that connect with the talent, to shape their perceptions of the city and to influence their decision-making. Although models have attempted to understand the structure of this relationship, several key questions still remain about whether place branding makes a difference in talent attraction and retention.

To unearth these linkages, this research combines marketing, place branding, and geography to develop a conceptual model to understand how place branding influence talent's sense-of-place, and in turn, how this influences decision-making. A key difference between this research and previous work is the addition of sense-of-place as the interface between branding and decision-making. In this regard, sense-of-place becomes the equity that a city has among talent.

The findings of this chapter demonstrate that place branding influences how places are perceived and understood, softer elements such as cultural, recreation, and social offerings are important to talent. This is consistent with findings that explored the factors that attract the creative class (see Florida et al, 2011; Lawton et al, 2013; Mellander et al, 2011; Zenker et al, 2009). Additionally, the key contribution of this research is the finding that equity accrued through stronger sense-of-place makes cities more desirable as places to live and work. As a result, a framework is developed that understands what brand and marketing factors contribute to a city's sense-of-place, and how this relates to talent decision-making.

8.2.3. Research Manuscript 3 (Chapter Six)

The third research chapter considered the question of: *does place branding at the city level attract immigrants once they have decided to migrate to a country or region?* As outlined in Chapter Three, there is a broad consensus among cities in Ontario on the need to attract immigrants to overcome population and labour-force issues. However, as Chapter Six argues most place branding at the city level is broadly focused on attraction of human capital and does not differentiate between the brand elements that will appeal to domestic talent and those that are important to international migrants. Additionally, research into place branding has explored the idea of talent and creative class attraction there is limited research into whether it influences how immigrants view and evaluate competing cities within a region. As a result, the chapter argues that there is little current understanding of what branding factors are most influential in the attraction of immigrants.

The results of the analysis in this chapter suggest that housing and economic issues are the main areas that London was more favourably positioned compared to the other cities in the study (it was the only city that had a significantly greater perception when compared to the other cities in the study). Since the decision on where to live had already been made, and economy and housing were the only factors that emerged, it was concluded that these were the elements that were most important in how London was positioned in the mind of the respondents. This was further supported by the results of the regression analysis, which again identified economy and housing as the two factors that were positive and significant contributors in explaining the variability in the brand dimensions.

The implication is that local governments should focus on attenuating their brands to create strong associations with the local economy and housing market to attract immigrants. To accomplish this more emphasis needs to be placed on primary channels of place and brand communication (i.e. strategic policy development, local economic landscape), rather than traditional methods such as advertisement and logo development.

8.2.4. Research Manuscript 4 (Chapter 7)

The final research chapter considered the influence of place branding on the location decision-making of businesses in the City of London and the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, Ontario. Although place brands and promotional efforts are often described as playing a role of attracting and retaining businesses – particularly by government practitioners – there have been few empirical studies that investigate these assertions.

This chapter provided several key innovations and extensions to existing place branding, economic development, and economic geography scholarship. First, it re-framed the decision-making process as the outcome of a series of attribute trade-offs, rather than a stringent set of factors. Second, it introduced a robust new methodological approach – adaptive choice conjoint analysis supported by Hierarchical Bayesian estimate – that allows for the importance or utility of each factor to firms in their decision-making to be isolated and quantified, providing a new method for analysis within economic geography. Finally, it re-contextualized the outcome of place branding as one of tacit knowledge and sense-of-place; ultimately organizing perceptions of this city into halo and summary constructs which influence how the city is viewed and evaluated by firms. Through this new approach, this study finds that place branding does act as a construct that influences firm perceptions, evaluations, and decisions.

8.3. Contributions of the Study

This dissertation makes theoretical, methodological, and practical contributions to the field of place branding, and more broadly local economic development. While this research focused on the Province of Ontario for its study area, the lessons learned from this dissertation should be applicable to other core cities in advanced economies, both in terms of scholarship and policy. Indeed, Ontario shares many of the same political-economic, local economic development, and place branding challenges faced by cities and regions around the world. In fact, in many regards Ontario is slightly ahead on its development trajectory (particularly in the areas of formal economic development

strategies and place branding usage), and therefore can understand and inform other areas as they mature to Ontario's current stage.

8.3.1 Contributions to Scholarship

At a broad level, due to the multi-disciplinary nature of this research, there are potential contributions in the transferring of knowledge, theoretical frameworks, and methodology between disciplines, strengthening geography's research domain. Drawing on marketing, the robust process of development of multidimensional scales provides a novel approach to measuring geographic concepts related to place and sense-of-place. Further, the examination of place branding will provide insights into how place and sense-of-place function in the contexts of political-economic and local economic development. Finally, by taking a geography-rooted approach to this research, the domain of place branding can be strengthened by bringing merging existing conceptual and theoretical models with those that have involved place, and place attachment and attractiveness. As a result, this research has the potential to extend understanding and scholarship in multiple fields.

More specifically, the theoretical contributions of this dissertation are particularly in the concept of sense-of-place as a measure of place equity and in the way the influence of place branding manifests itself. First, the dissertation extends the discussion on sense-of-place, describing how place branding and target audience with the place brand can actually begin to form the psychological connections between an individual and a place – which ultimately leads to consumer connection with place and influence on their decision-making. In this regard, this dissertation provides a contribution by examining

place branding's influence on the other side of equity. Previous research focuses on the outcomes of equity such as satisfaction (Insch & Florek, 2008; Zenker et al, 2013), aesthetics (Florida et al, 2012; Mellander et al, 2011), attachment (Lee & Shen, 2013), and commitment and loyalty (Braun et al, 2014). This previous research has focused on the outcomes of sense-of-place without directly addressing it. As demonstrated in this thesis, place branding should be inextricably linked with sense-of-place, and there is enormous merit in applying the re-conceptualized framework into research on attraction of talent, migrants and businesses. The connections that these footloose economic resources begin to form with a city through branding and the way it is positioned allow for changes in perception and changes in decision-making. While this concept – that brand alters decision-making is supported in other studies, this dissertation provides a new way of considering this relationship.

The second key theoretical contribution involves how place branding's influence is conceptualized. In particular, Chapter Seven introduces the concept of city's having a halo effect and the brands a summary construct effect that change the way they are understood by target audiences (in this case, businesses). The idea of these constructs in issues of place branding is not new, however, to date this has been focused at higher geographic orders (i.e. country of origin branding). This dissertation presents a new approach by considering these construct effects at the city level, as well as by considering the city itself as the product that is being evaluated.

Beyond the theoretical contribution, this dissertation makes several key methodological contributions, by taking approaches done in business and marketing fields and adapting them for use in human geography, place branding, and economic

development. From a study design perspective, the use of intervention studies (Chapters Four and Seven) presents an approach to examining efficacy (rather than general effectiveness) that has previously been underutilized in place branding research.

In terms of analytical approach, this research shows that there is potential for both structural equation modeling (Chapter Five) and conjoint analysis (Chapter Seven) in both place branding and broader economic development work. Indeed, while structural equation modeling (see Klijn et al, 2012) and scale-based surveys (see Zenker et al, 2009) are not new, this dissertation draws upon more robust and comprehensive survey designs put forward by marketing and acculturation research. It provides a robust methodology for exploring the influence of branding on sense-of-place, and in turn sense-of-place's impact on talent perception and decision-making. In particular, the development and validation of a multidimensional scale for the measurement of place image perceptions provides a new avenue of exploration for both place branding and geographic research.

Additionally, the adaptive choice conjoint analysis approach presented in Chapter Seven, introduces a compensatory approach to examining firm location decision-making, allowing the trade-off of different attributes to be incorporated in their decision-making. In conjunction, the Hierarchical Bayes estimation of individual-level part-worth utilities and overall attribute importance provides a novel, but methodologically robust approach to quantifying the factors that go into decision-making, while also allowing for the evaluation of place brand interventions.

8.3.2 Contributions to Practice and Policy

The findings of this study the potential can provide critical lessons to local governments in Ontario and abroad to shape place branding practice and policy. This dissertation shows that place branding can work; however, a finding that permeates through the research – that traditional branding and marketing efforts have limited or negative effects – is a key issue related to place branding practice. While this assertion is not new and is a well-established perspective within place branding research (see Anholt, 2005), it is worth reinforcing as the emphasis on logos and slogans is a common mistake that local governments make (Cleave et al, 2017). The visual identity allows branding to be an act of political expediency and provides a tangible outcome for local officials; however, this approach is also unlikely to have any impact on raising awareness, shaping perceptions, or attracting and retaining a target audience.

Instead, local governments should focus on integrating place branding and local economic development policy. This is beginning to occur in Ontario, however, there is even greater potential for synergy. This can occur two ways: as local governments begin to develop their local economic development strategies, place branding can be used to help position the city in a favourable way to attract a target audience; or alternatively, a place's brand can guide development to support the positioning and image of the city. In either case, from this study place branding needs to be viewed in a more holistic way.

A final consideration is that cities do not fully understand how they are positioning themselves. Clear understanding of place branding, there can be unintentional side-effects where urban and economic policy and development decisions – which are implicit forms of branding – can have unintended outcomes that influences the way the

city is positioned. As a result, the relevant lesson from this dissertation is that local officials and policymakers need to take care to make sure their urban and economic development policy decisions attenuate the correct elements within the network of associations that are held in the mind of the consumer. This approach is where the city can improve their chances of changing perceptions and decision-making among their desired target audience.

8.4. Limitations of the Study

The goal of this dissertation is to advance the understanding of the effectiveness of place branding within the context of local economic development and examine how place images are influenced by various city attributes. Due to the broad aims of this research, there are some potential limitations.

First, this research considers place branding's effectiveness through the understanding and interpretation of place equity and decision-making within a target group. This, however, does not capture a 'real-world' effectiveness of place branding by considering the effects of a place branding intervention (although Study 3 in Manuscript 1 and Manuscript 4 do provide intervention studies). As a result, this research may not fully capture efficacy of place brands, as it examines perception rather than direct action or investment. Additionally, there is the potential limitation in the sampling approach. By focusing the survey sampling in confined geographic areas, there may not be the generalizability that a study with a broader scope may be able to capture. Rather, this research provides an initial case study that can be broadened in the future.

A second potential limitation, related to the first, is that the concept of decision-making was accessed through a series of proxies – the evaluations of cities as places to live and work pre-decision by talent, the post-hoc analysis of immigrant decision-making, and the hypothetical location decision-making of firms. Although the close temporal proximity to a decision existed (i.e. the talent were within a year of determining where to live and work, the migrants were on average less than a decade after their determination of where to live, and businesses were on average less than a decade removed from the decision of where to operate) data was not collected ‘in the moment’ which would allow for a more accurate understanding of the role that place branding played.

A third and final potential limitation is the way that sense-of-place and place brand perceptions (or equity) were defined. Both were delineated along two dimensions – strength and favourability. While this provided a simple framework for investigating the influence of place branding, it is understood that places are complex (as are their brands). There are many outcomes of sense-of-place and branding that have been measured (i.e. satisfaction, loyalty, attachment, and aesthetics), however, the antecedents are less well understood. There are potentially other dimensions that could be used (i.e. drawing from Canter, 1997 or Gustafson, 2001 conceptualizations of place). This could lead to more robust delineations of sense-of-place and more nuanced analysis of the influence of place branding.

8.5. Directions for Future Research

There are several areas for future research: first, broader geographical research should be undertaken to determine whether the patterns and quantification of place

branding influence found in Ontario are unique or reflective of a more general level of place branding effectiveness. Since this dissertation introduced several new methods for teasing out place branding influence and effectiveness, these should be tested in other places. Second, and related, the new methods that were introduced were limited to one group. Future research should apply these approaches to other target audiences (e.g. conjoint analysis for talent and migrants). This would allow for greater triangulation and between group comparisons. This would also apply to the structural equation modeling presented in Chapter Five, where group invariance testing could compare whether the underlying structures that explain place branding's influence are similar between different target audiences (i.e. talent and immigrants), which would lead to better understandings of brand adaptiveness. Finally, stronger analysis of the influence of place branding could occur by examining the decision-making of the study groups while they are making their determination of where to live, work or operate. In this case a combination of qualitative and quantitative research could help uncover the specific points where place branding's influence is felt and acknowledged (either explicitly or implicitly) and further identify the extent of its impact.

8.6. Final Remarks

In this dissertation, I examined the effectiveness of place branding by examining the extents of its influence in generating place and brand awareness, place equity, and its impact on the decision-making of talent, immigrants, and businesses. The thesis presented a new way of conceptualizing place branding's influence – sense-of-place – and through the introduction of new methodological approaches into place branding

research it demonstrated that there is a detectable and significant influence. Based on the findings from four manuscripts that relied on surveys of three study groups (i.e. talent, immigrants, and businesses) the dissertation showed specific theoretical and methodological advantages of this approach. The relevance of this study is that place branding is being adopted as an economic development strategy by core cities in all advanced economies, with little evidence for efficacy, or direction on how to effectively shape perceptions of a target audience. As demonstrated in this dissertation, when done correctly (i.e. *not* focusing on logo and slogan development) place branding can be a beneficial tool for cities in their local economic development. This presents new opportunities for cities to be more judicious and efficient in their place branding efforts and provides new paths for future research.

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APPENDIX A: LETTERS OF ETHICS APPROVAL

A.1 Letter of Ethics Approval – Talent and Immigrants



Research Ethics

Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Godwin Arku
Department & Institution: Social Science/Geography, Western University

NMREB File Number: 108101
Study Title: Quantifying Place Branding Among Talent and Migrants in Ontario

NMREB Initial Approval Date: July 25, 2016
NMREB Expiry Date: July 25, 2017

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol	Received July 22, 2016	
Recruitment Items	Email Script - Migrant Stage 1	2016/07/20
Recruitment Items	Email Script - Talent Stage 1	2016/07/20
Recruitment Items	In-Person Verbal Script - Migrant Stage 1	2016/07/04
Recruitment Items	In-Class Verbal Script - Talent Stage 1	2016/07/04
Recruitment Items	Email Script - Migrant Stage 2	2016/07/20
Recruitment Items	Email Script - Talent Stage 2	2016/07/20
Recruitment Items	In-Person Script - Migrant Stage 2	2016/07/04
Recruitment Items	In-Person Script - Talent Stage 2	2016/07/04
Letter of Information & Consent	Migrants - Stage 1	2016/07/04
Letter of Information & Consent	Talent Stage 1	2016/07/25
Letter of Information & Consent	Migrant Stage 2	2016/07/20
Letter of Information & Consent	Talent Stage 2	2016/07/20
Instruments	Survey - Migrants stage 1	2016/07/04
Instruments	Survey - Talent stage 1	2016/07/04

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000011



_____, NMREB Chair or delegated board member

Ethics Officer: Erika Basile ___ Nicole Kaniki ___ Grace Kelly ___ Katelyn Harris ___ Vikki Tran ___ Karen Gopaul ___

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A.2 Letter of Ethics Approval – Businesses



**Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board
NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice**

Principal Investigator: Dr. Godwin Arku
Department & Institution: Social Science/Geography, Western University

NMREB File Number: 109072
Study Title: Examining the effectiveness of place branding among businesses

NMREB Initial Approval Date: April 28, 2017
NMREB Expiry Date: April 28, 2018

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol	Received April 12, 2017	
Recruitment Items	Revised email script	2017/03/27
Letter of Information & Consent	Revised email LOI	2017/03/27
Letter of Information & Consent	Revised LOI for in person	2017/03/27

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 0000941.

Ethics Officer: _____ NMREB Chair or delegated board member

EO: Erika Basile ___ Grace Kelly Katelyn Harris ___ Nicola Morphet ___ Karen Gopaul ___

APPENDIX B: LETTERS OF INFORMATION

B.1 Letter of Information – Talent Stage 1

Place Branding Recognition, Image, and Influence Letter of Information and Consent (Survey)

Dr. Godwin Arku, Principal Investigator
Department of Geography,
The University of Western Ontario,

Evan Cleave, Co-Investigator
Doctoral Student,
Department of Geography,
The University of Western Ontario,

Introduction

I am Evan Cleave, a Doctoral Student in the Department of Geography at the University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting a research project on whether place branding influences where individuals choose to live and work.

Purpose of Study

The overall purpose of the study is to determine the effectiveness of place branding: whether current place branding effort have meaning to talent and skilled workers; whether it impacts perceptions of places that use branding; and how it influences talented and highly-skilled members of the workforce in their decision of where to live and work. Additionally, the research will help identify the key city attributes and offerings that talent find attractive, and whether cities in Ontario are perceived to actually have these attributes. As a university student that will shortly enter the workforce and have to decide where you want to live and work, I would like to invite you to participate in the study. It will assist us to update and advance Canadian scholarship and contribute to international scholarship on place branding and its influence on talented individuals in determining where they will live and work.

If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in a brief survey. The survey may cover topics such as place brand recognition and recall, perception of place brand images, and the influence of place branding on how you perceive London as a place to live and work. You will be asked to provide only basic personal information, such as the city you currently live in, current education level, and desired field of employment. No identifying information will be collected. The survey should take approximately thirty minutes to complete. If interested, you will be provided with a hard-copy of the survey,

which you can complete at a location and time of your choosing. A drop box will be provided at the Social Sciences Centre, Room 2436 (SSC2436) for you to submit completed the survey.

Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. I will be the only person to handle the raw survey data. That is, all information will be kept in a secured on a password protected laptop and destroyed five years after the completion of the study. The findings will be published in a journal after the information has been aggregated. The data collected for this study will not be used for any purposes other than those related to this project. Please note that representatives of Non-Medical Research Ethics Board at The University of Western Ontario may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks associated with your participation in the study. This research may benefit participants by identifying key features that are important to them when considering where they want to live and work. More broadly, these discoveries may be incorporated into future place branding research and practice, as well as urban and local economic development discourse, and policy development practices.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. There is no penalty for withdrawing or not answering all questions. Completing this survey indicates that you are currently enrolled as a student at the University of Western Ontario. You may keep a copy of this information sheet. You do not waive any legal rights by participating in this study.

Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact:

Evan Cleave
Department of Geography
The University of Western Ontario

B.2 Letter of Information – Talent Stage 2

Place Branding Recognition, Image, and Influence Letter of Information and Consent (Survey)

Dr. Godwin Arku, Principal Investigator
Department of Geography,
The University of Western Ontario,

Evan Cleave, Co-Investigator
Doctoral Student,
Department of Geography,
The University of Western Ontario,

Introduction

I am Evan Cleave, a Doctoral Student in the Department of Geography at the University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting a research project on whether place branding, specifically focusing on brand recognition, how it shapes perceptions of cities, and its influences on where individuals choose to live and work.

Purpose of Study

The overall purpose of the study is to determine the effectiveness of place branding: whether current place branding effort have meaning to talent and skilled workers; whether it impacts perceptions of places that use branding; and how it influences talented and highly-skilled members of the workforce in their decision of where to live and work. Additionally, the research will help identify the key city attributes and offerings that talent find attractive, and whether cities in Ontario are perceived to actually have these attributes. As a university student that will shortly enter the workforce and have to decide where you want to live and work, I would like to invite you to participate in the study. It will assist us to update, and advance Canadian scholarship and contribute to international scholarship on place branding and their influence on talented individuals in determining where they will live and work.

If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in a brief survey. The survey may cover topics such as place brand recognition and recall, place brand images, and the influence of place branding. You will be asked to provide only basic personal information, such as the city you currently live in, current education level, and desired field of employment. No identifying information will be collected. The survey should take approximately thirty minutes to complete. If interested, please complete the online survey that follows. You can complete the survey at a location and time of your choosing. Please note, by completing the online survey you are giving consent that your

responses can be used in any analysis or reporting of results. All information collected will remain anonymous.

Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. I will be the only person to handle the raw survey data. That is, all information will be kept in a secured on a password protected laptop and destroyed five years after the completion of the study. The findings will be published in a journal after the information has been aggregated. The data collected for this study will not be used for any purposes other than those related to this project. Please note that representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks associated with your participation in the study. This research may benefit participants by identifying key features that are important to them when considering where they want to live and work. More broadly, these discoveries may be incorporated into future place branding research and practice, as well as urban and local economic development discourse, and policy development practices.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. There is no penalty for withdrawing or not answering all questions. Completing this survey indicates that you are a student at the University of Western Ontario. You may keep a copy of this information sheet. You do not waive any legal rights by participating in this study.

Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Evan Cleave or Dr. Godwin Arku.

B.3 Letter of Information – Immigrants

The Influence of Place Branding on Migrant Attraction Letter of Information and Consent (Survey)

Dr. Godwin Arku, Principal Investigator
Department of Geography,
The University of Western Ontario,

Evan Cleave, Co-Investigator
Doctoral Student,
Department of Geography,
The University of Western Ontario,

Introduction

I am Evan Cleave, a Doctoral Student in the Department of Geography at the University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting a research project on whether place branding influences where individuals choose to live and work.

Purpose of Study

The overall purpose of the study is to determine whether place branding influences migrants in their decision of where to live and work. Additionally, the research will help identify the key city attributes and offerings that are considered attractive or requisite when determining where to live, and whether cities in Ontario are perceived to actually have these attributes. As a resident of London, Ontario who migrated into the city, I would like to invite you to participate in the study. It will assist us to update and advance Canadian scholarship, and will contribute to international scholarship on place branding and its influence on migrants in determining where they will live and work.

If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in a brief survey. The survey covers topics such as your what specific city attributes and offerings are important in deciding where to live and work, what place branding is and how it influence your perceptions of a city, and whether place branding influences your perception of the city as a good place to live or work. You will also be asked to provide some basic information, such as how long you have live in London, Ontario and where you lived prior to migrating to London. No identifying information will be collected in the survey. The survey should take approximately fifteen minutes to complete. If interested, please complete the online survey that follows. You can complete the survey at a location and time of your choosing. Please note, by completing the online survey you are giving consent that your responses can be used in any analysis or reporting of results. All information collected will remain anonymous.

Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. I will be the only person to handle the raw survey data. That is, all information will be kept in a secured on a password protected laptop and destroyed five years after the completion of the study. The findings will be published in a journal after the information has been aggregated. The data collected for this study will not be used for any purposes other than those related to this project. Please note that representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks associated with your participation in the study. This research may benefit participants by identifying key features that are important to them when considering where they want to live and work. More broadly, these discoveries may be incorporated into future place branding research and practice, as well as urban and local economic development discourse, and policy development practices.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. There is no penalty for withdrawing or not answering all questions. Completing this survey indicates that you were born outside of Canada and are currently a resident of London, Ontario. You may keep a copy of this information sheet. You do not waive any legal rights by participating in this study.

Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Evan Cleave or Dr. Godwin Arku.

B.4 Letter of Information - Businesses

Influence of Place Branding on Perceptions of Businesses Letter of Information and Consent (Online Survey)

Dr. Godwin Arku, Principal Investigator
Department of Geography,
The University of Western Ontario,

Evan Cleave, Co-Investigator
Doctoral Student,
Department of Geography,
The University of Western Ontario,

Introduction

I am Evan Cleave, a Doctoral Candidate in the Department of Geography at the University of Western Ontario. I am currently conducting a research project on whether place branding influences the (re)location decision-making of businesses.

Purpose of Study

The overall purpose of the study is to determine the influence of place branding: whether current place branding effort have any influence in how businesses perceive cities; and whether this influences their decision-making on where to locate. In particular, this research is comparing the perceptions of businesses located in the City of London, Ontario and the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, Ontario. The research will help identify the key city attributes and offerings that businesses find important to their operation and success. As an owner or primary operator of a business operating in either London or Waterloo, I would like to invite you to participate in the study. It may assist us to update and advance Canadian scholarship and contribute to international scholarship on place branding and its influence on talented individuals in determining where they will live and work.

If you agree to participate

If you agree to participate in this study you will be asked to participate in a brief online survey. The survey covers topics such as how you perceive London or Waterloo as places to operate your business. You will be asked to provide only basic information on your business, such as the city you currently operate, how long you have been established, and the field that you operate in. No identifying information will be collected. If you wish to participate, please use the icon at the end of this letter to continue onto the survey. Consent to participate in this study is indicated by clicking the icon to continue to survey. The survey should take approximately fifteen minutes to complete.

Confidentiality

The information collected will be used for research purposes only, and neither your name nor information which could identify you will be used in any publication or presentation of the study results. All information collected for the study will be kept confidential. I will be the only person to handle the raw survey data. That is, all information will be kept in a secured password protected laptop and destroyed five years after the completion of the study. The findings will be published in a journal after the information has been aggregated. The data collected for this study will not be used for any purposes other than those related to this project. Please note that representatives of Non-Medical Research Ethics Board at The University of Western Ontario may require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

Risks & Benefits

There are no known risks associated with your participation in the study. This research may benefit participants by identifying key features that are important when determining where to locate their business. More broadly, these discoveries may be incorporated into future place branding research and practice, as well as urban and local economic development discourse, and policy development practices.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time. There is no penalty for withdrawing or not answering all questions. If you chose to withdraw from the study, you may request to have any information that you have provided removed. Completing this survey indicates that you are currently the owner or primary operator of a business in Ontario. You may keep a copy of this information sheet. You do not waive any legal rights by participating in this study.

Questions

If you have any questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research participant you may contact the Office of Research Ethics, The University of Western Ontario.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact:

Evan Cleave
Department of Geography
University of Western Ontario

APPENDIX C: SURVEY INSTRUMENTS

C.1 Brand Recognition Survey




Place Branding Recognition








Part 1








Thank-you very much for your assistance in completing this survey. The first section of the survey is meant to explore place brand recognition and recall. In this first section, you will be asked to identify logos that are associated with cities in Ontario. We ask you to please read carefully through each question, and provide the answer that most accurately reflects your perspectives and understandings.




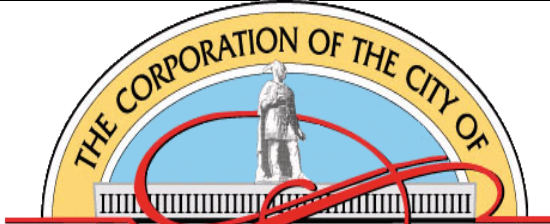



Please note that you should work at a fairly high speed through the survey. There is no need to look back and forth between questions, or to worry and puzzle over individual items or terms. There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers. We value your opinions and it is *your first impression, your immediate reaction or ‘feeling’ about the question* that is important. You should look at each questions as separate from the rest and answer each of them independently from the others. Please do not use any resources when answering the questions – it is your perspective and insight on place brand recognition and recall that is important!

Please take a look at each logo of a city in Ontario and write who you think it belongs to. For answers that you do not know, please leave the answer space blank.

Question	Logo	Please write your answer here:
1		
2		
3		

4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		

11		
12		
13		
14		
15		
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25		
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Part 2

In this last section, we ask for some background information, which is very important for us to classify the answers we receive. Please be assured that your responses will remain strictly confidential and will only be used to analyze statistically the data from our entire set of respondents. Thanks very much for your cooperation.

26. *What was your place of birth?* _____

27. *Before coming to Western, where are the last three places that you lived (if applicable)? And for approximately how many years?*

Place 1: _____ *I lived there for* ____ *years*

Place 2: _____ *I lived there for* ____ *years*

Place 3: _____ *I lived there for* ____ *years*

28. *You are:* Female ____ Male ____

29. *Your age is:* _____

30. *What year of study are you in?* 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5+ ____

31. *What level of study are you at?* Undergraduate ____ Masters ____ Doctoral ____

32. *What is your field of study?* _____

33. *What is your desired field of employment after graduation?* _____

THANK-YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!

C.2 Brand Recall Survey

Place Branding Recall

Part 1

This section of the survey explores place brand recall. In this section, you will be asked to identify slogans that are associated with cities in Ontario. We ask you to please read carefully through each question, and provide the answer that most accurately reflects your perspectives and understandings.

These slogans are used to cities in Ontario. Based on the slogan, which city do you think it belongs to? If you do not know, you can leave the answer blank

Question	Slogan	Please write your answer here:
1	Grand to Great	
2	Prepare to be Amazed	
3	Superior by Nature	
4	Canada's	
5	It's All Right Here	
6	Greater Together	
7	Naturally Gifted	
8	B...more	
9	The City Above Toronto	
10	Together Aspire... Together Achieve	
11	Canada's High-Tech Capital	
12	Building a smart and livable city	
13	It's a Natural	
14	Technically Beautiful	
15	The Garden City	
16	Diversity: Our Strength	
17	Leading Today for Tomorrow	

Part 2

In this last section, we ask for some background information, which is very important for us to classify the answers we receive. Please be assured that your responses will remain strictly confidential and will only be used to analyze statistically the data from our entire set of respondents. Thanks very much for your cooperation.

18. *What was your place of birth?* _____

19. *Before coming to Western, where are the last three places that you lived (if applicable)? And for approximately how many years?*

Place 1: _____ *I lived there for* ____ *years*

Place 2: _____ *I lived there for* ____ *years*

Place 3: _____ I lived there for _____ years

20. You are: Female _____ Male _____

21. Your age is: _____

22. What year of study are you in? 1 _____ 2 _____ 3 _____ 4 _____ 5+ _____

23. What level of study are you at? Undergraduate _____ Masters _____ Doctoral _____

24. What is your field of study? _____

25. What is your desired field of employment after graduation? _____

THANK-YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!

C.3 Brand Image Survey

Place Branding Recognition

Part 1: Background

Thank-you very much for your assistance in completing this survey. The first section of the survey is meant to gather some background information about yourself. We ask you to please read carefully through each question and provide the answer that most accurately reflects your situation. Please be assured that this survey is completely anonymous, and any information collected will only be used for academic purposes.

1. *What was your place of birth?* _____

2. *Before coming to Western, where are the last three places that you lived (if applicable)? And for approximately how many years?*

Place 1: _____ *I lived there for* ____ *years*

Place 2: _____ *I lived there for* ____ *years*

Place 3: _____ *I lived there for* ____ *years*

3. *You are:* *Female* ____ *Male* ____

4. *Your age is:* _____

5. *What year of study are you in?* 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5+ ____

6. *What level of study are you at?* *Undergraduate* ____ *Masters* ____ *Doctoral* ____

7. *What is your field of study?* _____

8. *What is your desired field of employment after graduation?* _____

Part 2: City Image

This section of the survey is meant to explore the influence of brand imagery on your perceptions of a place. In this section, you will be shown images of cities in Ontario and will be asked to describe how you perceive them. Please note that you should work at a fairly high speed through the survey. There is no need to look back and forth between questions, or to worry and puzzle over individual cities. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. We value your opinions and it is *your first impression, your immediate reaction or 'feeling' about the question* that is important. You should look at each questions as separate from the rest and answer each of them independently from the others.

(Group 1 Images – respondents were randomly assigned to one of the three group)



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



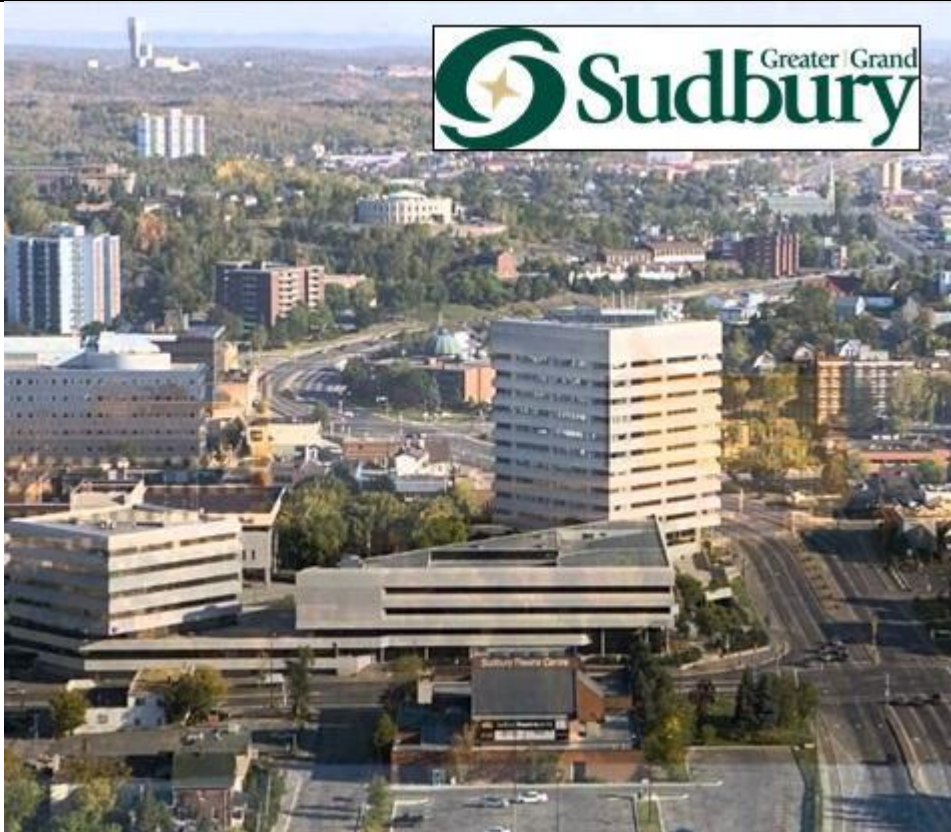
	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



MISSISSAUGA



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



TORONTO



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

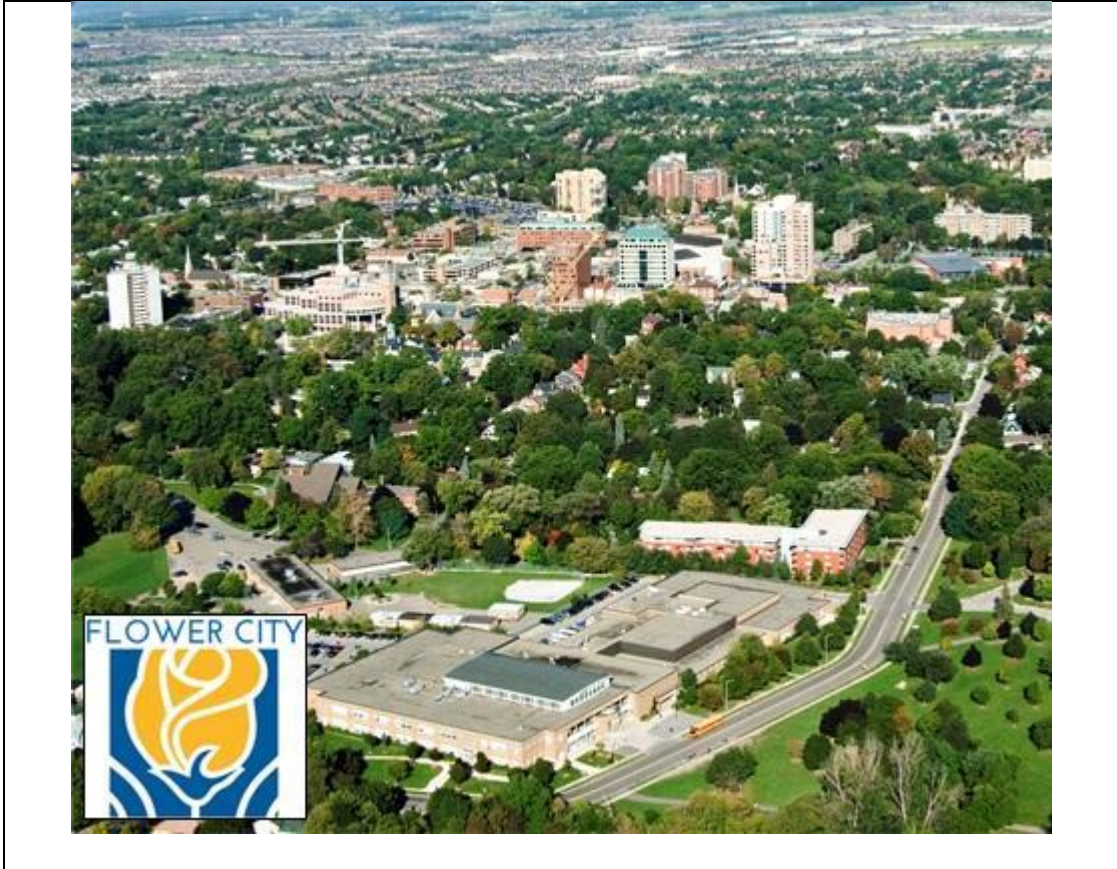


	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(Group 2 Images – respondents were randomly assigned to one of the three group)



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

(Group 3 Images – respondents were randomly assigned to one of the three group)



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7



	Very Negative					Very Positive	
Based on the above image, my impression of the city is:	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

THANK-YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!

C.4 Talent Place Brand Survey – Stage 1

Place Branding Influence

The following statements describe some characteristics about London, Ontario and its place brand image. We ask you to please carefully read through each statement. Then on a scale of 1 to 7, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. Please note that you should work at a fairly high speed through the survey. There is no need to look back and forth between questions, or to worry and puzzle over individual items or terms. There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers. We value your opinions and it is *your first impression, your immediate reaction or ‘feeling’ about the question* that is important. You should look at each questions as separate from the rest and answer each of them independently from the others. Remember, there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer, it is your immediate feeling that counts.

Question		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
1	I feel London, Ontario has a positive place image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2	I feel London, Ontario has a strong place image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3	My image of London, Ontario is that it is a good place to live	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4	My image of London, Ontario is that it is a good place to work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Question	When I think of London, Ontario’s image, I think of?	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
5	The friendliness of the community	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
6	Celebrities living in the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7	Traffic congestion	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	Urban design	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	Walkability of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	Local sports teams	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	Presence of a population with a similar age	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	Quality and availability of medical services	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13	Local taxes rates	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	The presence of family and friends in close proximity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15	Types of businesses that operate there	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16	Being able to get from place to place easily	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17	Beauty of the physical setting	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Question	When I think of London, Ontario's image, I think of?	Strongly Disagree							Strongly Agree	
18	Presentation of public spaces	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
19	Local art scene	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
20	Future economic conditions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
21	Actions of the municipal government	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
22	Quality of colleges or universities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
23	International access (through airports or ports)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
24	Artisanal stores	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
25	Religious institutions that meet your needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
26	A feeling of safety within the community	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
27	Cultural institutions that fit your needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
28	Fishing opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
29	Amount of shopping opportunity	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
31	Low crime rate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
32	The politics of the city or region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
33	Current economic conditions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
34	The population size and density	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
35	Availability of local golf courses	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
36	Television advertisements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
37	Its slogan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
38	Online content (i.e. YouTube videos)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
39	Diversity and multiculturalism	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
40	The urban image of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
41	Employment opportunities in your field	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
42	The cost of housing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
43	The quality of local architecture	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
44	Learning opportunities for children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
45	A good place to meet people and make friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
46	Quality of healthcare	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
47	Cost of house/property maintenance	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
48	Pedestrian friendliness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
49	A wide range of cultural opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
51	Access to water	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
52	Similarities to places that I have lived	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
53	Volunteer opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
54	Outdoor parks and playgrounds	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
55	Quality of infrastructure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		

56	Quality of public education system	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
57	Ease of finding desired employment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58	Cultural activity groups that fit my needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59	Winter recreation (skiing and skating)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60	The climate of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
61	Street cleanliness	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
62	How it is presented in the news	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
63	Quality of businesses that operate there	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
64	Ease of finding suitable housing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
65	Local history	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
66	Access to specialty foods	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
67	The general level of wages	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
68	The energy, atmosphere, or buzz	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
69	Recreational opportunities for children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
70	Air quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
71	Organized recreational activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
72	Cost of utilities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
73	Number of singles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
74	Access to main transportation routes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
75	Selection of local restaurants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
76	The city's quality compared to others in the province	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
77	Quality of shopping opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
78	Festivals held locally	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
79	Its appearance in television or movies	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
80	The general cost of living	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
81	Access to local beaches	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
82	Number of families with similar aged children	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
83	Quality of apartments or housing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
84	Parks and natural areas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
85	Tranquility of the place	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
86	Key local government members (i.e. mayor)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
87	Quality of jobs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
88	Social media presence	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
89	Canoeing and camping opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
90	The environmental image of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
91	Walking/hiking/jogging trails	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
92	Newspaper and magazine advertisements	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Question	When I think of London, Ontario's image, I think of?	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
93	Quality of local restaurants	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
94	Child daycare services	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
95	A strong sense of community	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
96	Concerts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
97	The availability of housing or apartments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
98	Museums and art galleries	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
99	Sense of security	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
100	Environmental quality (level of pollution)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
101	Its logo	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
102	Vibrant nightlife	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
103	Public transportation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
104	The business climate	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
105	Availability of different services	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
106	Access to greenspace	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part 2

In this last section, we ask for some background information, which is very important for us to classify the answers we receive. Please be assured that your responses will remain strictly confidential and will only be used to analyze statistically the data from our entire set of respondents. Thanks very much for your cooperation.

107. What was your place of birth? _____

108. Before coming to Western, where are the last three places that you lived (if applicable)? And for approximately how many years?

Place 1: _____ I lived there for ____ years

Place 2: _____ I lived there for ____ years

Place 3: _____ I lived there for ____ years

109. You are: Female ____ Male ____

110. Your age is: _____

111. What year of study are you in? 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5+ ____

112. What level of study are you at? Undergraduate ____ Masters ____ Doctoral ____

113. What is your field of study? _____

114. What is your desired field of employment after graduation? _____

THANK-YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!

C.5 Talent Place Brand Survey – Stage 2

Place Branding Perceptions

Part 1

In this first, we ask for some background information, which is very important for us to classify the answers we receive. Please be assured that your responses will remain strictly confidential and will only be used to analyze statistically the data from our entire set of respondents. Thanks very much for your cooperation.

1. *What was your place of birth?* _____

2. *Before coming to Western, where are the last three places that you lived (if applicable)? And for approximately how many years?*

Place 1: _____ *I lived there for* ____ *years*

Place 2: _____ *I lived there for* ____ *years*

Place 3: _____ *I lived there for* ____ *years*

3. *You are:* *Female* ____ *Male* ____

4. *Your age is:* _____

5. *What year of study are you in?* 1 ____ 2 ____ 3 ____ 4 ____ 5+ ____

6. *What level of study are you at?* *Undergraduate* ____ *Masters* ____ *Doctoral* ____

7. *What is your field of study?* _____

8. *What is your desired field of employment after graduation?* _____

Part 2: London, Ontario's Place Brand

The following statements describe some characteristics about London, Ontario and its place brand image. We ask you to please carefully read through each statement. Then on a scale of 1 to 7, please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. Please note that you should work at a fairly high speed through the survey. There is no need to look back and forth between questions, or to worry and puzzle over individual items or terms. There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. We value your opinions and it is *your first impression, your immediate reaction or 'feeling' about the question* that is important. You should look at each questions as separate from the rest and answer each of them independently from the others. Remember, there is no 'right' or 'wrong' answer, it is your immediate feeling that counts.

Question		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9	I feel London, Ontario has a positive place image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	I feel London, Ontario has a strong place image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	My image of London, Ontario is that it is a good place to live	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	My image of London, Ontario is that it is a good place to work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Question	When I think of London, Ontario's image, I think of...	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13	The city's logo and/or slogan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	Traditional advertising by the city (i.e. TV commercial; advertisements)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15	The city's online content (i.e. webpage; social media)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16	News coverage of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17	Availability and quality of outdoor recreation activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18	Availability and quality of organized recreational activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19	Presence of greenspace	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20	Access to water in the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21	The beauty of the natural environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22	Diversity and multiculturalism within the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23	Cultural groups/ethnic organizations within the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24	Cultural opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25	The urban design of city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26	Population size and density	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27	The energy, atmosphere, or buzz	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28	The urban image of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29	Current economic conditions of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30	Employment opportunities that suit my needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31	Quality of the employment opportunities available	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32	Future economic conditions of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33	Overall cost of living	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Question	When I think of London, Ontario's image, I think of...	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
34	Cost of housing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35	Quality of housing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36	Businesses that operate in the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37	Population of similar age to myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38	Vibrant nightlife	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39	The city as a good place to make friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40	Number of Singles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part 3: Place Brands of Cities in Ontario

You are nearly done! This final section of the survey is meant to explore your perceptions of one other city in Ontario. You will be asked your perceptions about the place brand of one of the following cities in Ontario: Toronto, Mississauga, Hamilton, Brampton, Markham, Windsor, Vaughan, Kitchener, or Ottawa. The city you are asked about is randomly selected. Please note that you do not have to have lived in the city (or even know much about it!) to complete this section of the survey.

As in the previous section, you will be asked about your perception of the city, its characteristics, and its place brand. As before, we ask you to carefully read through each statement. Then on a scale of 1 to 7, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. Please consider each question separately and answer each of them independently from the others. Finally, please do not use any resources when answering the questions – it is your own feelings and insights that are important!

Question		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
41	I feel _____, Ontario has a positive place image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42	I feel _____, Ontario has a strong place image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43	My image of _____, Ontario is that it is a good place to live	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44	My image of _____, Ontario is that it is a good place to work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Question	When I think of _____, Ontario's image, I think of...	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
45	The city's logo and/or slogan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46	Traditional advertising by the city (i.e. TV commercial; advertisements)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47	The city's online content (i.e. webpage; social media)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Question	When I think of _____, Ontario's image, I think of...	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48	News coverage of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49	Availability and quality of outdoor recreation activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50	Availability and quality of organized recreational activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51	Presence of greenspace	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52	Access to water in the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53	The beauty of the natural environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54	Diversity and multiculturalism within the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55	Cultural groups/ethnic organizations within the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56	Cultural opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
57	The urban design of city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58	Population size and density	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59	The energy, atmosphere, or buzz	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60	The urban image of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
61	Current economic conditions of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
62	Employment opportunities that suit my needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
63	Quality of the employment opportunities available	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
64	Future economic conditions of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
65	Overall cost of living	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
66	Cost of housing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
67	Quality of housing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
68	Businesses that operate in the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
69	Population of similar age to myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
70	Vibrant nightlife	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
71	The city as a good place to make friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
72	Number of Singles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

THANK-YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!

C.6 Immigrant Place Brand Survey

Part 1: Background

Thank-you very much for your assistance in completing this survey. The first section of the survey is meant to gather some background information about yourself. We ask you to please read carefully through each question, and provide the answer that most accurately reflects your situation. Please be assured that this survey is completely anonymous, and any information collected will only be used for academic purposes.

1. Are you male _____ or female _____
2. In what country were you born? _____
3. How long (in years) have you lived in London? _____ In Canada?

4. Prior to migrating to London, where was the last city that you lived in?

5. And how long (in years) did you live there before migrating to London?

6. What level of education best describes you?

_____ Completed high school	_____ Enrolled in university
_____ Enrolled in college	_____ Have received a university degree
_____ Have received a college degree	_____ Other – please specify: _____
7. What were your primary reasons for migrating to London? (Please select all the items from the following list that apply to you)

_____ To join family	_____ for work	_____ for education
_____ the promotional activities of the city	_____ the reputation of the city	_____ local religious institutions that fit your needs
_____ due to positive word of mouth from friends and family	_____ familiarity with the city from media sources	_____ presence of cultural group/organizations that fit your needs
_____ Other – please specify _____		

8. *Since migrating to London, my perception of the city as a place to live and work has:*

_____ improved greatly	_____ improved slightly	_____ stayed the same	_____ diminished	_____ diminished greatly
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Part 2: Place Brand Image of London, Ontario

This second section of the survey is meant to explore your perceptions of London, Ontario's place brand. The following statements describe some characteristics about London, and its place brand image. As before, we ask you to carefully read through each statement. Then on a scale of 1 to 7, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement.

Please note that you should work at a fairly high speed through the survey. There is no need to look back and forth between questions, or to worry and puzzle over individual items or terms. There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers. We value your opinions and it is *your first impression, your immediate reaction or ‘feeling’ about the question* that is important. You should look at each question as separate from the rest and answer each of them independently from the others. Please do not use any resources when answering the questions – it is your perspective and insight on place brand recognition and recall that is important!

Question		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
9	I feel London, Ontario has a positive place image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10	I feel London, Ontario has a strong place image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
11	My image of London, Ontario is that it is a good place to live	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12	My image of London, Ontario is that it is a good place to work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Question	When I think of London, Ontario’s image, I think of...	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
13	The city’s logo and/or slogan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
14	Traditional advertising by the city (i.e. TV commercial; advertisements)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15	The city’s online content (i.e. webpage; social media)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16	News coverage of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17	Availability and quality of outdoor recreation activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Question	When I think of London, Ontario's image, I think of...	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18	Availability and quality of organized recreational activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19	Presence of greenspace	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
20	Access to water in the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
21	The beauty of the natural environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
22	Diversity and multiculturalism within the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
23	Cultural groups/ethnic organizations within the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
24	Cultural opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
25	The urban design of city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
26	Population size and density	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
27	The energy, atmosphere, or buzz	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28	The urban image of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29	Current economic conditions of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30	Employment opportunities that suit my needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31	Quality of the employment opportunities available	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
32	Future economic conditions of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
33	Overall cost of living	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
34	Cost of housing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
35	Quality of housing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
36	Businesses that operate in the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
37	Population of similar age to myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
38	Vibrant nightlife	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
39	The city as a good place to make friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
40	Number of Singles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Part 3: Place Brands of Cities in Ontario

You are nearly done! This final section of the survey is meant to explore your perceptions of one other city in Ontario. You will be asked your perceptions about the place brand of one of the following cities in Ontario: Toronto, Hamilton, Kitchener/Waterloo, or Ottawa. The city you are asked about is randomly selected. Please note that you do not have to have lived in the city (or even know much about it!) to complete this section of the survey. As in the previous section, you will be asked about your perception of the city, its characteristics, and its place brand. As before, we ask you to carefully read through each statement. Then on a scale of 1 to 7, indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the statement. Please consider each question separately and answer each of them independently from the others. Finally, please do not use any resources when answering the questions – it is your own feelings and insights that are important!

Question		Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
41	I feel _____, Ontario has a positive place image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
42	I feel _____, Ontario has a strong place image	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
43	My image of _____, Ontario is that it is a good place to live	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
44	My image of _____, Ontario is that it is a good place to work	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Question	When I think of _____, Ontario's image, I think of...	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
45	The city's logo and/or slogan	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
46	Traditional advertising by the city (i.e. TV commercial; advertisements)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
47	The city's online content (i.e. webpage; social media)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
48	News coverage of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
49	Availability and quality of outdoor recreation activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
50	Availability and quality of organized recreational activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
51	Presence of greenspace	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
52	Access to water in the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
53	The beauty of the natural environment	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
54	Diversity and multiculturalism within the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
55	Cultural groups/ethnic organizations within the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
56	Cultural opportunities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
57	The urban design of city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
58	Population size and density	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Question	When I think of _____, Ontario's image, I think of...	Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
59	The energy, atmosphere, or buzz	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
60	The urban image of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
61	Current economic conditions of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
62	Employment opportunities that suit my needs	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
63	Quality of the employment opportunities available	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
64	Future economic conditions of the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
65	Overall cost of living	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
66	Cost of housing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
67	Quality of housing	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
68	Businesses that operate in the city	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
69	Population of similar age to myself	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
70	Vibrant nightlife	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
71	The city as a good place to make friends	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
72	Number of Singles	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

THANK-YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR HELP!

CURRICULUM VITAE

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Summary of Scholarship:

Published Refereed Journal Articles	13
Refereed Journal Articles Under Review	8
Book Chapters (Refereed)	1
Encyclopedia Entries	1
Book Reviews	1
Technical reports (refereed/non-refereed)	6
Conference Presentations	27
Invited Speaker/Lecturer	12
Invited Panelist	5

Relevant Refereed Journal Publications:

Cleave, E., Arku, G., and Chatwin, M. (2018). One step forward, two steps back? Examining the influence of consultants on local economic development policy. *Canadian Public Administration* 61(4): Forthcoming.

Cleave, E., Arku, G., and Chatwin, M. (2017). Cities' economic development efforts in a changing global economy: Content analysis of economic development plans in Ontario, Canada. *Area* 49(3): 359–368.

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Cleave, E., Arku, G., Sadler, R., and Kyeremeh, E. (2017). Place marketing, place branding, and social media: Perspectives of municipal practitioners. *Growth & Change* 48(4): 1012-1033.

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Kennedy, J. Arku, G., and **Cleave, E.** (2017). The experiences of front-line service providers of Housing First programme delivery in three communities in Ontario, Canada. *International Journal of Housing Policy* 17(3): 396-416.

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