

# A Review of Branding Initiatives for the City of Manchester

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The branding of cities through the use of symbols, logos and slogans has become a feature of the urban regeneration process in many parts of the world. However, the effectiveness of city branding is subject to much debate. In this paper this issue is explored through a case study of a series of attempts to brand the city of Manchester in the United Kingdom.

Initiatives to brand Manchester are not new and go back to the use of the Bee in the nineteenth century as a symbol of industry. Most recent has been the logo M and summing up slogan “original and modern”. This paper reviews the chronological development of Manchester branding initiatives including logos, slogans and symbols and seeks to identify their effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses. It is important to understand the reasons for these changes too. The paper does not propose a particular symbol, logo or slogan for Manchester, but seeks to put arguments about the importance of unique branding initiatives in the global competition of places.

**Keywords:** city branding, city development, city marketing, logo, slogan and symbol of the city.

## Introduction

City marketing has grown out of marketing science (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990) and uses techniques associated with the creation of classical product brands (Hankinson, 2007). It has become very popular in recent years, particularly in the form of city branding. City marketing is used for multiple goals (to build a positive image for the city, attract enterprises, tourists, events etc.) while branding creates the identity for the city which is expected to increase its attraction (Rainisto, 2003). According to Ashworth and Voogd (1990), “Marketing, as a new way of viewing cities and thus the problems of their management in the public interest, offers a largely unexplored potential” for city planners, managers and place marketers. City marketing can be described as a technique of planning and, according to Ashworth and Voogd (1990), “urban market planning in some form, has long been accepted as being essential in preventing market failures” such as retarded private developments through the lack of information about the area and so on.

Nowadays European communities are in active competition with each other. Furthermore place competition is global, and all places whether located in Europe, Asia, Latin America or the USA, need to develop new capabilities to survive in this competitive environment (Rainisto, 2003). The starting point for competitive advantage could be a symbol, logo and slogan of the city. A symbol of the city is part of its marketing and promoting strategy. It supports and contributes to the image of the city and helps to distinguish a particular city amongst the others so the symbol should be unique and represent only this city. Nevertheless a problem exists.

Place marketers need fresh ideas and good advice about how to manage the global competition between locations; however there is not much empirical research in the area (Rainisto, 2003). “Despite an expanding body of literature, however, very little has been written about how place marketing and in particular the branding of places, should be managed” (Hankinson, 2007). According to Rainisto

(2003) the place marketing approach needs continuous development, additional discussion and modeling supported by new empirical research.

Manchester is a particularly good example of how city branding has developed from the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was well known as first industrial city. Since the Second World War it has been through economic doldrums and de-industrialisation so there was a need to address radical measures to build a new image. Actually, many cities, regions and countries are beginning to engage in marketing according to Hankinson (2007) which helps to realise the vision of the city. The current vision for Manchester is set out in the Greater Manchester Strategy by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities which states that by 2025 the Manchester city region will be “A world class city-region at the heart of a thriving North”.

This paper focuses on marketing initiatives for Manchester and how they have been changing during the years, and how effective they have been. The paper’s contribution is to review related literature outlining Manchester marketing practices and image issues on a practical level. This then will be used to develop a theoretical model for successful marketing of Manchester with the possibility to develop a more general model. The paper is in three parts. The first summarizes the history of Manchester and especially issues such as recent industrial decline and regeneration. The second gives an outline of the changes in the way in which Manchester has been symbolized and branded over the years. The third discusses various theoretical approaches to branding, initiatives to brand Manchester in relationship to these approaches and the criticisms that have been made of these initiatives.

Qualitative methods have been selected for the research. “Qualitative data are collected in close proximity to a situation and the emphasis is on a specific case” (Rainisto, 2003); these have included investigation of beliefs, understandings, opinions, views, perceptions etc. A descriptive approach to the analysis of qualitative data gives a coherent and comprehensive view of the subject and a theory building approach helps to develop theory out of the collected data (Fellows and Liu, 1997).

## **1. The history of Manchester**

Manchester is situated in the North West of the UK and is sometimes regarded as the country’s second city after London. Manchester has been known as a centre of engineering and manufacture: it is the place where Mr Rolls and Mr Royce met before founding Rolls Royce cars; it has the world’s oldest commercial railway line between Manchester to Liverpool; the world’s first storage program computer was created at Manchester University in 1948 (Sarson, 2005). In cultural and sporting terms it is home to the first public library, the longest established symphony orchestra in the UK, it hosted the Commonwealth Games in 2002 and has two major football teams. One of these is the internationally famous Manchester United. Today’s Manchester is a renaissance of the former industrial city and is dominated now mainly by sport, broadcasting and education.

Manchester was built with a purpose as other Victorian cities. From 1840s till 1920s it was a city of industry. Manchester’s manufacturing included cotton and textile industries expanding to textile engineering and machine tool making. Transportation of raw materials and finished goods through the canal system (Manchester Ship canal opened in 1894) or railways (Manchester-Liverpool railway opened in 1830 helped the city to grow from a village in 1750 to the world’s major cotton-milling centre in only a hundred years. Manchester became one of the great power-capitals of the Industrial Revolution (Shaughnessy, 2004). The cotton industry explained the growth of the population which had increased in 1831 nearly six times in sixty years (Briggs, 1963).

Since the Second World War Manchester has undergone de-industrialisation and decline process especially in 1960s and 70s.

Major city centre’s revival projects started during the early 1980s including expansion of the airport, early development of the Casltfield area, creation of the G-MEX exhibition centre, the planned Metrolink and since the late 1980s Manchester has been at the forefront of urban regeneration which

resulted more flagship projects like The Bridgewater Concert Hall, The Manchester Evening News Arena, Urbis, The Lowry Centre in Salford and the Imperial War museum in Trafford (Quillley, 2000). A key event in the regeneration process was the IRA bomb explosion in the city centre in June 1996. This disrupted the city's commercial infrastructure but also inspired an ambitious rebuilding scheme, which also came to embrace the Commonwealth Game's facilities and innovative millennium design projects (Cooper, 2004; Sarson, 2005; Hetherington, 2004). Since then Manchester has been undergoing enormous urban regeneration programmes which according to Hetherington (2004) involve redeveloping areas in decline (Salford Keys, East Manchester, Hulme), a large out of town shopping mall (Trafford centre), theatres with galleries (The Lowry centre), rebuilding old industrial areas (Castlefield), loft conversions, waterside housing developments, new luxury city centre apartments, cafes, restaurants, etc.

Manchester is being transformed from "cotton mill" to "knowledge mill" because nowadays the knowledge economy is significantly contributing to economic growth so Manchester's initiatives and strategies are focused on knowledge and intangible assets. Furthermore, it is believed that the "knowledge-based economy" will help to match the growth levels of the US and emerging Asian countries (Windén et al 2007). Universities together with other research institutions contribute to new knowledge and technological innovations. Manchester has the fastest growing student population in Britain and is a home for three universities (Manchester University, Manchester Metropolitan University (UMIST) and Salford University). This gives the city an excellent background for the Knowledge Capital initiative within Manchester city region which was launched in late 2002 and is described in detail in a Strategy for Greater Manchester.

Manchester has had a bad reputation for hundreds years as one of the England's most crowded and unhealthy cities with a lack of public green spaces (Cooper, 2004). Nevertheless it has been changing during the centuries together with its symbols, slogans, logos as well as strategies and visions.

## **2. Development of the branding of Manchester**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Manchester became the world's foremost industrial city with its cotton production and hard working workers like "busy bees". Since then the bee was adopted as symbol of Manchester and its emblem is in mosaics all over the floor, pillars and walls of the town hall and metal bollards across the city centre. This was perhaps the first attempt to symbolize the city. The city's motto is "concilio et labore" in Latin (The Arms of the City of Manchester), which can be translated as "integrity and industry" or "wisdom and effort". Hetherington (2004) states that the city was represented in particular through its neo-classical or gothic civic and municipal buildings at the time, one of which is the Town Hall (built in 1887).

From 1930s as traditional industries went into decline and Manchester remained the city of grime till 1980s. The paintings of L. S Lowry, Walter Greenwood's novel "Love on the dole" (about working class poverty in 1930s in Northern England), and since the late 1950s the popular television soap of working class life "Coronation street" (Hetherington, 2004) represent the images of Manchester of the early to mid twentieth century.

Manchester tried to redefine itself in 1980s after the British Empire was gone, and change its image and negative public perceptions with an intention of employment creation and economic growth. Then Manchester was projected as the "Olympic city" in a bid to host the Olympic games according to Loftman and Nevin (1996). Also Manchester has been proclaimed as "A Nuclear Free City" for years (after Manchester City Council declared a resolution in November 1980 about the City as a nuclear free zone) in response to "Cold War" issues. In 1980s Manchester was well known as a music industry city with its Hacienda nightclub (opened in 1982), thriving music scene (Oasis started here and other well known bands like Joy division, The Smiths, Happy Mondays), Factory Records (started in 1978 and became the most influential alternative record label) and the Dry Bar.

In 1988 “a key element of Manchester’s new-found, pro-growth strategy was the promotion and development of the city centre area” Loftman and Nevin (1996) including quality architecture and outdoor art. This was intended to contribute to promoting Manchester as an international centre for business and tourism. After the 1987 election Manchester City Council began working with new agencies created by central government (Ward, 2000) involving the private sector in regeneration increasingly at the beginning of 1990s. As a result Marketing Manchester was set as a limited company in 1995 to “sell” Manchester which launched the red and blue slogan “we’re up and going” on 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1997. It was created at a cost of £2.5 m (O’Rourke, 1997). The McEnroe group (named after the tennis player’s famous phrase “You cannot be serious”) (Shaughnessy, 2004), a group of around 35 young entrepreneurial people, dismissed this legendary campaign and suggested the new one. This consisted of a ten point asterisk with words “Made in Manchester” symbolizing the ten boroughs of Greater Manchester and which, according to them, reflected the image of the city better than “We’re up and going”. It was launched on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July 1997. The McEnroe soon disbanded due to internal disputes over the returns, politicians were called to rethink Marketing Manchester’s role (Ward, 2000). In March 2004 P. Saville – McEnroe group member, co-funder of Factory Records and designer of record sleeves for the bands Joy Division, New Order and others - was commissioned by the city council to come up with an idea of marketing Manchester to the world (Ottewell, 2004). The outcomes of this commission were introduced in press in 2004 and launched by Manchester City Council during the 2006 Labour Party Annual Conference in Manchester. Saville devised the summing up slogan “original modern” and introduced the new logo M for the city. The concept “original and modern” was embodied in many different forms in Manchester: the original modern lightshow - the words with letters from multi-colour dots ‘Be Original’ and ‘Be Modern’ on both sides of the Bridgewater tunnel beneath Manchester Central (former GMEX centre); neon-like colour bars on a black background on billboard advertisements and other pieces of advertising and promotion. The M for Manchester, a new Manchester City Council sign, has been visible on the streets of Manchester from 2006. The M appears to be five overlaid neon M’s of different colours. The diagram below shows the evolution of the various branding initiatives:

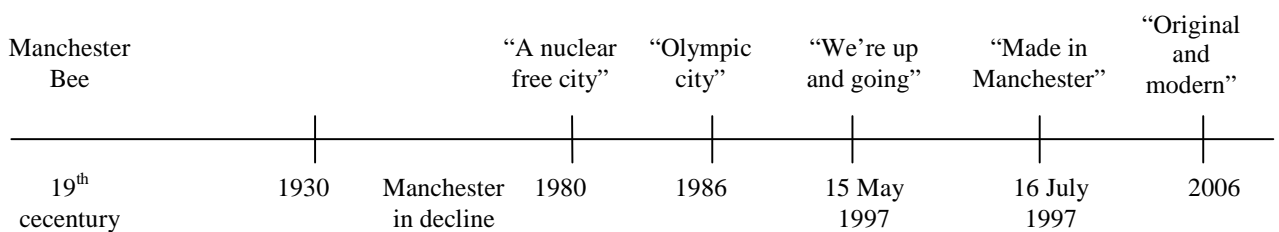


Figure 1. Evolution of Manchester Branding Initiatives

By the way, there are more Manchester M’s currently visible around Manchester city centre which O’Rourke (2006a) has assembled. The Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Authorities ‘computer circuit board’ M was designed in the early 70’s and is still in use today, the MEN Arena has a distinctive branding with cleverly arranged initials seen on road signs around the city. The Metrolink M, designed prior to 1992 is and finally giant stainless steel M’s serve as billboard for advertisement posters around Manchester city centre (O’Rourke, 2006a).

### 3. Evaluation of the branding of Manchester

City marketing practitioners believe that various branding and re-branding initiatives, which became very popular recently, can contribute to creation and representation of city brand as such. In theory a clear slogan, logo and world famous symbol for the city would help to eliminate negative perceptions

and contribute to the promotion and identification of the city, position it in a local and global context. On the other hand “cities are in themselves a brand” (Sarson, 2005).

There is a problem with a city branding; how to use the slogan. According to Saville cities suffer from ‘sloganitis’ and the use of a slogan suggests the existence of problems which can be eliminated with the help of slogan. That is why Glasgow or Leeds needs a slogan, but London or Paris does not. Nottinghamshire - is "Robin Hood country" and Warwickshire is "Shakespeare country". Signs in Leeds say “Live it, Love it” and Birmingham's sign describes it as a “Great City”. Glasgow has a slogan “Smiles Better”.

To sum up the city and its key factors into a slogan of one or two words is a difficult task. The slogan has to reflect different characteristics of the city. “Like a piece of architecture, the city is a construction in space and city design is therefore a temporal art” (Lynch, 1960). This suggests that symbol, logo and slogan as part of the city image are temporary as well and will eventually change when circumstances change. In fact, this can be noticed easily analyzing the story of Manchester branding.

### ***3.1. Manchester branding in the 1990s***

“We’re Up and Going” was criticised by McEnroe group though it was intended to represent local development to the world. The McEnroe Group argued that the logo and slogan fell short of the “international” standards, the typographic design of the campaign lacked “vitality and panache”, finally the campaign failed to reflect the energy of the city (Ward, 2000). As a result a group of young entrepreneurial people launched their campaign to highlight Manchester on the international map which consisted of two elements on the banners: “Revolution” and “Made in Manchester”.

### ***3.2. Original and modern***

O’Rourke (2006a) expressed his concerns whether a logo can sell a city and whether the M will stick in peoples minds making them willing to visit Manchester or do business here. Obviously the slogan could be applied not only to Manchester, but any other city in the UK, Europe or World. Furthermore, “M” could stand not only for Manchester but Macclesfield or Middlesbrough as well. There are different comments on Manchester’s description as “original and modern” some of them praising and some of them - disparaging it. Any city or town is original and has modern elements. Furthermore, there is a danger in interpreting the word “modern” according to O’Rourke (2006c). “Modern” is associated with recent trends, something that is "up-to-date", "new", “innovative” or from the present time but does not mean that is always better. However “modern” means innovative and ground-breaking in the context of all time and in all areas. It means that the past remains a part of the present, and a part of the future (O’Rourke, 2006d).

Manchester was named “original and modern” for the reason that so many world-conquering innovations were born here. It makes sense as passenger railways, the splitting of the atom, the computer, powerhouse of industry and the industrial revolution, technical innovation, ground-breaking pop music started in Manchester. According to O’Rourke (2006) today Manchester has already many exciting innovative world-class projects that can be called “original” and “modern” and spreading the message to the world about Manchester as city of knowledge, a centre of creativity. One of the examples is Eastserve project to wire up communities in East Manchester, or Manchester Digital Development Agency.

The new M sign is visible only on Oxford Road next to the Mancunian Way, but M should reflect wider city conurbation, consisting of separate local authorities inside the M60 motorway. Lots of cultural and sporting events are being organized in Manchester with sponsors, flags, banners, posters and other advertising opportunities to promote the city but interesting enough Manchester branding is currently absent from the Manchester International Festival website. This fact forces us to think what

really promotes the city. It also raises the question for what new the Manchester branding was created. Is it a missed opportunity to represent Manchester for Europe and World?

### ***3.3. Landmark buildings to symbolize Manchester***

“Modern” architecture and landmark buildings are used to symbolise cities. High rise glass and steel buildings with air conditioning, contemporary apartments with floor to ceiling windows, public spaces with benches, furniture and light fittings are replacing old brick or stone buildings with ornaments, which were modern at the time when just built. According to O’Rourke (2006d) Manchester has allowed much of its unique identity to disappear but to be “modern” does not mean demolishing old buildings as “old fashioned”.

Today Manchester is called a modern 21<sup>st</sup> century city with its shiny buildings, but lots of buildings (the Town Hall is perhaps the best known example of a 19<sup>th</sup> century building symbolising Manchester; the Midland Hotel) and most streets (Market St., Oxford St., Deansgate St., Whitworth St.) remain relatively unchanged from the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Tall buildings can be symbols of cities like Twin Towers in New York or Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia. The CIS tower was the tallest office building outside London in 1962 and recently became the largest solar project in the UK after it was covered by solar panels; it can be seen as representing the Co-operative group and Manchester as well. This fact suggests that not only newly built tall buildings contribute to regeneration and branding. A timeline of buildings that symbolise Manchester at different periods of history can be drawn: The Town Hall built in 1877, G-MEXX reopened in 1986, CIS Tower built in 1962, Urbis built in 2002, Beetham Tower built in 2007.

Ian Simpson, designer of the Beetham (Hilton) tower (the 169-metre tall, 47-storey the highest residential accommodation in Western Europe, built in 2006), thinks that this building will change the perception of Manchester from that of a Victorian city to one that is passionate about embracing the future (O’Rourke, 2006f). However, Tim Evans, a partner and creative director at Sheppard Robson, argues that tall buildings are often an expression of ego and they are not very sustainable as costs of the development increase with the height (O’Rourke, 2006f). Peter Saville has concerns about the quality of contemporary architectural projects and probably he is right saying that graphics and identity are inept and inadequate (Sarson, 2005; Taylor, 2004). Further more, according to Taylor (2004) people do not think that Manchester has an iconic building as the Eiffel Tower, Sydney Opera House or the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.

## **Conclusions**

This paper has briefly examined the history of Manchester and the development of marketing initiatives, from the nineteenth century to the present day. It could be argued that the nineteenth century symbol of the bee is still relevant and today’s people are as busy as they were in the 19<sup>th</sup> century notwithstanding that they are working in non-manufacturing industries like finance, business and tourism. So the bee could be still used as a symbol of Manchester.

In 1986 Manchester aspired to become an international centre of sport and leisure but did not succeed. This failure partly drove later initiatives. In 1990s Manchester arguably became the music and night club capital of the world. By 1997-98 Marketing Manchester created a slogan “we’re up and going” for the city but it was criticized by the MaEnroe group and changed to “made in Manchester”, which was thought to better reflect the image of the city.

Today Manchester is famous for rain, its football club Manchester United, iconic pop music, new commercial and cultural life and the television soap-opera called Coronation Street (Shaughnessy, 2004). Manchester is an international city in the global economy with the aim of generating more jobs so it has to sell itself in order to attract business, tourism, students and key workers such as doctors and

teachers. Despite that the designer of the new branding campaign for Manchester Peter Saville confirms that the city in the 21st century needs to mark itself out from other cities. It is not a capital of the country, but has its history, own spirit and unique characteristics.

The slogan “original and modern” and logo “M” were created in 2004 and this initiative is supposed to be addressed to the people living and working in Manchester as the future prosperity and success of Manchester depends on them. Manchester is now already, and should be in the future, a city that is both original and modern according to its image’s designer.

It can be argued that success of the city depends on successful marketing and re-branding campaigns. The paper does not test this though and does not compare marketing campaigns for Manchester with practices of other cities. Its aim is to put arguments about the importance of city marketing and outline the development of branding initiatives which gives guidelines for further research and theoretical modelling in the area. Further stages of the research will be focusing on marketing practices in other cities, relation between regeneration and branding, role of Manchester residents in developing city branding. The results will then be finalised and reported in subsequent academic papers and PhD thesis.

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