

MASTERARBEIT

Titel der Masterarbeit

Marketing the Local: Using Resident Tips in Destination Marketing

Verfasser/in

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angestrebter akademischer Grad

Master of Arts (MA)

Wien, 2014

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt:	A 066 664
Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt:	Masterstudium DDP Urban Studies
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Abstract

This thesis will explore the phenomenon of “travelling like a local”. I position this as the outcome of cultural and societal trends in the consumption of European city breaks, where consumers seek unique and authentic experiences that tap into “local knowledge” and put them into contact with local people and cultures. This is believed to make for a more authentic and sustainable holiday. There are growing numbers of local organisations who seek to promote “their” city to the tourist and who promise to share niche and hidden activities, and they are gaining in popularity. This trend is slowly being picked up by a variety of Destination Marketing Organisations, seeking to promote the “local” angle of their knowledge and offering. I will examine the campaigns of Visit Manchester, Visit Birmingham, and This is Antwerp, all of which claim to utilise local. I then contrast this information with that provided by local people and organisations.

The question I seek to answer is “How does the depiction of the city as a tourist destination differ between local residents and Destination Marketing Organisations?” Through a literature review, discourse analysis, and semi-structured interviews, I find that DMOs try to offer an omniscient view of the city attractions and attempt to cater for all population groups. Locals, with their focus on their personal connections to the city and the emphasis on their favourite things to do, offer a more compelling and personalised approach. The image of the city that this creates is different to the DMO, but is complementary rather than competing.

Diese These wird das Phänomen der "Reisen wie ein Einheimischer" zu erkunden. Ich diese Position als die auskommen von kulturellen und gesellschaftlichen Trends in der Verbrauch der europäischen Städtereisen, wo die Verbraucher einzigartige und authentische Erfahrungen, die in die "Ortskenntnis" tippen und sie in Kontakt mit der lokalen Bevölkerung und Kulturen zu suchen. Dies ist vermutlich für eine au-then und nachhaltigen Urlaub zu machen. Es gibt eine wachsende Zahl von lokalen Organisationen, die an der touristischen Förderung "ihrer" Stadt zu suchen und wer Nische und verborgenen Aktivitäten teilen versprechen, und sie werden immer beliebter. Dieser Trend wird langsam von einer Vielzahl von Destination-Marketing-Organisationen aufgenommen, suche, um die "lokalen" Winkel ihres Wissens und ihrer Opfer zu fördern. Ich werde die Kampagnen von Visit Manchester, Birmingham besuchen zu untersuchen, und dies ist Antwerpen, die alle behaupten, lokal zu nutzen. Ich habe dann diese Informationen mit Kontrast, dass von der lokalen Bevölkerung und Organisationen.

Die Frage, die ich versuchen, zu beantworten ist: "Wie ist die Darstellung der Stadt als Reiseziel unterscheiden zwischen Anwohnern und Destination Marketing Organisationen?" Durch eine Literatur Kritik, Diskursanalyse und semi-strukturierten Interviews finde ich, dass DMOs versuchen, eine allwissende Blick auf die Sehenswürdigkeiten der Stadt zu bieten und versuchen, für alle Bevölkerungsgruppen gerecht zu werden. Einheimische, mit ihrem Fokus auf ihre persönlichen Verbindungen zu der Stadt und der Schwerpunkt auf ihre Lieblings-Dinge zu tun, bieten eine überzeugende und personalisierten Ansatz. Das Bild der Stadt, die das schafft unterscheidet sich von der DMO, aber ergänzen und nicht konkurrieren.

Curriculum Vitae

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EDUCATION

University of Vienna (Universität Wien): M.A., Urban Studies**Sep. 2012 – Sep. 2014**

This course is taught between six universities in four European cities, adding a unique intercultural and international dimension to urban studies. My thesis will focus on the study of local involvement in tourism through a blend of interviews, questionnaires and quantitative analyses.

University of Cambridge: B.A. Hons., Geography (*upper second class honours*)**2009 – 2012**

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1. Introduction

“Travelling like a local” is a small but growing niche within tourism. Long a mainstay of eco-tourism in developing countries, it is an outlook on travel increasingly applied to urban tourism in western nations. Tourists, weary of mass marketing and overcrowding at hotspots, are turning to more memorable and authentic travel experiences that utilise local knowledge. This connection between local knowledge and international travellers has been facilitated by the internet and is, I believe, the latest trend in a movement towards more individualised, authentic and experiential holidays. Online platforms such as Airbnb and Spotted by Locals introduce tourists to unknown neighbourhoods; guiding services such as the Global Greeter Network present local oral histories and meanings for free; CouchSurfing connects like-minded people to exchange food, shelter and conversation. This challenge to conventional tourism marketing is being embraced by some Destination Marketing Organisations, who are utilising social media and the knowledge of local people to present their city in new and authentic ways.

The question I seek to answer is “How does the depiction of the city as a tourist destination differ between local residents and Destination Marketing Organisations?” This taps into ideas of the image of the city: how is the city marketed as a tourist destination, and how are emotive discourses of uniqueness, authenticity, and local flavour tapped into? Do the activities offered, places advertised, and messages conveyed by Destination Marketing Organisations and the local residents seeking to raise the profile of “their” city, differ in any way? What might this mean for the tourist experience? I set out to answer these questions through a literature review, discourse analysis, and semi-structured interviews.

2. Research Question

The research question that I shall set out to investigate is:

- How does the depiction of the city as a tourist destination differ between local residents and Destination Marketing Organisations?

The idea of “destination image” has a long provenance in tourism studies, and this research will be tied closely to ideas of city image and city marketing: how are the attractions and culture of the city depicted by Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs), and how does this differ to what local promoters of the city are saying? How are official discourses shaping, or shaped by, what local residents are telling tourists? The differences that I am looking at will be inferred rather than explicit; discourse analysis will be used to look at the language employed, and how these connotations may shape the expectations of the tourist.

In order to answer this question, I will explore a number of sub-questions.

- What is driving the emergence of new online and offline interaction between locals and tourists?
- How are DMOs recognising and responding to this?
- How do the approaches of locals and DMOs differ? What sorts of attractions are being recommended, and what sort of language is being used to promote them?

I will begin to explore some of these ideas in Section 3, the literature review. In section 4 I outline my methodology and hypotheses based on the themes uncovered in the literature review. In section 5 I present my case studies and the results of my interviews with DMOs. In sections 6 and 7 I move onto analysis of how the approaches of DMOs and locals differ, through analysis of online and offline promotional material. Section 8 presents my summary and conclusions.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Defining tourism

Tourism is worth \$3 billion to the world economy every single day. In 2008, 922 million international arrivals were registered at tourist destinations, a figure that is growing by four per cent annually and is expected to reach 1.6 billion people by 2020 (UNCTAD, 2010:p21). This is one third of the human race. Nearly 40 per cent of international arrivals are into European countries. In the European Union, tourism directly generates more than five per cent of GDP and employs 9.7 million people (EC September 2013). There is no doubting the importance of tourism, particularly as many other sectors continue to decline due to the global recession.

City trips are a growing sector within the tourism industry. From 2009 to 2013 the volume of city trips has increased by 47 per cent, whilst trips to the countryside have declined by 10 per cent (ITB 2014). In Europe, where 80 per cent of the population is urbanised (EC 2000), encouraging urban tourism is a vital strategy for municipal and national governments to encourage investment and economic growth.

Yet behind the dry figures of airport arrivals and hotel occupancy rates lies a whole world of encounters, perceptions and narratives; a mythology based on a search for the authentically different "other". Even defining "the tourist" is notoriously difficult. According to UNTWO, tourism is the "activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside of their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes" (UNTWO 1994, in Crang 2009:763). Despite its comprehensiveness, this omits the question of cultural practice which sociologists such as Rojek and Urry (2003) place at the centre of their studies. For Urry and Larsen (2011), tourism is defined by its opposite: regulated and organised work. Acting as a tourist is enabled through developments in the econ-

omy and changing work and leisure practises, and is therefore one of the defining characteristics of being modern.

MacCannell (1999) wrote that the tourist was a sightseer in search of experience, motivated by a desire to find a reality and authenticity that was felt to be lacking in the discontinuities and fragmentation of modernity. Tourism is therefore based upon nostalgia for “other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles” (ibid, p3). Similarly, Urry and Larsen (2011) write that tourists are motivated by the desire to gaze upon sites that are separate from the routines of everyday experience. These studies seem to be based on an entirely Western figure, grappling with the uncertainties of their modern lifestyle. And whilst these theories seem particularly suited to tropical Pacific islands, what of the fastest growing type of holiday – the city break? Cities are based on the juxtapositions of modernity and tradition, and are the foundations of the modern condition that MacCannell believed tourists to be escaping.

Urban tourism is then something of a paradox, and the motivations that might take tourists there are explored in more detail in the next section. Unlike other often-cited categories of tourism, such as eco-tourism, sports tourism, or cultural tourism, urban tourism does not denote likely activities or motivators, but instead provides a spatial context. It is one amongst many social and economic forces operating in the urban environment, and is difficult to separate from other activities. Unlike an exotic beach or ethnic enclave, the distinction between local resident and urban tourist is blurred; neither makes exclusive use of any single urban feature, and there is no clear cut way of recording the division between the two groups. Does the attraction that the tourist is visiting just happen to be in an urban area, or is the city itself a holistic destination? Are all tourists in the city urban tourists?

3.2 Destination Marketing

The tourist industry is built upon representation. There can be no tourist without a destination; destinations can only be created through the structuring of a powerful and enticing narrative. Destinations are both physical realities and imaginary constructs: amalgams of tourism services and experiences, linked by geographical proximity and conceptualised as a coherent and singular whole by visitors. A place becomes a destination through the creation of a narrative and a discourse of sights to see (Morgan et al 2011, Urry and Larsen 2011). According to Urry and Larsen (2011), “Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is anticipation” (p4); this anticipation is constructed through the representation of the destination, creating a mythology of signs that the tourist must collect in order to validate their holiday. Tourism is the collection of these signs.

Cities, perceived through neoliberal discourse as coherent entities in competition with other cities, are easy to conceptualise as a singular destination. Tourism services are often in close proximity and linked by geographical and administrative boundaries. The perception of cities as singular destinations with certain attributes is actively aided by city marketing. As

Kavaratzis and Ashworth point out, city “boosterism” is a 19th Century concept, but today is taken to new extremes by discourses of neoliberalism and globalisation (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2005). With the advancement of neoliberalism as the dominant economic paradigm, urban government has become entrepreneurial instead of managerial (Harvey, 1989). Cities are run as corporations, defined by their capacity to compete and make profit. In order to make cities more attractive to human and economic capital, marketing has become a staple part of government activities, for regions as well as large cities. Presenting the city as a product renders it a coherent entity with which you can do business. Snazzy logos and taglines that complement the prevailing fashions are meant to capture and distil the essence of the city.

Within a destination, there is often a multiplicity of stakeholders attempting to attract visitors. With growing competition to attract tourists, city authorities have been looking for ways to coordinate their tourism offering and create a more coherent and streamlined visitor experience. Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) are bodies entrusted with ensuring this collaboration. There is no real blueprint for their function, but they are often public-private partnerships set up with the holistic goals of destination promotion and management. There are many advantages to collaboration between tourism stakeholders, with the ultimate aim of greater efficiency in resource allocation and marketing initiatives. Whilst there is no typical model, according to Fletcher et al (2013:133), in order to work effectively DMOs must be clearly identifiable; they must command support and recognition; have authority over decision making; and be innovative and flexible, which often requires a degree of independence.

3.3 Social Media and user interaction

The Internet has come to dominate the way that consumers plan their holidays. According to ITB World Travel Trends, the Internet now is now used as a booking channel by 65 per cent of the market – in mature markets, 70 per cent. According to Fletcher et al (2013), by 2016 there will be 3bn Internet users globally – almost half the world’s population. Within this share, social networks have an increasingly prominent role to play. Social networks reach 80 per cent of users in developing and developed economies alike. According to ITB, 95 per cent of Chinese, 84 per cent of Brazilians and two thirds of Europeans and Americans now use social media when planning holidays. Tourists now rely heavily on the internet to seek information about destinations. According to Fletcher et al (2013: 596), the Internet is now twice as important as travel agents as an information source. The Internet is involved in almost 85 per cent of holiday purchases in the UK in 2011; 53 per cent of UK consumers research and buy holidays online.

According to data from the ‘State of the American Traveller Survey’ (in Germann Molz, 2013: 3), “In 2011, more than 43 per cent of travellers surveyed reported that they consulted user-generated online content, up from 30 per cent in 2009. In 2009, only 8.5 per cent of respondents used social media and photo sharing sites while planning their trips. By 2011,

this number had risen to 25.8 per cent. That same year, significant numbers of respondents reported taking laptops with them on leisure trips, as well as using mobile devices to access travel or destination information online and to download destination-specific podcasts, locative tools and interactive guides.”

Social media are becoming increasingly important in destination marketing as a cost effective way to reach new audiences. Destination Marketing Organisations are able to use them as multimedia channels to engage and entertain diverse audiences. Videos, pictures, customer testimonials, and conversations between destination and consumer are options now available that were previously limited by traditional print media. In addition, consumers are now able to tell their side of the story and inform others of the quality of their experiences. This means that word of mouth advertising is becoming ever more important in the choices that consumers make, evidenced by the success of platforms such as Trip Advisor.

3.4 Changing consumption of tourism

MacCannell’s theory of tourism as a way to connect with a reality felt to be lacking in modernity was based on the structured forms of mass tourism in the post-war era. In the era of mass tourism (from 1945 to the 1990s, continuing to a lesser extent today) tourists would seek changes in the functional dimension of the built environment: they left behind Fordist forms of regulated, organised labour to experience a break from their routine (Gospodini 2001). This was the era of seaside resorts, bus tours, and package holidays; comfortable and safe environments were created to shepherd the tourist around an exotic location without the danger of being confronted by local reality. Work and leisure were more strictly separated, and so tourist activity took on a predictable pattern. Mass tourism was built upon an infrastructure of extensive roads and highways, large modern package hotels, and organised activity where participants could consume the exotic in a safe and insulated environment.

However, as Gospodini (2001) and others point out, the needs of the ‘postmodern’ tourist are very different. Gospodini characterises this as ‘fragmented and flexible’ tourism (p925), in line with post-industrial shifts in society. Tourists of the postmodern era are highly mobile and highly connected, whilst time-space compression has enabled tourists to reach destinations more quickly and more easily than ever before. Changing work patterns have blurred the boundaries between work and leisure, meaning their complete separation – as in mass tourism – is more problematic, particularly when people remain near permanently engaged with the online world. Freedom is now a key aspect of leisure: the freedom to dictate your own actions as well as freedom from pressures of routes and itineraries being imposed upon you. The trend now is towards flexibilisation of the tourist product, a reflection of the new post-industrial information society (Stamboulis and Skayannis, 2003). According to those authors, “alternative tourism” is gaining pace: perhaps their version of “postmodern tourism”, which they see as reflecting greater responsibility and sensitivity to the host community.

3.5 The Tourist Experience

Tourism has always sold a staged experience. MacCannell, in 1976, was one of the first to identify the tourist as a consumer of experience. He described the tourist as the model of the modern man [sic]: “For moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere: in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simpler lifestyles” (MacCannell, 1999/1976, p3). In an effort to attract visitors, destinations were staging authenticity: manufacturing and selling an experience. This experience was designed to present a version of ‘real life’. For MacCannell, the primary motivation of tourism was to seek an authenticity and experience that was lacking in your own life.

In 1999, Pine and Gilmore stated that the developed world was moving away from a service economy towards an experience-based economy: the companies with the best prospects were those offering unique, memorable and engaging experiences. Perhaps then the service economy is picking up on what the tourist industry has always known? Tourist destinations have always aimed to provide an experience, but Stamboulis and Skyannis assert that this experience is increasingly designed, intentionally produced, organised, foreseen, calculated, priced and charged for (2003, p38). Morgan et al (2009) write that with increasing choice of destination, tourists make decisions based on price regardless of the supplier – the implicit assumption is that service will be good. Quality and reliability are taken for granted. The experiential value of a destination comes to the fore: according to the authors, destinations need to make a transition from satisfying needs to fulfilling aspirations, desires and dreams. Consumption is a way to make a statement about one’s identity – consumers “choose particular tourism destinations that are congruent with, or which enhance, their actual or ideal self-concept” (ibid, p202). The tourist becomes an active participant in the tourist experience, rather than a passive consumer.

3.6. Authenticity

In a follow up piece to the Experience Economy, Pine in 2004 stated that as an experience economy matures, there is a shift towards authenticity: decisions on whether to buy were made depending on how “real” the product or service was perceived to be. In 2007, Gilmore and Pine further characterised these “new consumers” as individualistic, involved, independent, and well informed in their taste and behaviour. They transcended national boundaries, ages, ethnic groups and income. This might correspond to Florida’s “Creative Class”, but according to Pine and Gilmore, this desire for authenticity extended to *all* consumers (creative or not). This desire for authenticity was a reaction against a technologically mediated, commercialised and socially constructed reality.

Yeoman, Brass and McMahon-Beattie (2007, p1130) followed this up specifically referencing tourism: “The consumer in 2015 is better educated, more sophisticated, has travelled the world, is concerned about the environment in which he or she lives and wants a better quality of life. Combining these facts, we are led to the conclusion that they have a desire for

‘real’ experiences rather than something false.” According to these authors, there were ten trends that now shaped authentic tourism, worth reproducing here:

1. A global network: globalisation, fuelled by technology and travel, is creating new tastes and awareness.
2. Ethical consumption and volunteerism: consumers with greater spending power and better education are more concerned with social and environmental values.
3. The affluent consumer and the experience economy: luxury is now a mainstream phenomenon, with consumers searching for self-esteem and self-actualisation as their tangible needs have been met.
4. The educated consumer: higher education is much more important globally.
5. Trust in the past: the future is filled with uncertainty. Destinations rich in history and heritage are perceived to be authentic because history is an illustration of truth.
6. Individualism: diminishing role of social and mutual institutions, encouraging a decline in deference to authority and growth in self-reliance.
7. Multiculturalism: new media technologies and globalisation are raising awareness of new communities and connections. This provides a melting-pot from which people can draw their identity.
8. Resistance to marketing: big brands are increasingly being corralled and controlled due to health awareness. The increasing ubiquity of marketing also leads to information overload and scepticism.
9. Time pressures and authenticity: the portfolio of leisure activities has increased, but time hasn’t. Consumers seek things that offer value for money as well as experience.
10. Increased competition amongst tourism destinations: leads to new demands from consumers. Destinations must be innovative and creative.

But to take a step back: what is authenticity? This has been a key concern of tourism studies since the 1970s. “At the heart of these debates is a familiar, if contested, narrative that casts authenticity as an antidote to the alienation and disenchantment of modern social life and then proposes travel as a way of recapturing that authenticity, at least momentarily” (Germann Molz 2013 p112). Germann Molz writes that there are three types of authenticity that tourists seek:

- Objectivist – authenticity is something inherent in objects, performances, and cultural products. Tourism, with its penchant for commodification, can be a serious threat.
- Constructivist – authenticity is negotiated, situated and contingent and emerges in particular social contexts. Cultural products can become infused with new meanings over time.
- Existentialists – authenticity is in the tourists’ subjective experience. It only matters if something *feels* authentic. A feeling of connection is central.

Attempts to define authenticity tell us more about the questioner than the phenomenon itself. Yeoman et al (2007) may not risk a definition, but they seemingly know it when they see it: authenticity should be ethical, natural, honest, simple, beautiful, rooted and human. It should be founded on the ideas of community and sustainability, and be understandable and people-focused with a sense of the past. This woolly and plaintive list of “wants” tells us more about the anxieties and aspirations of modern life than about authenticity.

According to Knudsen and Waade (2010), authenticity is not a thing to possess but a state of mind: something that can be experienced and performed (related to Germaine Molz’s existentialist authenticity). Performative authenticity, as the authors dub it, is when sites, places and actions are authenticated by the traveller based on their understanding of the destination, their self-reflection and feelings regarding their surroundings. Knudsen and Waade describe three differing degrees of authenticity. A destination may have symbolic authenticity, depending on how well it meets the customer’s own ideas of what the destination is about; it may have iconic authenticity, depending on how well the event or object resembles or copies the real thing; and it may have indexical authenticity, when something is thought to be original or the real thing. The value of a product or place depends on the strength of the emotions it evokes.

3.7 The sharing economy

Technology has been reshaping tourism in other ways. The “sharing economy” is a phrase that has gained currency in recent years thanks to the development of Web 2.0, often referred to in business literature as peer-to-peer renting. Articles in *Forbes* and the *Economist* treat the sharing economy as something monetary, focusing on companies such as AirBnb and RelayRides. For Zervas, Proserpio and Byers (2014, p2) in the sharing economy “broad segments of the population can collaboratively make use of under-utilised inventory via fee-based sharing.” Consumers are able to rent goods at a lower cost or with a lower transactional overhead than buying or renting from a traditional supplier. However, Geron (2013) points out that AirBnb apartments are often not as cheap as equivalent hotels; consumers see some other, non-monetary value in sharing, which Geron believes is the personalised experience of renting a “real person’s” apartment.

Belk (2010, 2013) talks about the sharing economy in broader terms, encompassing both for-profit and not-for-profit organisations. For Belk, sharing involves “the act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use and/or the act and process of receiving or taking something from others for our use” (2013 p2). We may share for functional or altruistic reasons: because we want something in return, or simply because it feels good. “Sharing tends to be a communal act that links us to other people. It is not the only way in which we may connect with others, but it is a potentially powerful one that creates feelings of solidarity and bonding” (Belk 2010 p726). This extends beyond companies like AirBnb to organisations such as CouchSurfing, where “hosts” welcome “surfers” to stay with them in their residence for free.

This epitomises the solidarity and bonding described by Belk, and is theorised in some detail in a study by Germann Molz (2013, p96): “Thanks to new networking technologies, travellers are able to engage each other in radically new economies of exchange that shift hospitality out of the commercial arena of hostels and hotels and into the private realm of the host’s home.” She takes as her starting point Bauman’s ‘moral economy’, which produces a different sort of sociality from the market economy: one based on solidarity, compassion and mutual sympathy rather than distant, impersonal connections.

3.8 “Travel like a local”

Consumption is becoming increasingly dependent on the feeling it gives consumers: we like to feel a purchase is authentic and sustainable. Where we go on holiday and what we do when we get there is symptomatic of our lifestyle choices. An Airbnb apartment may be just as expensive as a hotel room, but it thrives as an organisation because it offers consumers the authenticity and uniqueness of staying in someone’s home, opposed to the perhaps generic and impersonal service offered in a branded hotel chain. To draw on German Molz (2013), it offers objectivist, constructivist and existentialist authenticity.

The phenomenon of “local travel” is as yet neglected in the literature and seemingly little understood outside of a few tourism organisations. ‘The Local Travel Movement’ is a coalition of tourism companies who believe in the values of “local travel”, and have started a website to raise awareness amongst organisations, experts and practitioners and promote the values for which they stand.

According to their website, “Local Travel connects independent and mindful travellers with local people. It is a better deal for everyone. For travellers it’s a chance to get under a place’s skin (and let it under theirs), while also making the most of their travel time and saving money by spending locally. For host communities, it is vital for enforcing the beneficial qualities of tourism, maximising a general awareness of the local culture and minimising ‘leakage’ from the local economy.”¹

According to the movement, this is a win-win situation. Independent and mindful travellers are connected with local people, and their spending targeted towards local businesses and attractions. For host communities, the beneficial aspects of tourism are enhanced, with awareness of local culture increasing and more money spent directly in the local community. “If you are mindful of the local people, you put yourself in the locals’ shoes and discover what they really think. If you are mindful of the local environment, you put yourself in the heart of it, feel its beauty and power, and do what you can to preserve it for the future. If you are mindful of the local culture, you put yourself in the local mindset and share in activi-

¹ <http://www.localtravelmovement.com/why-local-travel/>

ties and experiences as locals do. If you are mindful of the local economy, you put your money into local business and ensure that your tourism benefits the right people.”²

It is relatively easy to be a local traveller, and is perhaps as much a state of mind as set of actions. A local traveller should connect with local people before or during their trip; travel in a manner sensitive to the local environment; respect local heritage and culture; and spend their money locally. This sounds much like more traditional eco-tourism, familiar to the sustainable tourism movement and focused in developing countries. Yet a growing number of businesses and groups are tapping the zeitgeist and seeking to connect locals and tourists in Western urban destinations. This may be through recommending attractions (Use It, Spotted by Locals), conducting personalised tours (the Global Greeter Network), or offering accommodation (AirBnb, CouchSurfing); whilst some of these organisations are older than others, developments in the ways we connect and consume mean that they can reach and appeal to ever wider audiences.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to contextualise the emergence of Destination Marketing Organisations, positioning them as the outcome of city competition and the growing number of urban tourism actors. Tourism is a diverse and dynamic sector, and DMOs have to be constantly on the lookout for changing trends and preferences. With many city break tourists now desirous of individualised and unique experiences, and rejecting the mass-marketing of big organisations, DMOs may struggle to provide niche information that feels fresh and unusual. This helps to explain the modest growth in industries that encourage “travelling like a local”: they offer unique and personalised advice on what to do if you desire something more “authentic” than following a guide with an umbrella.

The internet has revolutionised the way we plan holidays, and have revolutionised the way that trips are marketed. This means that DMOs have the opportunity to use local knowledge to expand their offering, and successfully compete with (or complement) organisations that encourage tourists to “travel like a local”.

² <http://www.localtravelmovement.com/local-travel-values/>

4. Methodology

To return to my research question:

- How does the depiction of the city as a tourist destination differ between local residents and Destination Marketing Organisations?

The literature review of section 3 has provided a context for the growth in residents promoting their city as a tourist destination, and the demand for local information. This thesis will seek to examine how this promotion differs from that of the DMO: what is the added value in local information, and how might the image of the city created by resident tips and DMO differ?

Based upon the literature review I have conducted, I have made a number of hypotheses that seek to tease out the differences between information provided by locals and information provided by DMOs.

1. Due to their public function and all-encompassing remit, DMOs will offer diverse and comprehensive advice that seeks to cater to all types of tourist.
2. Locals will seek to justify their choices based on their local expertise – thus referencing their backgrounds as a “qualification”.
3. Locals will use language that taps into notions of authenticity and experience – in particular “hidden secrets”, “unique”, “not well known”.

4.1 Expert interviews

For the first section of my research – questioning why and how DMOs were integrating local opinion into their content – I used semi-structured expert interviews, contacting those in charge of Digital Media to discuss the “travel like a local” trend. I chose a semi-structured format in order to make the most of my interviewee’s expert status and compare views across destinations. It also allowed me to tailor my questions depending on their responses and expertise, in order to gain a more destination-specific view. Destination Marketing Organisations were asked about the strengths of social media; the impact of interaction with users; the problems, if any, with “traditional” destination marketing and how the approach of their campaign differed; and what they believed local points of view could offer to marketing. I also asked about the specific details of the campaigns involving locals. Interviews typically took 35 to 45 minutes.

Manchester, Birmingham and Antwerp were chosen as case studies particularly because they offered campaigns that used local knowledge.

- Visit Manchester runs “Locals Like”, using 34 video interviews to ask locals for their top five things to do
- Visit Antwerp runs “This is Antwerp”, a website, magazine and mobile app run by local young people and aimed at under-30s
- Visit Birmingham runs “Familiar Faces’ Favourite Places”, video interviews with 14 well known locals asking for their top things to do

I chose to interview Destination Marketing Organisations in part for ease of access: DMOs are easy to interact with, and often transparent about the way they operate. Whilst it would have been interesting to interview tourists on their perceptions of authenticity and local interaction, this was judged to be beyond the scope of the author due to time constraints and the international nature of the study. These results are presented in section 5.

4.3 Discourse Analysis

Discourse can be described as a “specific series of representations and practises through which meanings are produced, identities constituted, social relations established, and political and ethnical outcomes made more or less possible” (Campbell 2009). Discourse is both socially constitutive and socially conditioned – it creates reality and is structured by it. Studies of discourse have a long provenance in the humanities and social sciences, and tourism – with its emphasis on representations, meanings and identities of self and other – is a particularly obvious example. Tourism is a discursive practice, constituted through language and representation.

Tourist advertising is a “communicative act” that uses language to create and reinforce a discourse – in this case, about an urban area as a tourist attraction. As such, the promotional material created by DMOs can be analysed as a text, using established methodology of discourse analysis. The “mythology of sights to see”, outlined by Urry and Larsen (2011) as a driver of tourism, is created through the medium of the tourist guide. These guides shape tourist expectations long before they arrive at their destination, and therefore the representations of local life presented in those texts becomes the codified and authorised versions of local culture and history (Hallett and Kaplan-Weinger 2010).

Discourse analysis involves a wide array of methods and approaches, focusing on the structure and language of spoken or written text. Critical Discourse Analysis expands this analysis to take into account the social and political context of the text. For a dynamic, multi-layered and interactive website, with links within and without the text, discourse analysis must be particularly careful. With their combinations of words and images they require a multimodal approach.

This analysis will not take a formal approach to Critical Discourse Analysis and the commensurate methodologies; it will instead take a multi-pronged approach to analysing the discourses utilised by DMOs and locals. This will encompass approaches from semiotics and

linguistics as well as quantitative techniques to characterise the types of attractions advertised.

Analysis of websites offers many challenges for the researcher. Websites are constantly changing and highly interactive, making them a “moving target”. I chose July 31st 2014 as a cut-off date to analyse content; new content added after that date were not included in this study.

4.4 Structure of this research

In section 5, I question if and how Destination Marketing Organisations have recognised and responded to this trend in “travelling like a local”. This is done through semi-structured interviews.

My second objective is to look at whether these local voices present a different idea of the city to the more encompassing destination marketing view. Firstly, I have counted and categorised the attractions listed by the DMO; by the locals interviewed for the DMO campaign; and by locals operating independently with the organisation Spotted by Locals. I have looked at the spread of attractions, the differences in the types of recommended attractions, and used statistical techniques to test whether these differences can be judged significant. Secondly, I have transcribed and analysed the content of the DMO websites, the content of video interviews with locals (for Familiar Faces and Locals Like), the content of a print magazine (for This is Antwerp), and selected web articles from Spotted by Locals.

Spotted by Locals is one of the most popular local recommendation services on the web, with 1.8 million independent visits in 2012 (conference, 2013). Operated as a private company, Spotted by Locals launched in 2008. It aims to give a platform for local people to share reviews of their favourite places in their home town. The locals have to apply to the website and are selected if they are deemed to be suitable (the criteria are unclear).

Spotted by Locals operates in Antwerp and Manchester, and offers a comparable service to This is Antwerp and Locals Like. Reviews are impartial (so far as you can tell), written by residents of the city, and plotted on a map. The picture of the city supplied by Spotted by Locals therefore offered an interesting point of comparison.

- For Locals Like and This is Antwerp, locals were selected by the DMO. For Spotted by Locals, locals are self-selecting.
- Spotted by Locals and This is Antwerp are expressly meant to be impartial – locals only talk about their favourite spots. (For Locals Like and Familiar Faces, participants may advertise their own business or attraction).
- All platforms reviewed specific places that were plotted on a map, allowing for easy comparison.

A description of the case studies and analysis of the interviews is found in section 5. Section 6 presents the results of the critical discourse analysis.

5. Case studies

This section considers the role of Destination Marketing Organisations in promoting a local view of the city. I will first consider the roles and strategies of the Destination Marketing Organisations, before moving on to consider their recognition of the travel like a local trend.

5.1. Visit Manchester

Marketing Manchester is the destination marketing organisation for the Greater Manchester region, covering ten different boroughs. It is run as a public-private organisation, with an income supplied by businesses, the city government, and ERDF funding. It is charged with promoting the city nationally and internationally. Visit Manchester is the division charged with promoting and developing tourism. Manchester is one of the UK's most visited cities, with 4.1 million people visiting in 2012 (the next biggest draw, Edinburgh, saw 3.6 million visitors. Meanwhile, both were dwarfed by London's 27.6 million). Tourism is a large and growing part of the city's economy; tourism was worth £6.6 billion to the region's economy in 2012, a sharp increase from £5.8 billion in 2010. Manchester's growth rate in tourism volume and income has outstripped the England average (Visit Manchester, 2014 p5-9).

5.1.1 "Locals Like"

Visit Manchester has started to move away from what they considered the 'traditional' approach of Destination Marketing Organisations, beginning with the Visit Manchester website (visitmanchester.com), redeveloped in 2010. "The new website has taken a distinct and bold step away from the traditional tourist board approach and incorporates real time information from real people, delivering a genuine, honest interpretation of the city" (Visit Manchester 2013, p8). The Visitor Centre has also been redesigned to provide a more interactive experience, and feeds in user comments on social media directly via large screens. This "honest" picture of the city was stressed by the interviewee, who stated: "if you put a positive opinion on absolutely everything then people start to question you. ... I think that the too positive approach, perhaps meant that people start not to trust that, and there are so many alternative sources now available" (interview, 2014). The website now has up to two million visits per year, a large number compared to what the organisation see as their "competitor cities".

According to my interviewee, Mancunians were known to be proud of their city; local music has a particular attitude which stems from the people, and this is one of the appeals of visiting the city. However, previous visitors were believed to make just as valuable a contribution, since "Often locals might not experience things like tourists do". Individual bloggers, such as those who work with the travel website Spotted by Locals, were believed to be comfortable with large audiences and sometimes seeking to promote their own blog. In general, locals were thought to give "insider knowledge that you might not get in a weekend trip", but it was "also good to see it [Manchester] from another visitor's perspective." Tourists

may share similar limitations, preconceptions and expectations, which would be very different to a resident.

One of the key campaigns of this switch in attitude was Locals Like, begun in 2012. It is primarily a campaign on the Visit Manchester website, appearing prominently on the homepage with the tagline "See what the locals like". The page itself has the headline "Locals and celebrity friends of Manchester let us know their top 5 places to see and things to do in the region." Beneath are 34 thumbnail pictures of various people; clicking on one leads you to a YouTube video of their interview. Below the video are five large photos of what they had named as their things to do, with a summary of what they had said about it beneath the photo (figure 1). Each picture can be clicked on, leading you to more detailed information about the venue/attraction.

Locals were chosen that were from Manchester or "friends of the city"; particular emphasis was placed on interviewing people that visitors may interact with during their stay. Visit Manchester asked that the places recommended had longevity, giving the website content a long shelf-life. The "Locals Like" section is now the most popular page on the website, with Annie Lennox's recommendations being the most viewed (with 22,496 hits in 2013). The interviewee believed that the popularity of this content stemmed from its longevity and the "increase in people wanting to tap into local knowledge" and gain an "insider view".

The screenshot displays the Visit Manchester website interface. At the top, there is a navigation menu with options: HOME, WHAT TO DO, STAY, TRAVEL, BUSINESS, and MAP. A search bar and a 'SAVED' icon are also visible. On the left side, there is a 'Get the newsletter' section with a 'Sign up now' button, and a 'Manchester Visitor Information Centre' section with contact details: Piccadilly Plaza, Portland Street, Manchester, M1 4BT, +44 (0)871 222 8223. Below this is a 'Follow us on' section with links for TWITTER, FACEBOOK, BLOG, YOUTUBE, FOURSQUARE, PINTEREST, GOOGLE+, and INSTAGRAM. The main content area features a large video player with a red play button, titled 'Bonnie Yeung's Top 5'. Below the video, there is a 'VIEW ON MAP' button and a 'SHARE THIS PAGE' section with social media sharing options (Share, Tweet, Like). The 'Top 5' list includes: 1. China Town (A major cultural and community hub in the heart of Manchester. It's full of independent eateries and retailers.), 2. Food (Manchester has a massive variety of food on offer, especially from the independent restaurants. Favourites include Yang Sing, Salvi's and 63 Degrees.), 3. Music (Manchester has produced some of the greatest bands and artists, including Oasis, The Smiths and Joy Division, along with the Hallé Orchestra - one of the oldest orchestras in the), and 4. Architecture.

Figure 1: Example of a "Locals Like" interview

5.2 Antwerp Tourism and Convention

Antwerp Tourism and Conventions is a sub-department of Business and City Marketing, one of ten departments of Stad Antwerpen. They are therefore publicly funded, but work with private partners to deliver marketing and tourism projects. Antwerp saw 1.8 million overnight stays in 2012, making it Belgium's second most visited city after Brussels (6 million overnight stays) (Visit Antwerp, personal communication 2014).

5.2.1 This is Antwerp

"This is Antwerp" is a campaign run by Visit Antwerpen since 2012. This was developed in response to the importance played by young visitors to the city: 18-29 year olds account for 22 per cent of all visitors. They recognised a gap in tourism marketing for this age group, and made "local knowledge" central to the campaign. A mobile app, biannual magazine and website were launched, alongside a developing social media presence; the app has been downloaded 45,500 times up to March 2014, and the website gets 5,000 hits a month. It is funded by but run independently from Visit Antwerp.

The website itself declares that all content is "selected and approved by locals". There is a blog, agenda of events, maps, and videos: very content heavy and easy to navigate (figure 2). The website includes a page named "locals", with photos and interviews with young people ("locals" or "city trippers") about their background, lifestyle, and what they think of Antwerp.

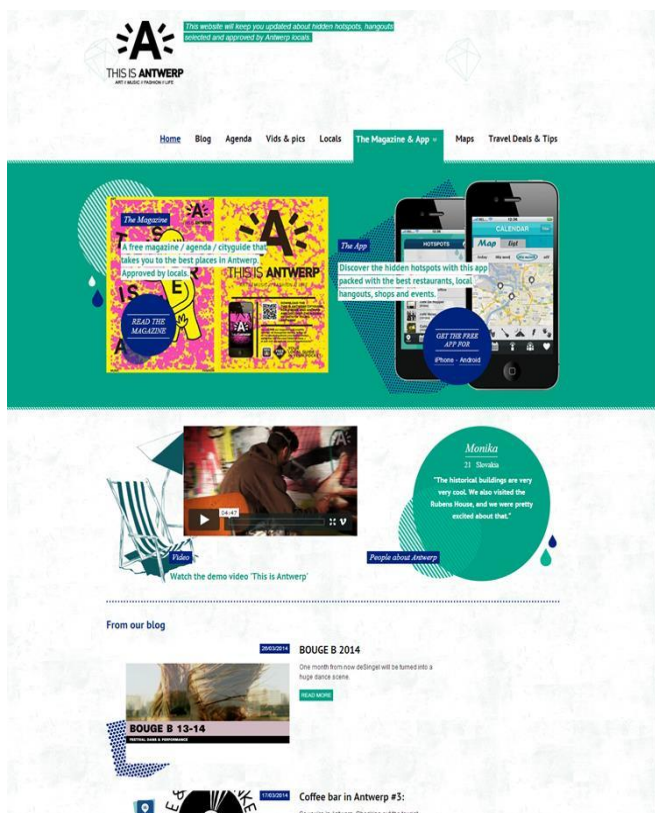


Figure 2: This is Antwerp homepage

As described by my interviewees: “What we think is valuable with those interviews is that if someone familiar is telling you something you’re going to believe it, or you going to be more likely to believe what they are saying.” The key to believability is the ability to relate: “you are more likely to believe or follow his or her opinion... It’s more credible.” Locals are often keen to be involved and have approached the organisation; otherwise, the team actively “head hunt” people who fit attributes that they are looking for: diversity, internationalism, and creativity. Local pride is also central to the campaign. “A lot of Antwerpians are really proud of their city, and if we ask them to share their treasures, they are more than willing to do it because they are so proud of their city. Anyone who has been living here for a few years will do the same thing. They want to show you the real Antwerp, what real Antwerpians do. ...we want to push the locals a little bit and make them a little bit more proud.”

There are fourteen “hotspot videos”, which in the words of my interviewees, are places “where the locals are hanging out... These places aren’t found in touristic brochures. They are normally found just behind the tourist places, where the real – you know, where every local actually goes. It’s that feeling we want to share with everybody.” They stated: “What we really want to show is a creative very lively city that is known for its dynamics and creativity”, illustrating the core aims of This is Antwerp.

5.3 Marketing Birmingham

Marketing Birmingham is a public-private partnership with interests from both the city council and private businesses. It is funded through Birmingham City Council, the European Regional Development Fund, and rates paid by 400 local businesses. It is split into three groupings: Visit, Meet and Business, with Visit operating the tourist activities of the company. According to the Visit Birmingham website³, Birmingham attracts 35.5 million visitors a year – a number dwarfing that cited by Visit Manchester, and highlighting the difficulties in counting visitor numbers and the disparities that can arise between different agencies. According to Visit Britain⁴, since 2008 Birmingham has been the fourth most visited city in the UK (after London, Edinburgh and Manchester) and in 2013 had 941,000 overseas visitors.

My interviewee acknowledged that Visit Birmingham’s social media perhaps had a lower profile than other UK cities, but that the role of digital media has been increasingly rapidly in importance. There is now a budget set aside for digital promotion, and the role that the interviewee occupied – head of digital communications – was only created six months before. The websites for Visit, Meet and Business were all redesigned within the last two years. “We’re concentrating on quality of images, tone of voice, making sure the content isn’t too wordy; it’s very snappy and easy to digest, making sure things are easy to find. Maybe before it was used like a library, you just put information on there; but now you need to make

³ <http://www.marketingbirmingham.com/visit-birmingham/>

⁴ <http://www.visitbritain.org/insightsandstatistics/inboundvisitorstatistics/regions/towns.aspx>

sure people can find the information they are looking for very fast, otherwise they will go somewhere else to look for it.”

At the time of my interview (March 2014) Birmingham did not run campaigns specifically involving locals, but my interviewee recognised the importance that “personal” knowledge has. Tripadvisor has designated two “local experts” on Birmingham, a title given to users who make many helpful comments about a single destination on travel forums. Marketing Birmingham keeps a close eye on questions about Birmingham that come up on Tripadvisor, but the local experts “are doing our job without having to... The work that they’re doing is really good... it’s really nice to have people out there with the same passion for the city that we have.”

For their social media channels, the interviewee placed particular importance on positive comments from users:

“I always think, sometimes a destination marketing organisation is paid to say what they have to say, paid to promote Birmingham. I’m always conscious of the fact – even though I’m born and bred in Birmingham, and I do love Birmingham, I think not many people know that and at the end of the day I’m paid to be here. I am conscious of that and I think having other people share their natural comments... [is] very powerful. To show that it’s not just me being paid to shout about Birmingham, other people do love Birmingham and it is a great city to come to. I’m always trying to share real-time, local, positive comments, photos. In campaigns I’m always trying to run certain competitions, where it’s share your favourite memory of Birmingham, favourite place of Birmingham, things like that. And we do a lot of interactive tweets for what’s your favourite restaurant, where are you heading for Sunday lunch today. So it’s not just us saying “go here for Sunday lunch”, because we’ve been told to tweet that. It’s very much, what are your favourite places? And having that content on there enables people to have a look. It’s good, because sometimes they mention things that we don’t know. ...trying to get that natural organic content that isn’t influenced by us is really important.”

5.3.1 Familiar Faces

At the time of the interview, Visit Birmingham was running a campaign to turn over their Twitter account to an employee every Saturday, calling it the “Saturday takeover”. “They decide where they want to go, and they take you to little hidden restaurants and coffee shops and things like that.” The initiative was proving very popular: “People are tweeting us and saying they really look forward to the Saturday takeover. And it’s really interesting.”

However, it was clear that this would be kept within the Visit Birmingham team: “A lot of people within our company... are from Birmingham, and I think at the end of the day we’re just normal people, we’re only like the same people you’d find out in Birmingham.” The interviewee felt it was important to give Visit Birmingham a face: “I think if you are a faceless

organisation you're not trusted – you're just an organisation. So one of the things we're working on at the moment is trying not to be a faceless organisation, to put a face on us."

Since the interview, in June 2014 a new video campaign has been launched: "Familiar faces' favourite places", a campaign using fourteen "familiar" local faces that includes comedians, chefs, TV presenters and sports stars (Figure 3). The page appears under the "What to do" section of the Visit Birmingham website. According to my interviewee, this new campaign started because: "People tend to trust other people more than just a standard website therefore we are trying to show people how great Birmingham is through faces that they already trust" (personal communication, 2014). It is organised in a similar way to the Manchester campaign, with a video followed by links to each of the attractions they recommended.

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We've been out and about pointing our film camera in the direction of some familiar faces. Take a look at where the more famous residents of Birmingham like to go in the city... You never know, you may even see them there! [#BhamFaces](#)


Lucy Kite
ITV Presenter


Jenny
Cadbury World Chocolatier


Laura Mvula
Singer








Figure 3: Familiar Faces' Favourite Places homepage

5.4 Comparison

This table compares the comments of the three Destination Marketing Organisations regarding problems with “traditional” destination marketing and the benefits (and problems) of a more personalised, local approach.

	Antwerp	Manchester	Birmingham
<i>Problems with traditional marketing</i>	Implied rather than stated directly: official info is more one-size-fits-all and less tailored. “This is a strength of This is Antwerp, people don’t really know that the tourism office is in fact the one that provides and organises the campaigns.”	“Shiny polished view”; “very polished and very positive”; “if you give a positive opinion on absolutely everything then people start to question you”; “there are so many alternative sources now available”	“Sometimes a destination marketing organisation is paid to say what they have to say... at the end of the day I’m paid to be here.” “If you are a faceless organisation you’re not trusted – you’re just an organisation.”
<i>Benefits of social media</i>		“Flexibility”	“You can ask questions... real time information”. “It gives people the opportunity to talk to us directly”; “engagement [with our tourist channels] has grown”
<i>Benefits of local information</i>	“They will guide you to the hidden treasures or places where not a lot of tourists go. And a lot of people are looking for places like that.” If you share interests with locals “It’s more credible.” “They live here, they are interested in the same things.” “People are very proud of their city”. “They want to show you the real Antwerp, what real Antwerpians do”. “if someone familiar is telling you something you’re going to believe it”. “it’s not the classic Antwerp that we want to show, but the real Antwerp... We are looking for people who are looking for value and the real thing.”	“It’s a very proud city... they’re a proud set”. But opinions of past tourists are just as important – need to hear from “friends of the city”. Locals might give you “insider knowledge that you might not get in a weekend trip”. “It’s not us saying it, it’s someone else saying it”. “People like to share their information”	Tripadvisor experts: “They are doing our job without having to.” “it’s really nice to have people out there with the same passion for the city that we have.” People commenting on website: “sometimes they say things we don’t know”. “it’s not just me being paid to shout about Birmingham, other people do love Birmingham and it is a great city to come to.” “People do trust organic content, because it’s very truthful”. Can form a basis for making a decision – trust isn’t automatic, just something to bear in mind. “it’s just getting other people’s opinions and seeing Birmingham” “it’s all about giving us a face, allowing people to get under the organisation’s skin, and allowing them to understand who we are, we do really love Birmingham”
<i>Shortcomings of local information?</i>	“it is always a challenge to find locals who are diverse”	“It’s also good to see it from another visitor’s perspective”; “tourists have certain behaviours that locals don’t”; “Often locals might not experience things like tourists do in the same way”.	“I don’t think people will see a tweet from someone and think they’ll trust it... People will look at it, but look at others as well.” “I’ve seen a lot of companies make big mistakes with social media because they allow people too much access with it... You’ve got to be mindful and careful all the time.”

<i>Who does local information appeal to?</i>	"Most of the time we are thinking about a creative person that is looking for value" – "more of a feeling than an exact science". "Young in spirit!"	"if you don't really know what you're doing when you're coming to Manchester they might think, oh let's see what the locals are doing"	
<i>Who are the locals?</i>	"We work together with 15-20 young locals. The locals have changed already; two years ago, other people were involved, but I think it's a good thing that we have been working with different and new people once in a while." "People approach us, they want to be part of the local team". Work with Erasmus and CouchSurfing. "Some of them we more or less head hunt."	"people that are either from Manchester or friends of the city or they might be well known", "people that visitors might interact with on a visit"; "a lot of them are from Manchester and really proud, but also recognisable"	People from the visit team; "at the end of the day we're just normal people, we're only like the same people you'd find out in Birmingham. We all have different likes". "People tend to trust other people more than just a standard website therefore we are trying to show people how great Birmingham is through faces that they already trust"
<i>Success?</i>	"It's a big success", "everyone is very enthusiastic and tells us that this is the way to work. Certainly for this group of people, young people, that is the way they think and act. I think we are on the right track."	Ongoing appeal; some videos are the most viewed pages on the website. Still gets the traffic	"People are tweeting us and saying they really look forward to the Saturday takeover." "I'd like it to be a long term thing"

It is clear that the value of local information lies in its "authenticity": for Manchester, it was about pointing out the hidden spots of the city as well as the well-known attractions, which was believed to appeal to the time-pressed holiday planner. For Birmingham, trust of marketing organisations was perceived to be a challenge – the interviewee wanted to give a face to the people working behind the scenes, to show that they were locals passionate about their city and not just paid to be there. Since the interview, Visit Birmingham has started a similar campaign involving videos where well-known locals give their recommendations – these are faces that tourists "already trust" (although it is debatable how many potential tourists outside of the West Midlands or UK would recognise the interviewees). For Antwerp, the local aspect was key to the appeal: it helped to portray the city as friendly, diverse, creative, and alternative. Here, locals were able to point travellers away from tourist hotspots and towards the "real" city. The appeal of this information was believed to rest with young, creative, budget travellers – those looking for alternative, authentic travel experiences rather than simple tourism.

6. Critical discourse analysis

6.1 Comparing the number, spread and types of attractions

Visit Manchester, Visit Antwerp and Visit Birmingham all recognised the importance of using local knowledge in their campaigns. In this section, I consider the number, categories and locations of the attractions described on these different platforms.

After some initial investigation of the attractions listed by the three DMOs, I designed a set of seven categories to separate out different types of attractions. Each of my case studies had their own pre-defined set of categories (Visit Manchester, for example, used “shopping”, “nightlife”, “food and drink”, and “attractions”); however, I wanted to further unpack these and ensure that my analyses were comparable by predetermining my own set of categories. The seven categories I used were:

- Food and drink venues, including bars, restaurants, cafes, pubs and clubs
- Historic and architectural attractions, including buildings, museums, galleries, places of worship and historic sites
- Shops and shopping centres
- Nature, including parks, gardens and open space
- Performance venues, such as theatres, concert halls and cinemas
- Areas and tours, meaning general areas of the city or routes that connected different elements
- Sports and leisure, covering sports infrastructure, activity centres and traditional attractions such as theme parks and zoos

This separated out attractions into a manageable number of categories, whilst grouping attractions together into what were felt to be logical clusters. I felt that it was important to separate places of consumption (food, drink and shopping) from more "conventional" tourist attractions, such as historic/architectural and sports and leisure infrastructure. Food, drink and shopping venues are infrastructure that will be used frequently by locals, whilst historic and architectural attractions will be used more exclusively by visitors – although, as noted in the literature review (section 3.1), few of the attractions will be used exclusively by visitors or locals. I felt that these seven categories gave different “flavours” of a city, and depending on the quantity recommended, could give very different pictures of the city (for instance, if there was a high proportion of recommendations for nature, it might give an overall impression of a green and healthy city, or a high proportion of historic and architectural attractions would give an image of a beautiful and historic city.)

However, I did run into some problems with these categories, stemming from the fact that some attractions aren't easy to pigeonhole. For instance, canals could be recommended as a "natural" feature, as a route or area to explore, or as an historic attraction. Similarly, there could be a crossover between (for instance) a gallery that was also a shop, or a cafe that also screened films. In these circumstances, I would list the attraction according to what I felt the “emphasis” was. Of course, this was not an exact science and remains an area of weakness in this study.

6.1.1 Manchester

The Visit Manchester website has a map feature with over 1,000 points of interest listed over an area of 2,135km². These are categorised into seven areas: what's on, hotels, shopping, food and drink, attractions, nightlife and summer. For the purposes of comparison, I

discounted the “what’s on” and “summer” categories, since these are temporary and changeable. I also disregarded hotels, since these are unlikely to be recommended by locals. I then listed the individual venues and attractions and colour-coded them by their function according to the seven categories listed in section 6.1.

I noted 964 attractions in total from the Visit Manchester website. 170 recommendations were made on Locals Like. As a further point of comparison, I also listed and categorised the attractions advertised on Spotted by Locals, which were 117 points listed mainly around Manchester and Salford city centres covering an area of 40.7km².

	Visit Manchester	Locals Like	Spotted by Locals
Food/drink venues	490	54	78
Historic/architectural	102	35	14
Shops	195	16	11
Nature	85	10	2
Performance	19	17	2
Areas/tours	12	23	10
Sport/leisure	61	15	0
Total	964	170	117

Figure 4: Table to show numbers of attractions in each category

It can be seen from figure 5 that there is a far from equal distribution in the types of attractions covered. Food and drink venues are the most represented in all three platforms. Spotted by Locals has the highest percentage of food and drink recommendations, at 66.6 per cent - two thirds of their total recommendations. There were no recommendations of sporting or leisure attractions. For Visit Manchester, most recommendations – 50.7 per cent – were for food and drink venues. 20.2 per cent were for shops, and 10.6 per cent were for historic and architectural attractions. Locals Like appears to be the most 'equally' distributed, with proportions not deviating too significantly from what would be an equal distribution of 14.2 per cent. Food and drink venues were still the most recommended, but only at 31.8 per cent of the total. The locals of Locals Like were more likely to recommend areas and tours, and performance venues.

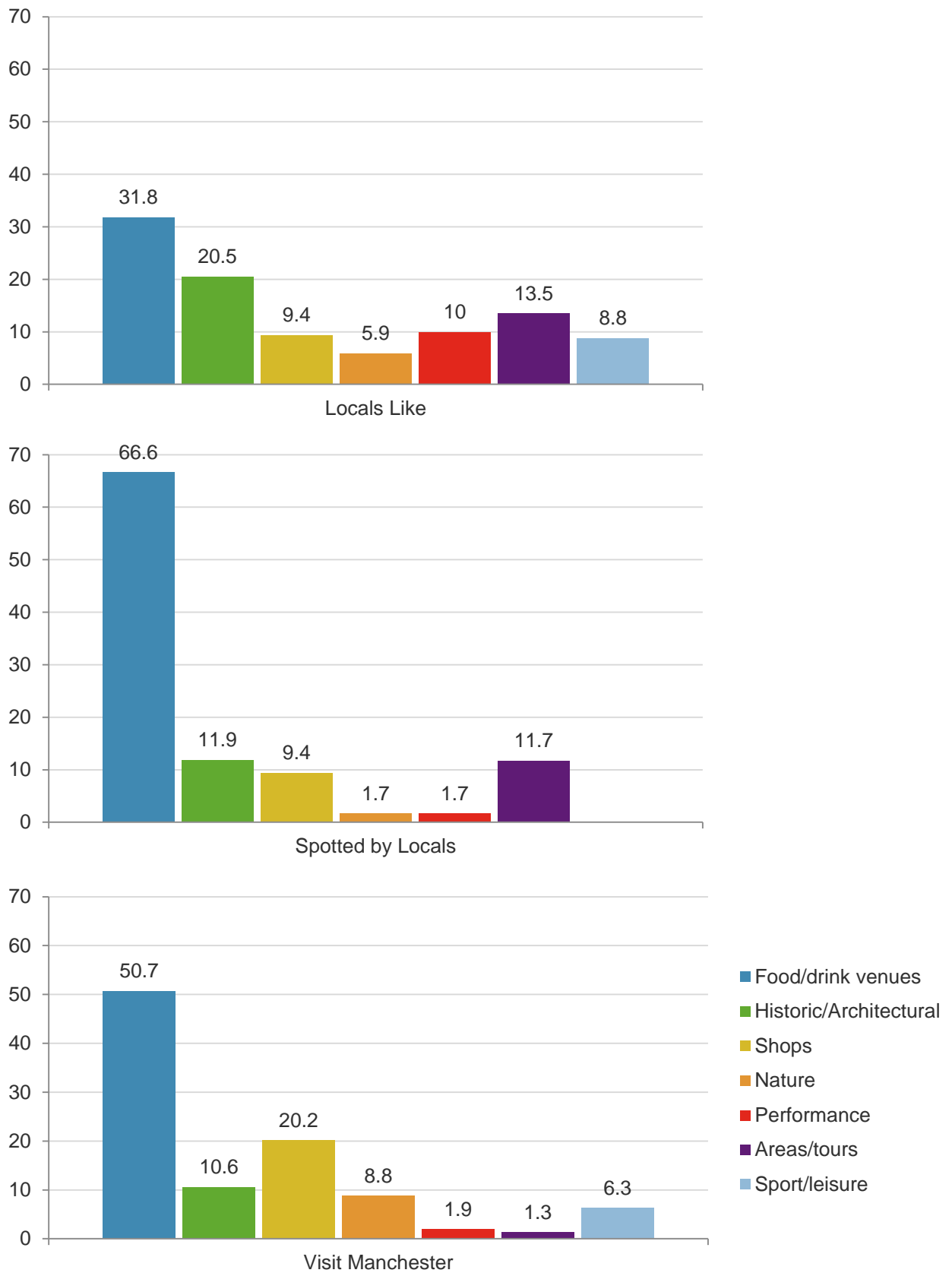


Figure 5: Graphs to compare the percentages of attractions in each category

In order to test whether these differences in the numbers of attractions in each category recommended by Spotted by Locals and Visit Manchester were significant, I performed a two proportion Z test, which determines whether two populations differ significantly on some single characteristic. Taking the null hypothesis as my starting point, I calculated whether the differences in absolute numbers of recommendations for each category were significant. I took the significance level as 0.05. My hypothesis was two-tailed.

The results are shown in figure 6.

	Spotted by locals		Visit Manchester		Result
Food/drink	78 / 117	66.6%	490 / 964	50.7%	Significant The Z-Score is 3.2395. The p-value is 0.0012.
Historic/architectural	14 / 117	11.9%	102 / 964	10.6%	Not significant The Z-Score is 0.4571. The p-value is 0.64552.
Shops	11 / 117	9.4%	195 / 964	20.2%	Significant The Z-Score is -2.8158. The p-value is 0.0048.
Nature	2 / 117	1.7%	85 / 964	8.8%	Significant The Z-Score is -2.669. The p-value is 0.00758.
Performance	2 / 117	1.7%	19 / 964	1.9%	Not significant The Z-Score is -0.1936. The p-value is 0.8493.
Areas/tours	10 / 117	11.7%	12 / 964	1.3%	Significant The Z-Score is 5.2825. The p-value is 0.
Sports/leisure	0 / 117	0%	61 / 964	6.3%	Significant The Z-Score is -2.8011. The p-value is 0.00512.

Figure 6: Z test scores for Spotted by Locals and Visit Manchester

For the majority of categories, the differences in attractions recommended by the DMO and by Spotted by Locals were statistically significant. This shows that the spotters were more likely to recommend food and drink venues, and areas and tours; and were less likely to recommend shops, nature, and sports and leisure.

Since Visit Manchester runs as a public-private partnership and relies on business rates and tax payers for funding, it will probably feel the need to be impartial, and thus advertise all businesses in the city without bias or preference to particular premises. Visit Manchester recommended 685 shops, restaurants, bars and cafes in total. The significantly high proportion of food and drink venues that Spotted by Locals recommended may therefore be an attempt to limit the uncertainty for tourists when faced with such a bewildering array of possibilities.

For sports and leisure, as we see in section 6.2, some of Manchester's most well-known attractions are the city's two football stadia. It may be that the spotters were consciously avoiding mentioning them, since potential tourists are likely to already know of their existence.

For areas and tours, the two platforms recommended a similar number, but as a proportion this was much more significant for Spotted by Locals. This could be because locals are more likely to endow characteristics to certain areas, taking a creative license with their imaginative geography of the city. They may also seek to simplify the complex geography of Manchester in discussing the imaginary boundaries between different districts.

In order to test whether the city residents of Locals Like and Spotted by Locals might have similar interests, I ran the two proportion Z test as before. The results are presented in figure 7.

	Spotted by Locals		Locals Like		Results
Bars/restaurants	78 / 117	66.6%	54 / 170	31.8%	Significant The Z-Score is 5.8298. The p-value is 0.
Historic	14 / 117	11.9%	35 / 170	20.5%	Not significant The Z-Score is -1.9077. The p-value is 0.05614.
Shops	11 / 117	9.4%	16 / 170	9.4%	Not significant The Z-Score is -0.0029. The p-value is 1.
Nature	2 / 117	1.7%	10 / 170	5.9%	Not significant The Z-Score is -1.7356. The p-value is 0.08186.
Performance	2 / 117	1.7%	17 / 170	10%	Significant The Z-Score is -2.7759. The p-value is 0.00544.
Areas	10 / 117	11.7%	23 / 170	13.5%	Not significant The Z-Score is -1.3002. The p-value is 0.1936.
Sports	0 / 117	0%	15 / 170	8.8%	Significant The Z-Score is -3.3004. The p-value is 0.00096.

Figure 7: Z test values for Spotted by Locals and Locals Like

This shows that there is no significant difference in the proportions of shops, historic and architectural attractions, or areas and tours listed by either set of local people. This may illustrate that for these attractions, the priorities and interests of the locals are broadly similar. However, there were significant differences in food and drink venues, performance venues, and sports and leisure attractions.

This illustrates that the two sets of local residents do not follow the same criteria for all types of attractions. The emphasis of Spotted by Locals on food and drink is not replicated in Locals Like. In addition, four of the interviewees on Locals Like were athletes or people who worked at sports/leisure venues. It may also illustrate that the locals of Locals Like were more likely to recommend “well-known” attractions, as seen in the next section with the large number of recommendations for Old Trafford football ground. The locals of Locals Like were also more likely to recommend theatres and cinemas; it is hard to speculate why this might be.

6.1.2 Differences in types and locations of attractions: Antwerp

Visit Antwerp does offer recommendations for different attractions, but finding them requires quite a lot of negotiation of several different pages. The “to do” page groups attractions under seven categories:

- “Antwerp city card”: information on the purchase and use of a tourism card
- “Shopping”: offers a page on designers, a list of markets, shopping zones (characterising areas of the city depending on the goods offered) and a list of shopping centres. There is also a page of useful information for opening times.
- “Attractions”: these are more conventional visitor attractions and have no clear links between or rationale behind them. These are five attractions, and links to tours and petting farms.
- “Sights” are more conventional, with pages for museums, architecture and heritage, a green city, religious buildings, statues and street art, and beauty spots. Each of these pages has lists of attractions that will be explored in more detail below.
- “Highlights” covers must-sees, the city trip planner platform (provided by an external agency), and 48 hours in Antwerp.
- “Exploring the city” looks at transport and tours
- “Outside of the city” looks at the Antwerp region and the rest of Flanders, with descriptions of the regions rather than specific attractions.

Based on the listings of specific attractions within each of these sub-sections of the website, I was able to list and categorise them. One immediately noticeable difference between Visit Antwerp and my other case studies was that there were no easily viewable lists of recommended food and drink venues – those that are listed were likely to be food markets or well-known bars. I found 88 different attractions (figure 8).

This is Antwerp, Visit Antwerp’s local recommendation platform, does not offer a map of attractions on their website, but the monthly magazine and the mobile application both offer mapping services with lists of attractions. Since the magazine only covers a small subset of attractions in each issue, I reviewed the attractions listed on the mobile application. These were listed under the categories “see”, “shop”, “eat and drink”, “go out”, “sleep”, “to

do/hang out”, “Wi-Fi”, “night shops”, and “ATM”. I discounted sleep, Wi-Fi, night shops and ATM and listed 500 different points of interest over an area of 27.6km².

Spotted by Locals has a page on Antwerp with 114 attractions listed over an area of 39.3km². After listing the three sets of attractions, I categorised them according to my seven criteria.

	Visit Antwerp	This is Antwerp	Spotted by Locals
Food/drink	8	308	50
History/architecture	40	33	14
Shops	8	116	16
Performance venues	15	12	8
Nature	6	8	6
Sports/leisure	4	8	4
Areas/tours	16	15	7
Total	88	500	114

Figure 8: Attractions for Antwerp platforms

The main DMO visitor website offered a much less comprehensive view of the attractions than Visit Manchester. The proportion of historic and architectural attractions was very high (45 per cent), whilst compared to other recommendation platforms the number of food and drink venues was very low (9 per cent). This is Antwerp offered the most comprehensive listings service, but the majority of these were food and drink (61.6 per cent). In comparison Spotted by Locals seemed slightly more evenly distributed. Spotters were more likely to recommend areas and tours, whilst This is Antwerp was more likely to recommend food and drink venues, and shops. Visit Antwerp was more likely to recommend historic and architectural attractions, performance venues, nature and sport and leisure.

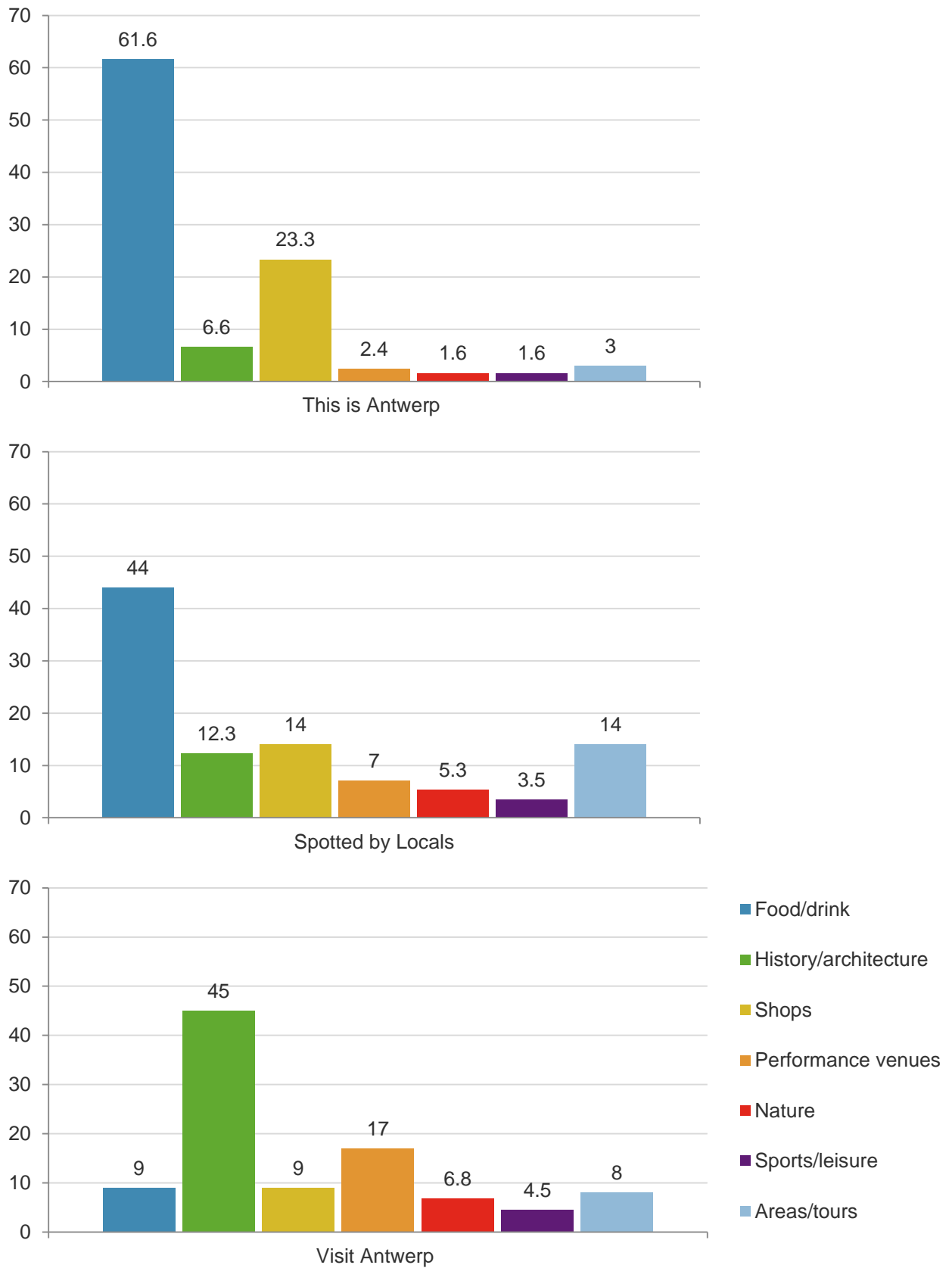


Figure 9: Graphs to show percentages of attractions in each category for Antwerp platforms

To test whether the differences in the recommendations of Visit Antwerp and Spotted by Locals were significant, I performed a two proportion Z test.

	Spotted by Locals		Visit Antwerp		Significance
Food/drink	50 / 114	44%	8 / 88	9%	Significant The Z-Score is 5.4158. The p-value is 0.
History/architecture	14 / 114	12.3%	40 / 88	45%	Significant The Z-Score is -5.2825. The p-value is 0.
Shops	16 / 114	14%	8 / 88	9%	Not significant The Z-Score is 1.0768. The p-value is 0.28014.
Performance venues	8 / 114	7%	15 / 88	17%	Significant The Z-Score is -2.2248. The p-value is 0.02642.
Nature	6 / 114	5.3%	6 / 88	6.8%	Not significant The Z-Score is -0.4636. The p-value is 0.64552.
Sports/leisure	4 / 114	3.5%	4 / 88	4.5%	Not significant The Z-Score is -0.3746. The p-value is 0.71138.
Areas/tours	16 / 114	14%	7 / 88	8%	Not significant The Z-Score is 1.349. The p-value is 0.17702.

Figure 10: Z test scores for Spotted by Locals and Visit Antwerp

Figure 10 shows that the differences in the categories of attractions recommended were generally not significant: the interests of the DMO and of Spotted by Locals are generally similar. However, spotters are significantly more likely to recommend food and drink venues; as in Manchester, this is probably an attempt to limit the large amount of choice available to tourists. It may be that Visit Antwerp views an exhaustive listing of all eating and drinking establishments to be impractical and/or unnecessary.

However, Visit Antwerp was significantly more likely to make recommendations for historic and architectural attractions. Since this was also the largest category of recommendations, it illustrates that the DMO may view this as their primary purpose: coordinating the offer of the multiple museums and historic buildings of Antwerp. Visit Antwerp was also significantly more likely to recommend performance venues, perhaps in order to provide (or be seen to provide) unbiased and impartial support to all venues.

In order to test whether the locals of Spotted by Locals and This is Antwerp have the same interests, I performed the two proportion Z test for their recommendations.

	Spotted by locals		This is Antwerp		
Food/drink	50 / 114	44%	308 / 500	61.6%	Significant The Z-Score is -3.4667. The p-value is 0.00052.
History/architecture	14 / 114	12.3%	33 / 500	6.6%	Significant The Z-Score is 2.0587. The p-value is 0.0394.
Shops	16 / 114	14%	116 / 500	23.3%	Significant The Z-Score is -2.1495. The p-value is 0.03156.
Performance venues	8 / 114	7%	12 / 500	2.4%	Significant The Z-Score is 2.5063. The p-value is 0.01208.
Nature	6 / 114	5.3%	8 / 500	1.6%	Significant The Z-Score is 2.3645. The p-value is 0.01828.
Sports/leisure	4 / 114	3.5%	8 / 500	1.6%	Not significant The Z-Score is 1.3286. The p-value is 0.18352.
Areas/tours	16 / 114	14%	15 / 500	3%	Significant The Z-Score is 4.856. The p-value is 0.

Figure 11: Z test scores for Spotted by Locals and This is Antwerp

The differences in the categories of attractions recommended were generally significant – meaning that, perhaps surprisingly, the two sets of recommendations from local residents made significantly different choices in what to recommend.

This is Antwerp was significantly more likely to recommend food and drink venues and shops, whilst it was significantly less likely to recommend history and architecture, performance venues, nature, and areas and tours. The only category where there was no significant difference in opinion was for sports and leisure.

It is notable that This is Antwerp is run and financed by Visit Antwerp, and offers a much more comprehensive set of recommendations than the Visit Antwerp website. It is therefore questionable whether all of these attractions are actually recommended by locals; it is more probable that the mobile application of This is Antwerp seeks to be exhaustive and cover all areas that could be of use to a tourist whilst in the destination. The dominance of shops, food and drink therefore reflects the dominance of those businesses in the city – This is Antwerp is trying to assume the DMO responsibilities in offering an impartial and comprehensive guide to all eating, drinking and shopping establishments. Due to their sheer number, all other attractions are recommended relatively infrequently.

The purpose of the mobile application is to provide an in-destination guide to the facilities available locally (including Wi-Fi, ATMs and night shops); a comprehensive guide that covers all areas of the city may therefore be believed to be more useful than a partial one that only makes a few recommendations.

6.1.3 Differences in types and locations of attractions: Birmingham

Visit Birmingham does offer a mapping service, but the number of attractions listed runs to 2,160 different 'places' (not grouped by type, but excluding accommodation and events). These are scattered over the entire West Midlands region, an area of 13,000km². It was therefore considered infeasible to transcribe and categorise these fully.

Birmingham does not have its own Spotted by Locals page, and no other "local recommendations" organisations were found. The 14 local personalities of the "familiar faces" campaign made 82 recommendations in total. These were found to be very concentrated in Birmingham city centre, but including the outliers were spread over 524km².

6.1.4 Differences between Locals Like, This is Antwerp and Familiar Faces

Although I had no other comparison for the Birmingham attractions of Familiar Faces, I decided to compare the attractions recommended by Locals Like, This is Antwerp, and Familiar Faces. These are all campaigns where DMOs select and interview "locals" about what they liked to do, and so comparing the proportions of attractions could demonstrate whether locals in each city had similar interests and priorities.

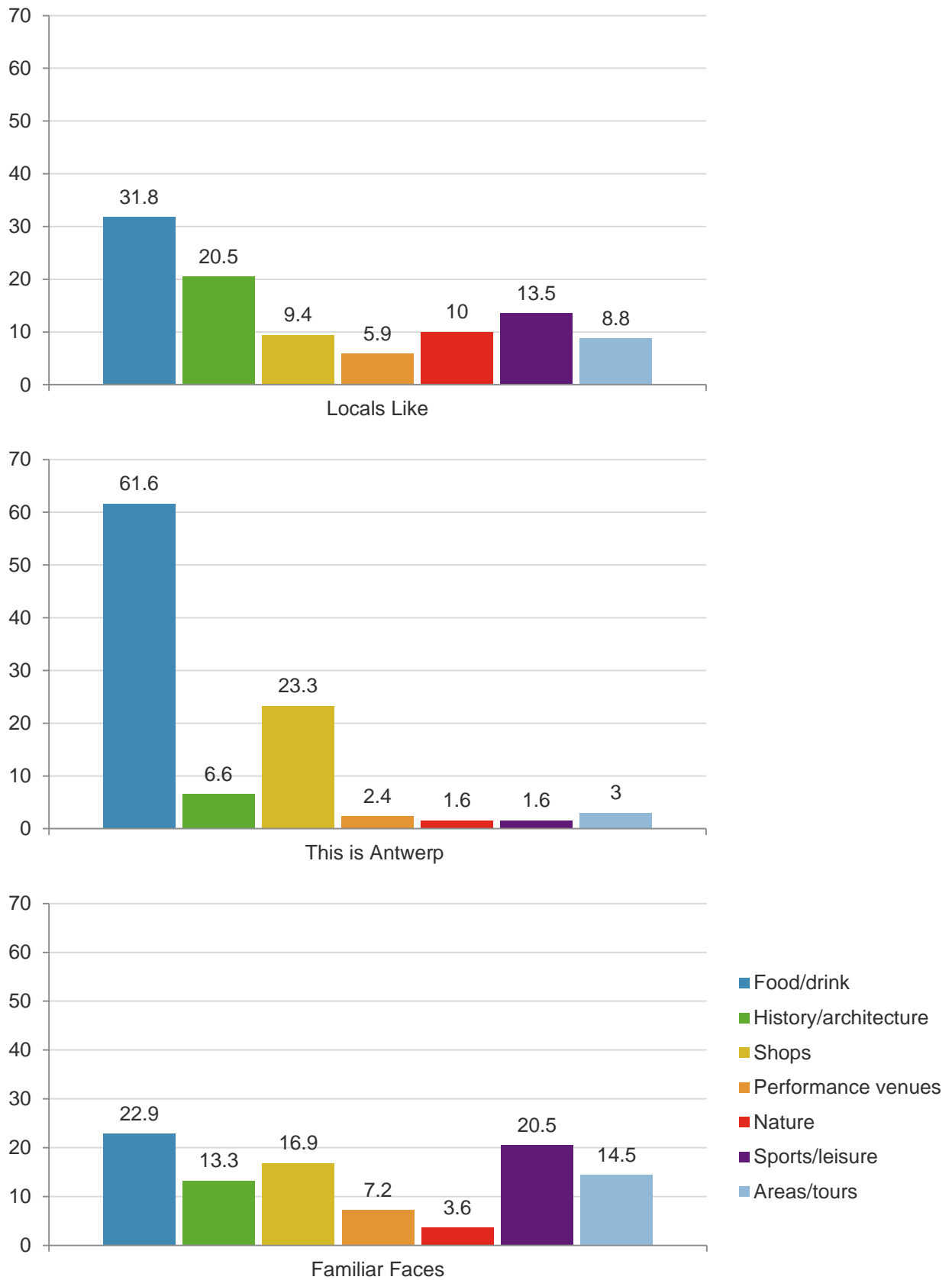


Figure 12: Graphs to show the percentages of attractions in each category for Locals Like, This is Antwerp and Familiar Faces

Figure 12 shows very few similarities in the proportions of attractions recommended by the three sets of locals. Locals Like was the most likely to recommend historic and architectural attractions and nature. This is Antwerp was the most likely to recommend food and drink and shops. Familiar Faces was the most likely to recommend performance venues, sports and leisure, and areas and tours. However, it should be remembered that Familiar Faces had the smallest number of recommendations with a large amount of repetition, as shall be seen in section 6.2.

6.1.5 Conclusion

From this study of the types and numbers of attractions recommended, I can conclude that in Manchester, the DMO sought provide a comprehensive and balanced account of all attractions. This gave a heavy bias to food and drink venues, and shops – since it is likely that the number of premises offering this outnumbers all others. Visit Birmingham could be interpreted as even more comprehensive, covering attractions across the entire West Midlands region. In Antwerp, the DMO did not seek to be comprehensive, although the DMO's local platform, This is Antwerp, did offer a comprehensive mapping service on their mobile application.

Visit Manchester sought to give comprehensive coverage of all of the city's attractions, leading to an inevitable over-representation of food and drink venues. Spotted by Locals was more likely to recommend food and drink venues as a way to help tourists limit this extensive choice. In general, the recommendations of Spotted by Locals and Locals Like were not significantly different from each other. Manchester's locals were more likely to recommend areas and tours of the city than Visit Manchester, illustrating the attempts to define the city's geography through particular generalizable characteristics and communicate the geography of the city to tourists in a graspable way. Locals Like was more likely to recommend sports and leisure attractions than Spotted by Locals, which partly illustrates the priorities of Visit Manchester when selecting locals to interview.

In Antwerp, the DMO did not offer a comprehensive coverage of all attractions, instead focusing on historic and architectural attractions. This is Antwerp provided comprehensive coverage of all attractions, illustrating the aims of the mobile application to be useful whilst the tourist is travelling around the city. However, this may serve to undermine their claim to be a platform dependent on local recommendations.

In Birmingham, Familiar Faces provided a fairly equal coverage of all categories of attractions, although with a much greater preference for sports and leisure attractions than seen in other cities. It can be seen that the three sets of locals did not display any particular common ground between them.

6.2 Language and representation

This section deals with a more qualitative investigation of the image of the city that the selection and description of the attractions provides. It uses discourse analysis to analyse the picture painted by the destination websites and promotional material.

To return to my hypotheses, I believe that:

1. Due to their public function and all-encompassing remit, DMOs will offer diverse and comprehensive advice that seeks to cater to all types of tourist.
2. Locals will seek to justify their choices based on their local expertise – thus referencing their backgrounds as a “qualification”.
3. Locals will use language that taps into notions of authenticity and experience – in particular “hidden secrets”, “unique”, “not well known”.

I would therefore expect to see these themes emerging from analysis of the texts and images of the websites.

I analysed the content of Locals Like, This is Antwerp and Familiar Faces in greater detail. Due to the limited timeframe and nature of this study, analyses of the main DMO websites are more limited, focusing on the homepage and the most prominent attractions pages.

Based on the research undertaken up to this point, I decided to use a semi-structured approach to analysis. In the “travel like a local” campaigns, I sought to pay particular attention to words, concepts, ideas and images relating to the following:

- References to the “localness” of the speaker (for instance, their background, occupation or place of residence), affirming their “qualifications” to give recommendations and potentially their objectivity
- General references to the city and its character, lifestyle, and culture
- Concepts referring to attractions as hidden, unique, or local – implying this recommendation could only come from a local

Since the representations of the three cities were unlikely to be identical, I also wanted to allow other categories to emerge that might only be relevant to a particular case study. For this reason my analysis remained open ended.

6.2.1 Visit Manchester

The homepage of the Visit Manchester webpage is busy, with multiple hyperlinks within the website. There is a large scrolling bar encouraging you to click on vivid photos of events, offers and places. Most prominent are the columns for “what’s on” and “most popular” (figure 13). Together they recommend a diverse array of things to do – two tours, two plays, three events, a section on offers, and two lists. There is a section advertising “See what the locals like”, and finally a bottom section with “featured”, full of small thumbnails linking to different elements of the city. It is image-heavy and hard to focus on any single element.

The scrolling banner contains links to what's on, attractions, restaurants, shopping, and travel planning.

The “What to do” page states: “From events and attractions to fine dining and a great night out; discover all things to do in Manchester.” The scrolling banner recommends a diverse array of things to do, including a festival, guided walks, top five restaurants and shopping.

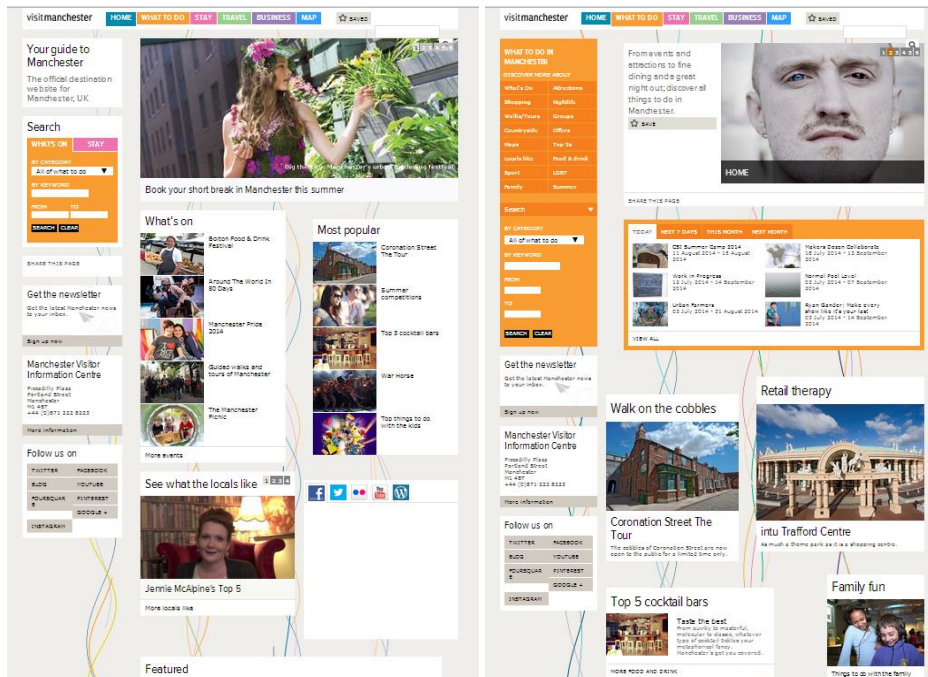


Figure 13: The homepage (left) and what to do page of Visit Manchester

The Visit Manchester website offers an all-encompassing view of the city, with advertisements for attractions in all seven categories (explained in section 6.1). Events in Manchester seem to be particularly prominent, given key places on the home page and what to do page. The large number of pictures encourages the audience to engage with the city and imagine themselves there. The Coronation Street tour is advertised with a sense of urgency (“open for a limited time only”), whilst the “Top 5 cocktail bars” promises “From quirky to masterful, molecular to classic, whatever type of cocktail tickles your metaphorical fancy, Manchester’s got you covered.” It is a diverse and engaging picture of a city with a lot to do: something for everyone.

6.2.2 Locals Like

I transcribed and analysed the 34 videos for the Locals Like campaign. They were all conducted, edited and distributed by the head of digital communications of Visit Manchester, my interviewee. In total, the interviews ran to 1:11:04, on average 2:05 minutes each.

References to the localness of the speaker

When introducing themselves to the audience, all except one of the speakers gave their name, and all except four gave their occupation. The occupation would be connected with Manchester – a business or initiative located within the city. Only four videos did not reference their occupation: a pop star, a band, a soap actor, and a restaurant manager who also neglected to give his name. Ten of the videos went beyond this “bare minimum” to state a direct connection with Manchester by birth, adoption or historic association.

- Been here around 40 years in leafy Cheshire, but originally I’m a Mancunian, north Manchester born and bred. ...It’s what I consider home, and I’m always heading back up there by train or bike, I’m always drawn to the centre of Manchester, myself and my family. (Video 1)
- I’m not a Mancunian by birth, but I’ve been living here for seven years. I moved over from Australia. Obviously, I moved for the weather. (Video 10)
- I grew up in Manchester, I’ve been living here 24 years and I love it. (Video 13)
- When I first moved to Manchester I moved to Chorlton, and I’ve been coming to Chorlton for about 17 years... It has a special place in my heart. (Video 31)

There are two references made to historic family connections with Manchester, so whilst the speaker may not live in the city anymore, the blood tie to the city gives them the authority to advertise the city. “The things that I love to do when I come to Manchester – seeing as my nan and granddad are Mancunian...” (Video 11). “[My favourite place] would be The Whitehorse, which is Max’s family’s local pub.” (Video 12).

There are also more oblique references to daily routines and habits in Manchester that stamp the speaker as a local and therefore genuine. The phrase “I like” is used five times, and “I love” 18 times, implying that not only are they advertising the ‘best’ things to do, they are advertising things they have themselves experienced, and things they enjoy doing. The word “favourite” was used 40 times, in 17 of the videos.

- The handbag stall is one of my favourites, and the shoe stall – these shoes actually – can you see them? (Video 2)
- I like to play football with my little boy in Beech Road Park in Chorlton, it’s a nice way to relax. ...I like to play five a side football on Monday night at the Manchester Central Power league, which I do with the lads I work with on a 5 a side team. ...And that’s what I do in Manchester. (Video 21)

Several of the locals framed the city as a repository of personal memories, with venues and attractions having personal significance to the speaker and their family.

- It’s a place I remember when I was a kid... Favourite of my mums, favourite of mine. (Video 1)
- I started cycling on the public taster sessions, so you never know! ...you might find you’re poached by the cycling team, like I was. (Video 5)
- ...it’s the first place I ever went to for a gig to see The Thrills when I was about 15 ...My mum used to go there as a kid with her mum... (Video 13)

These statements indicate that the speaker is advertising things that are personal to them, connected with their lives and their interests. This stamps the speaker as a genuine and authoritative voice on what to do in the city.

References to the city and its attractions

The key themes to emerge from the transcripts are food, shopping, music and football. The words food/foodie are used 36 times in 17 of the videos; and restaurants 26 times in 16 of the videos. Café is used 20 times, and pubs 13 times. Music or musical is mentioned 20 times in 11 of the videos. Football is mentioned 21 times in 11 of the videos. Shop and shopping are mentioned 18 times in 10 of the interviews.

More specifically, Old Trafford football ground and the Arndale shopping centre are the most popular attractions, both mentioned six times. Cornerhouse Cinema and the John Rylands Library are both mentioned five times. The Museum of Science and Industry, Royal Exchange Theatre, and the Northern Quarter are mentioned four times.

The top ten adjectives are all unremittingly positive, and demonstrate that most of the attractions are thought of superlatively as amongst the best in the city:

Great	86
Fantastic	41
Favourite	37
Nice	23
Good	23
Beautiful	17
Best	17
Amazing	14
Lovely	14
Fabulous	13

Figure 14: Key adjectives used in Locals Like

Regarding words that describe discovery and exploration, “hidden” is used six times; “secret” and “authentic” are both used twice; “gem” and “explore” are both used four times. “Independent” is more popular, used 11 times. Seven of the videos reference “hidden gems”, “secret” venues, or places that the speaker considers off the beaten track.

- And inside it is so peaceful! I don’t know how no one knows about it. Well, they will do now, it’s not going to be peaceful any more – you’ll all be in there. (Video 2)

- Not many people know... But it's open to the public, it's astounding – definitely a hidden treasure in the city. (Video 15)
- It's a hidden little gem in Manchester, up in the Northern Quarter. ...Another little hidden gem in Manchester is... (Video 18)
- It's a little bit hard to find, but worth finding... It's relatively new and still quite hidden. (Video 19)

Yet many of the videos do refer to attractions that are seen to be typical of Manchester.

- You can't think of Manchester without thinking of Coronation Street (Video 2)
- You can't talk about Manchester without mentioning football... Manchester is really probably the football capital of England (Video 10)

Several of the attractions were recommended multiple times, including in particular the Arndale Centre and Manchester United Football Club. This indicates that locals also feel a responsibility to recommend "must-sees" as well as "hidden gems".

Many of the locals described Manchester in terms that made it seem busy, exciting and diverse. These reference the city as a whole, or areas within it.

- It's a really vibrant place – full of diverse artists, craftsmen, women, lovely little funky cafes; it's just a place that I would go to, that's the place I would enjoy. ...Why do I love it? Because it's irreverent, because it's gay – it's hugely gay, it's fabulous, and it sort of shows to me the sort of spirit of Manchester, that is inclusive and celebratory... If you're looking for something really exotic, tasty, visual, exciting and happening, get on a bus, and go to the Curry Mile in Rusholme. That is where, if you're hungry, you can enjoy the wonderful assortment of different sorts of food. ...It's the best place to go. (Video 7)
- They've used every last inch of space where there's a bit of space, to fill with an ever-changing parade of stuff. One day you might walk through St Anne's square and it's a Persian souk, another day you come through and it's a German beer keller... but it's fantastic good fun... (Video 13)
- It's got an amazing crowd of people there, really friendly community atmosphere. It's got amazing places to eat and drink, more bars than anywhere else in Manchester, and it's just a really lovely place. (Video 31)
- Manchester is full of interesting, quirky people, so it's nice to just sit and absorb the atmosphere. ...They always have loads of different things on, whether it's music, football, comedy, whether it's statues, you always have something so it's nice just to have a look. (26)
- I've been to New York and other fantastic cities, and when you walk around the Northern Quarter on a good night, Friday or Saturday when it's jumping, it's just fantastic. It's got its own feel, and it feels very independent, slight bit of attitude about it, and proper places that are jumping. (Video 23)

Conversely, references to the countryside or to parks often referenced how easy they were to access, and how calm they were compared with the city. There were ten references to nature in total, and the parks were often framed in a way that emphasised their convenience and peacefulness.

- Great access from the city centre to get there, it's on the tram route, on the metro link route, and wow – they've had concerts there, it's great to walk around, all of a sudden you'll think you're away – 5 minutes out of the city centre but you're in this beautiful park. (Video 3)
- It doesn't look much from the road, when you get to Fletcher Moss it just looks like a couple of old tennis courts that aren't in particularly great condition; but if you walk past the tennis courts, you find this amazing, almost like an oasis of rock pools and flowering plants and shrubs and trees; it's a real botanical garden. (Video 10)
- If I want to get out of the city, I really enjoy going to Tatton Park or Dunham Massey. One of the lovely things about living in Manchester is that it's really easy to visit fantastic countryside very quickly and easily, and they are two places that are great to walk around at any time of year. (Video 17)
- Complete contrast to that, I thought of Fletcher Moss Park in Didsbury. It probably was even more wonderful 100 years ago when it had 2 or 300 park keepers, but it's still a beautiful beautiful place. You can walk down the bayou with and get away from everything with the dogs. It's just fantastic. (Video 23)

The homepage and attractions page of Visit Manchester illustrate a diverse and exciting city with a large number of events. The locals of Locals Like make frequent reference to their backgrounds, affirming their authority to give recommendations for Manchester. Whilst there was some emphasis on attractions that were hard to find or out of the way, they were equally likely to recommend "must-sees" such as the Arndale and Old Trafford. The strong themes to emerge are food, shopping, music and sport.

6.2.3 Visit Antwerp

Visit Antwerp has a very modern and visual website, with a much larger number of pictures and videos than the other case studies. This begins with the choose-your-language page, which is headed by a 50 second video on a continual loop. The video is fast-paced, making extensive use of time-lapse to show a large number of activities and landscapes. It loosely follows a woman dressed in red, and plays out over the course of one day (beginning with sunrise and ending with sunset). There are shots of the Cathedral and Grote Markt, the industry of the port and a cruise ship, luxury clothes and jewellery shopping, parks, Central Station, coffee and beer, and the general city skyline. Overlaying the rapidly shifting imagery is the name "Antwerpen" in a minimalist white font. The impression is of movement, diversity, and colour.



Figure 15: Stills from the "choose your language" page of Visit Antwerp

The rest of the website makes heavy use of black, white and red, with content highly organised in regimented boxes and rectangles. There is very little text; the homepage instead relies on single words or phrases (all in lowercase) and large images ("recommended", "antwerp in images", "events"). The most prominent links, appearing in the top left corner, are fashion; rubens; diamond; and maritime.

The page for "fashion" has been recently redeveloped (June 2014 according to the website). It has an extremely elegant design, continuing but updating the themes established on the homepage. There is almost no text; instead, it relies on large visual hyperlinks. The pages within the fashion section do make more use of text, presenting fashion in Antwerp as having a long and illustrious history.

The page for the artist Rubens has the older layout, with a large picture of Rubens and four links to "related content". The diamond page is more similar to fashion, with heavy use of red. Explanation of the role of diamonds within Antwerp's tourism offer is provided by a six minute video with dramatic music and an American voiceover. It outlines the formation and mining of diamonds, before looking at Antwerp's role in the diamond industry. "Through it's more than 500 years of diamond activities, Antwerp has become a centre of excellence, home to a cluster of technology and equipment providers, shipping and logistics firms, training centres and specialised and trusted insurance and financial institutions, all serving the diamond industry. The city is a huge logistical centre, a distinctly modern metropolis with deep historical roots; a place where creativity and innovation is fostered." The industry appears high-tech, modern, ethical and glamorous, with global connections. The city is depicted as the perfect backdrop: shots of sunny and historic streets appear alongside shots of the airport and sea port.

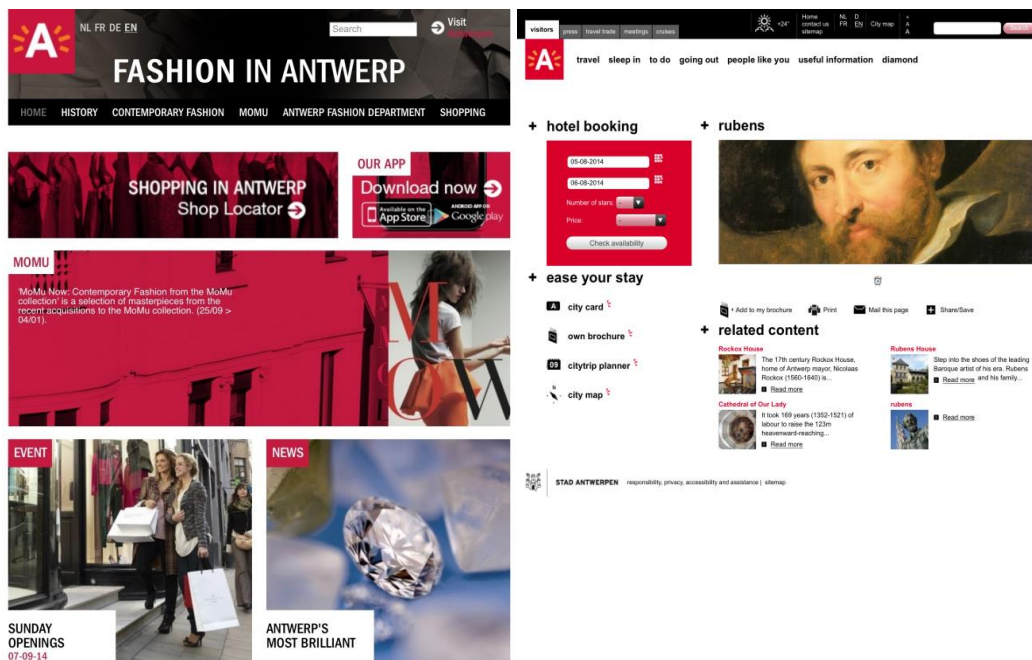


Figure 16: Comparison of the new (Fashion) and old (Rubens) designs for the Visit Antwerp website

The maritime page is much more textual than the other three attractions pages, and illustrates the pride that the city still has in its port. However, the modern industrialised container industry has no place in Visit Antwerp's idea of the past: "The romantic Victorian images of cruise ships, ladies with parasols and gentlemen in top hat and tails disembarking onto cobbled streets from cruise liners has never left the Port of Antwerp." The "mighty Scheldt" has dictated Antwerp's prosperity over the centuries. The modern port "rubs shoulders with the top ten global ports" yet remains somewhere "lying in wait to be discovered by you either on foot, by boat, car or bike."

The ghosts of the past stalk the wharves, and Europe's second busiest port is reimagined as somewhere idyllic and romantic, soaked in the memories of the glamorous and alluring cruise ship industry. "Hear the laughter of excited passengers, hold someone's hand as you sit under the lights on the promenade. Gaze across the water watching the changing colours reflecting on the ripples. The skyline silhouetted against the sunset, takes you back to the age of romance, cruise ship travel and the allure of foreign lands."

Visit Antwerp seems to hold much less content than Visit Manchester or Visit Birmingham. However, the heavy use of video and images seems suitable for time-poor tourists. Whilst the diverse number of attractions pages and pages aimed at specific demographics illustrate that there is something for everyone, the four most prominent links on the homepage give an interesting illustration of how the DMO wants the city to be perceived: as a glamorous and historic fashion and jewellery destination, with romantic links to the sea and golden age painters.

6.2.4 This is Antwerp

This is Antwerp is a similarly minimalist website, making extensive use of white, black and green. The most prominent feature on the homepage is the link to the magazine and app, and a video explaining the concept and uses of This is Antwerp. Much of the site is taken up with blog posts on events and cafes, interviews with locals and city trippers, and videos on hotspots.

The magazine is a prominent component of This is Antwerp's offering, with a discreet amount of textual and visual data that makes it relatively easy for analysis. The magazine advertises itself as covering Art, Music, Fashion, Life – the four areas that This is Antwerp have chosen to focus on. The cover image is designed by a local artist. The issue has two interviews, with the cover artist and a "Raw House DJ" "on the verge of his international breakthrough". There is a small section with street fashion photography, a large section devoted to the exploration of five neighbourhoods, and a section on more conventional tourist information with a map of the places mentioned in the magazine, listings of festivals and events, and practical information.

The magazine opens with a statement of its *raison d'être*: "In this issue we don't just want to encourage you to visit Antwerp, we want you to participate in it. To prove we mean business, we asked five locals to show you around their favourite neighbourhood so you can find out for yourself" (p4).

The artist interviews are accompanied by a statement of the importance of "young talent" in the city. "This is Antwerp wants the world to become familiar with our young local creative talent and entrepreneurs. More than ever they are the beating heart of our dynamic city. That's why we offer the cover of our magazine to upcoming artists as a platform to display their work" (p6).

The interview itself is a blurring of authorship between the interviewee and interviewer: "Because our man [artist interviewee] is deeply in love with Antwerp and its architecture he couldn't but agree to become one of the City photographers. Compared to other world cities everything in Antwerp is rather small but still has a very international feel. In addition, the city is always in motion. There's always something happening somewhere. The art is to be there at the right time. To him that's a very attractive asset for a city" (p7).

This sense of an unknown city awaiting exploration is repeated in the neighbourhood guide. The five neighbourhoods are given a general description followed by a more detailed content on places to hang out, eat, and drink, and the street style. 2060 in the north becomes a multi-cultural melting pot with different ethnicities located within spatially contained areas: "While Van Wesenbekestraat is known as little Chinatown, in Muzienstraat you'll find a lot of African speciality stores and eateries. If you feel like having Turkish or Moroccan food go

for a 5 minute walk to Handelstraat. If you can't find what you're looking for there, you'll probably never find it, ever" (p11).

The Jewish Quarter meanwhile has "a few classic must-sees that I can't avoid telling you about. But since you can find them in ev-er-y tourist magazine I'm just going to sum them up without going into so much detail" (p13). The City Park is described as a perfect place for a picnic – "I know it's a cliché but some clichés actually make sense. ...You'll meet a lot of locals with the same masterplan. Oh, I almost forgot, the park is the home of well-hidden Second World War bunkers. Seek and you will find." There is the presumption that the reader is not interested in the mainstream attractions, but even an area as clichéd as the City Park has its mysteries waiting to be discovered.

The local covering Brederode on page 14 characterises it as the most underrated neighbourhood in the city: this is the place where "Old School Antwerp meets New School Antwerp". Borgerhout – or BoHo as the local describes it – is a magnet for young progressive families, a little shabby but in the midst of a rediscovery. The local has recently moved to Antwerp from Ghent, and defends her local status: "You could say I'm the new kid in town but I already know my way around" (p16).

On page 18, Berchem has a "homely atmosphere and authentic feel", and has "not yet been discovered by herds of national or international tourists. We feel its identity is still pure and untouched. You could say Old Berchem is keeping it real. That's why a lot of Antwerp locals hang out there." A park is recommended that not even the locals have "discovered".

The section on festivals (p22/23) states that the diversity of Antwerp has "a huge impact on Antwerp's daily life and culture. Now imagine this wide variety of influences as a massive source of inspiration. Blend it with a mixture of old and modern buildings and Antwerp becomes a unique framework for outdoor and indoor events and festivals."



Figure 17: Page from This is Antwerp's summer 2014 magazine, viewed via the This is Antwerp website

The magazine depicts Antwerp as a canvas for young creative people; several of the bars in the neighbourhood section are advertised precisely as a hangout for trendy young people. The neighbourhoods have identifiable characteristics that are both homely and multicultural, “underrated” and “up-and-coming”. These are therefore places where young people who have their fingers on the pulse will wish to stay – places hidden from the “clichés” of the “herds of national or international tourists”. The emphasis is on experience – wanting readers to “participate” in Antwerp, rather than passively viewing the city.

6.2.5 Visit Birmingham

Visit Birmingham has a dynamic and colourful homepage. The scrolling bar is a very prominent feature, with links to four summer events that highlight the arts, culture, festivals and sporting events that the city was playing host to. The feature beneath is on “Essentials”, with maps and guides, getting around, explore, and festivals and events.

The “What to do” page highlights Birmingham’s diverse attractions: “A culture fix, the latest fashion or just something to keep the kids occupied? From museums, attractions and shopping centres to restaurants - take a look and be inspired!” Beneath are 18 different tabs, including “kids and teenagers”, “parks and countryside”, “Rugby world cup 2015” and “heritage”. It is clear that Birmingham has a diverse offering for all demographics and interest groups. The website as a whole feels extremely varied, with a lot of text, images, and hyperlinks. It is also quite city-centre focused: for instance, all of the “itineraries” focus on the city centre. The inner city and wider region are covered in two separate pages.

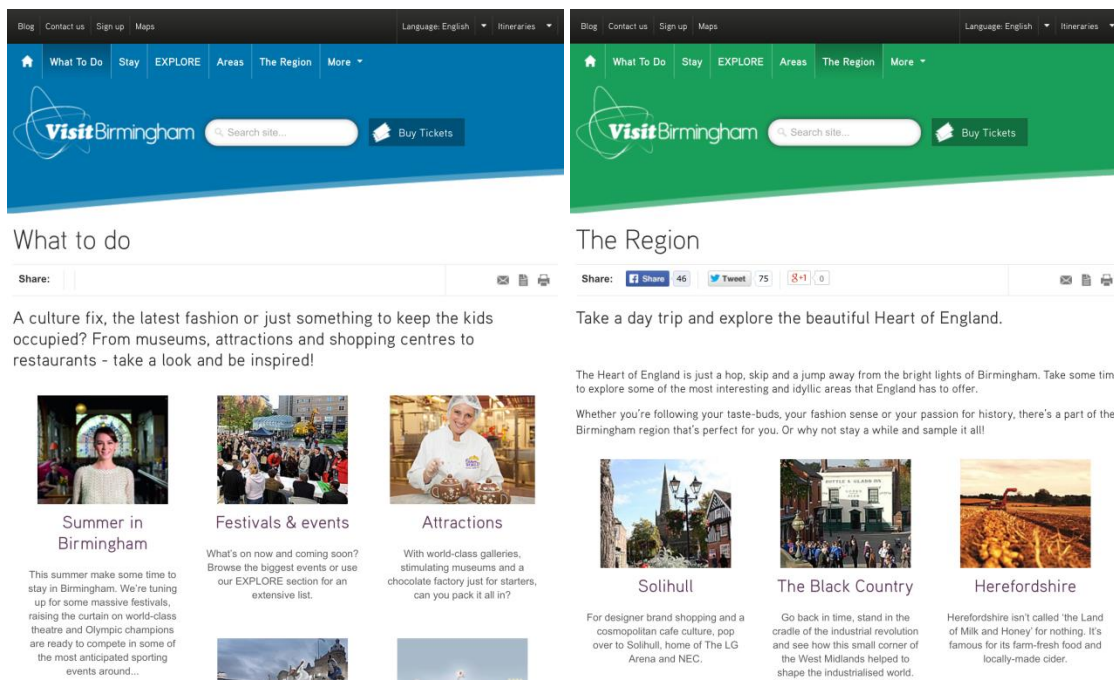


Figure 18: What to do and The Region pages for Visit Birmingham

The emphasis on the homepage is on publicising events, as with the Visit Manchester website. This gives the website a sense of immediacy and encourages the reader to visit as soon as possible. The what to do page is extremely varied, with attractions grouped by various themes – indicating that Birmingham has something for everyone.

6.2.6 Familiar Faces

The 14 videos were all added between May and July 2014. The 14 interviews lasted 22:17 in total, an average of 1:35 each.

References to localness of the speaker

Only nine of the 14 speakers opened by giving their name; of these, eight gave their occupation. This is partly due to the ad-hoc nature of the videos; some of them were conducted as part of other events or shows. Even fewer reference their place of residence, habits, or connection with the city.

- Although I'm a southerner born and bred, I've spent 30 years living and working in Birmingham, and I really love the place. (Video 8)
- I play for Birmingham City Football Club, and I play right midfield. I've lived here for nearly 3 years (Video 9)

There aren't many references to the historic ties that the interviewees have to Birmingham. These associations are implied rather than stated directly.

- From a small kid, I've been to the Balti triangle many a time, and I've got a few Balti burns off those hot dishes! (Video 7)

- I like to go and watch Aston Villa play. I've supported them ever since I was introduced to them when I was 4 years old. ...I've spent a lot of time there as a kid growing up... a lot of birthdays there with my mates (Video 10)

The word “love” was used 29 times in nine videos; “I love” 16 times in 7 videos. “I like” was used 11 times, and favourite only 4 times. Best was used 8 times. This illustrates that the locals are advertising attractions that they have themselves tried and tested, reassuring the viewer that their recommendations are genuine.

- I also spend a lot of time over at The Cube... I often present the weather from up there... I also love... (Video 1)
- I love the pantomime, it's a massive highlight (Video 7)
- There's a lot to do, I've spent a lot of time there actually, probably too much. (Video 10)

References to the city and its attractions

The interviews picked out several key themes. Shops and shopping were mentioned nine times in six videos; restaurants were mentioned 16 times in eight videos, and food more generally 16 times in six videos. The canals were referred to seven times in four videos, and the words culture and cultural 6 times in 3 videos. Birmingham is also depicted as a family-friendly city, with “kids” or “little ‘uns” used six times.

More specifically, the Bullring was the most mentioned attraction, referred to five times. Aston Villa and Birmingham City Football Clubs, the Hippodrome Theatre, Library, Symphony Hall and the canals were each mentioned three times.

The ten most used adjectives in the city were:

Love	28
Good	13
Amazing	10
Great	9
Best	8
Fantastic	8
New	7
Special	5
Different	5
Old	5

There were few references to the character or characteristics of Birmingham, partly due to the shorter nature of the videos. General references to the character of the city were linked to the appeal of certain attractions.

- More than anything it's the people. The people are such a laugh. (Video 4)
- ...walking around the Jewellery Quarter, it's great because of the different sorts of architecture that Birmingham's got, from the new to the old and the blend where we've got them both together. ...it's all modern but there's old pieces of Birmingham in there too. (Video 7)
- And finally I love Victoria Square, right at the heart of Birmingham. Birmingham City Council House is a magnificent building, awesome when it is lit up at night, and next door to it is the Town Hall, modelled on the old Parthenon on top of the Acropolis in Athens. Now that has a wonderful history... (Video 8)
- I love to have a walk down the Gas Street Basin, it's so pretty with all the lovely canal boats, and really peaceful too - even though you are right in the heart of the city. It's such a lovely serene place to be. (Video 1)
- Birmingham has more than 30 miles of canals, more than Venice they say, and you get the urban landscapes in the city centre, and the further out you go it gets more and more rural of course. (Video 8)

Birmingham is depicted as having diverse landscapes, characterised by the blend of old and new architecture and the canals that link the urban landscapes to the countryside. The buildings and canals recall the history and culture of some of Europe's great heritage cities, Athens and Venice.

The food of Birmingham is a key part of its tourist offering, which is consistently cited as diverse and exciting – “every single type of food you could possibly imagine” (video 10).

- One of the great things about Birmingham is the food culture, from the Chinese Quarter to some of the fantastic little hidden gems that are in there, but also the Balti triangle which is amazing. ...And it's just great how diverse the food scene is, from the four Michelin starred restaurants to some of the street food happening down in Digbeth. The food scene is amazing. (Video 7)
- The thing about Birmingham is that it's all about the culture, and we've got all these cultural hotspots. We've got Handsworth, Soho Road, all this culture, there are loads of little street food cafes there where you can go and pick up cultural delicacies. (Video 12)

There are very few linguistic devices that reference the advantages of local travel. The food scene provides the greatest opportunity for this, expressing the culture and diversity of Birmingham in a way that puts you in contact with Birmingham's authentic, multi-cultural feel. As one interviewee said of a Caribbean restaurant, “you know when you enter a space and you know it's the truth?” (Video 3). The “hidden gems” of China Town and “cultural

hotspots” of inner city Handsworth are further examples of locals that are encouraging tourists to step outside of the city centre and find these authentic cultural delicacies.

6.2.7 Spotted by Locals – Manchester and Antwerp

In order to compare the statements of locals selected by DMOs and the statements of self-selecting locals on Spotted by Locals, I analysed the “about” pages for the “spotters” in Manchester and Antwerp, where the reviewers introduce themselves and state what they like about their city. Manchester and Antwerp had five local reviewers each.

Credibility is built into the Spotted by Locals brand; in addition to saying who they are and what they do, the locals must provide links to their other online profiles – which were most often Facebook, twitter or a personal blog, thus verifying their identity as a real person. The articles on attractions and events always include a photo (often taken by the author) and a date of publication. Manchester had 117 articles written about the city, and Antwerp 114; I decided to analyse ten per cent of these to get a flavour of the sort of discourse used about the cities. Each article has its own number, and I used a random number generator to pick 12 articles for Manchester and 11 for Antwerp.

Manchester

The five Manchester locals all refer to the city as home, and four of the five compare Manchester favourably with other cities they have lived in.

- Manchester became my second home with no effort whatsoever. After attending networking events on a regular basis, you realise how tight and welcoming the community is. (Spotter 2)
- I returned to Manchester in 2007 after living in Exeter for seven years (Spotter 3)
- Despite living and working in various parts of the country I always find I am drawn back to the city. (Spotter 4)
- I’m Mancunian born, my parents left when I was 6, I returned at 16 and have found the city inescapable ever since. (Spotter 5)

The five locals describe Manchester in the “about” section; the picture that emerges seems to be quite honest, with potential negatives (cracked pavements, rain, and roughness) translated into positive images of grittiness and authenticity. A key theme that emerges is the welcoming nature of the city, with three spotters specifically referring to the friendliness and tolerance of the city.

- It has everything a person could need... I would never trade it in. My passions include the architecture, the history (old and new), the music scene, the bar culture, the rainy sky and the wonderful cracks in the pavements. (Spotter 1)

- I've loved the city's rough, jagged feeling right from the start. Its industrial surroundings are actually warm and welcoming, because most of the spaces have already been occupied by small, quirky creative ventures such as coffee shops or design agencies. (Spotter 2)
- I love the fact that there is always something going on, somewhere new to try or something different to see. There is nightlife, culture, exploration and music to suit all tastes, and for me, this is what the ideal city should be. ... When I want some respite from the city life, less than hour in any direction and beautiful scenery and countryside can be reached. (Spotter 3)
- Manchester is a great city that welcomes all. Whilst we know we have a reputation for it always raining, more importantly we have a reputation for our sense of humour. (Spotter 4)
- One of the best things about Manchester is it has allowed me several life times within it. It's small enough that you can travel almost anywhere in half an hour but each area has flavours distinctly its own. (Spotter 5)

The city and its attractions

Of the 12 articles chosen at random, four were food and drink venues; three were shops; two were historic and architectural; one was a performance venue, one was nature, and one was an area. Each of the attractions is given a "story" and is often described using the language of local travel, with references to hiddenness, exploration, authenticity and experience.

- Back Turner Street is one of those narrow streets where no matter how populated they are still give you the feeling that you were the first one who discovered them. So I've got this "explorer" feeling whenever I step into Montpellier's. (Article 3)
- Then one morning we noticed a little box, for weeks we would peer at it with curiosity, it seemed a bit too small to really be anything but finally I noticed a sandwich board, and made out the word coffee. I put it on my to do list. We came in and discovered a tiny coffee shop, behind the counter they do coffee in several ways, siphon coffee borders on science experiments... In fact it all seems quite magical. (Article 5)
- One of the longest running music venues, and also one of the best, is the Ritz. ...You are met by its beautiful original 1920s Art Deco frontage, which shows it is no recreation. ...This venue feels like it has more soul than a lot of the other venues in Manchester due to its history... (Article 6)
- ...I'm just building up your expectations of the heavy music-scented air in the shop. (Article 7)

The spotters address the reader directly in several instances, both presuming to know the reader's intentions and instructing or challenging them to try things for themselves. The

direct address makes for a more compelling article, where the reader is encouraged to imagine what they would do.

- The onion soup seemed a bit too vinegary, but feel free to give it a go and see if you like it! (Article 3)
- There is a balcony, an amazing place to watch the bands and crowd if you are not feeling that energetic to keep up with the mosh pit. If you do feel like taking advantage of the downstairs crowd, you will definitely notice the famous spring loaded dance floor. On a trip to Manchester this is definitely worth a go. (Article 6)
- If you're a music lover, put this on your map. If you're fond of the underground scene, especially Dance and Drum'n'Bass, put this on your map. Of course, you can always buy the records online. But that's not what you're searching for, is it? (Article 7)
- I really couldn't pick something on the menu that is my favourite, so you must try everything at least once. (Article 8)
- Even if you're just passing by Manchester, take a small detour by Stevenson Square to check the latest artwork. It might just surprise you! (Article 9)
- With over 25000 items on display it would be hard not to find something of interest in this huge collection. (Article 10)

In this brief analysis, the spotters of Manchester take great care to affirm their status as a genuine local and affirm their preferences for Manchester over other areas. Their characterisations of the city paint an image of somewhere industrial with rough edges and wet weather, but which is friendly, diverse and quirky. Many of the attractions analysed were written about in a manner that tapped into discourses of uniqueness, hiddenness, and authenticity. In addition, the articles were more direct than on other platforms, addressing the reader directly and making the review more compelling.

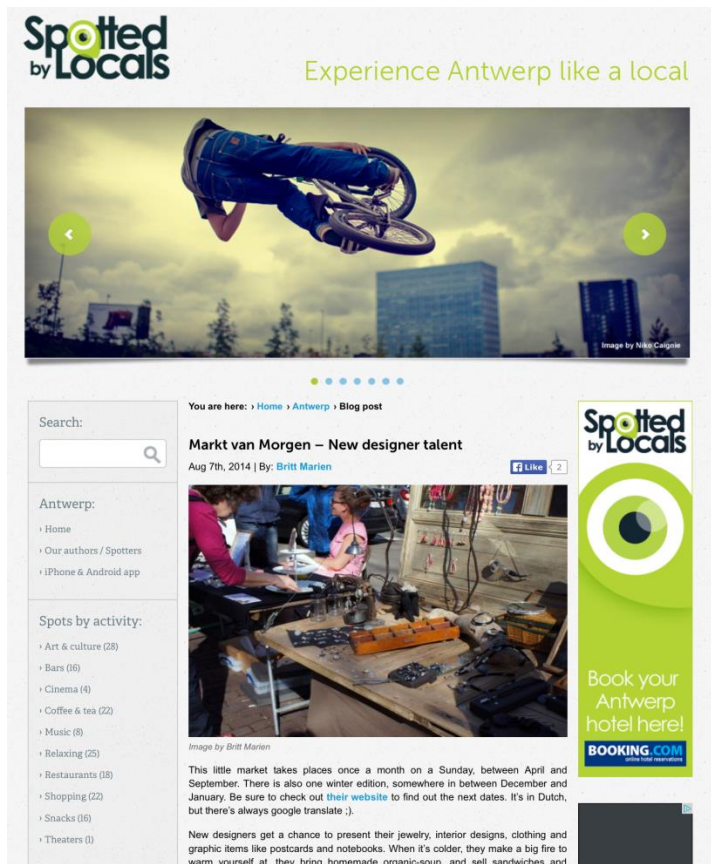


Figure 19: Example article from Spotted by Locals (Antwerp)

Antwerp

In the “About me” sections, only two of Antwerp’s five locals refer to Antwerp as being their long-term residence, focusing instead on their hobbies and interests. The descriptions of Antwerp paint a picture of a city that is small but cosmopolitan, with four of the spotters specifically referring to Antwerp’s small scale.

- Anything is possible, you just have to let the city guide you... It has all the advantages of a city, but once you get to know Antwerp, it feels more like a village or a town. (Spotter 1)
- I can find everything I need here and it’s only steps away. (Spotter 2)
- I identify this metropolis with the perfect wife. Which means she has beauty, brains and humour. ...This concubine has plenty of hidden curves and passionate secrets. Her hidden aspects give form to a mysterious and charming character. (Spotter 3)
- Antwerp is small scale but still has a cosmopolitan air about itself. There are many cultural venues, both with international fame and also a more edgy, alternative scene. (Spotter 4)
- What I really like about Antwerp is the fact that it’s a “Big City” as well as a small town. A big city because it fills needs for every heart: there are great events, nice historical sites, cultural activities, crowds to disappear in, great pubs and spots to hang out, cosy restaurants, shops... A small town because it isn’t actually that big. You can

cross it by bike in 30 minutes and you know people in almost every street. (Spotter 5)

The city becomes a mysterious playground where the “passionate secrets” can be discovered if you “let the city guide you”. The small but international scale means that it has something for everyone with a great sense of community.

The city and its attractions

Of the 11 articles analysed, two were shops, five were food and drink venues, two were architectural and historical, and one was a performance venue. The language used does not refer too specifically to the advantages of local advice – references to words such as hidden, authentic, and secret were noticeably absent. However, the experience to be gained through visiting the attractions was heavily emphasised; as one spotter said, “The best way to discover a city is live it!” (Spotter 5).

- Every two weeks on Sunday morning, you can watch a movie with a small breakfast on top. The Atlas building is the city’s centre for integration and diversity. So a lot of the movies will have a link with this theme. (Article 6)
- More focus on burning their own coffee beans (the machines for doing that are in the bar and look great) and the genuine coffee experience... Talk to the owner, he will explain his plans to you, and feel his passion and joy for making great coffee. So if you’re in Antwerp and you just want to make one coffee stop, Café Normo would be it! And my personal favourites are the Muskat or a Wonka. Just try it! (Article 7)
- This sanctuary welcomes all. Each prayer will be accepted, and every wish fulfilled. So do ask for that Aston Martin. (Article 8)
- That’s not all: if you want to try something very different, move back to the front after dinner and have a Portuguese beer while you wait for the karaoke to begin. Yes, if you’re lucky the owner will grab the microphone and sing some beautiful Portuguese songs. Don’t be shy and sing along in your best Portuguese. This is so much better than the karaoke bars you can find in the tourist part of town. (Article 11)

In this brief analysis, Antwerp is painted as a small but cosmopolitan city with something for everyone. Although there are fewer imperatives used than in Manchester, and fewer references to the language of local travel, the emphasis is still firmly on experience.

7. Analysis and Comparisons

7.1 Visit Manchester, Locals Like and Spotted by Locals

Visit Manchester has sought to move away from what they see as "traditional" destination marketing and towards a more interactive and "truthful" picture of the city. Local opinion and real time interaction formed a key part of this agenda, with the website and Visitor Centre redesigned to be more interactive.

The official Visit Manchester website is content-heavy with a focus on events. The large pictures encourage engagement, but there is not much text. The image created is of a lively city with lots of events, adding a sense of urgency to a potential trip. This comprehensiveness is reinforced with the mapping feature, offering an extensive catalogue of over 1,000 points of interest in the Greater Manchester region and beyond. There was a heavy emphasis on food, drink and shopping, illustrating that the DMO was attempting to be impartial by listing all venues.

The Locals Like campaign was initiated in 2012. Priority was placed on locals who were well known, or with whom visitors might interact as part of their stay, with emphasis therefore falling on people in the service industries. Locals Like is seen to be very successful and one of the most popular sections of the website.

Almost all of the locals give their name and occupation, and ten of the 34 stated some sort of direct connection with Manchester. Half of the videos used the word "favourite" at least once, with almost all of the videos advertising things that the local enjoyed doing.

Locals Like recommended a more equal spread of attractions than either of the other platforms, with 31.8 per cent of recommendations being food and drink venues and 20.5 per cent for historic and architectural attractions.

Food was the most popular theme, followed by music, football, and shopping. Old Trafford and the Arndale Centre were the most recommended attractions, illustrating that many locals felt obliged to recommend the "must-sees" of Manchester. Seven of the videos referred to attractions seen as off-the-beaten-track: the word "independent" is used 11 times, and "hidden" is used six times. The positive imagery and adjectives convey a picture of a busy, exciting and diverse city – and one that is also closely connected to the countryside.

Spotted by Locals engages five local writers to cover the Manchester area, and (as of July 2014) they have recommended 114 things to do and see. Over 60 per cent of these recommendations were for food and drink venues; no sports or leisure attractions were recommended. They differed significantly from Locals Like in their recommendations of food and drink venues, performance venues, and sports and leisure attractions. It is likely that the Spotters value their difference from mainstream tourism channels, and so consciously avoid mentioning attractions such as football grounds and shopping centres. The high proportion

of food and drink attempts to provide value to readers who may be bewildered by the range of choice. The attractions are each given a “story”, with an emphasis on the experience of going there and the authenticity it offers. In general, the picture of Manchester seems truthful, with references to rain and industrial grittiness, but also of a friendly and modern city. Unlike other platforms, there is a heavy use of imperatives in the articles, making them very compelling and persuasive.

7.2 Visit Antwerp, This is Antwerp and Spotted by Locals

Visit Antwerp does not offer a comprehensive list of attractions; they are instead spread throughout seven themed pages and sub-pages. The small proportion of recommendations for food and drink venues was surprising when compared with other DMO platforms; most recommendations – 45 per cent – were for historic and architectural venues. The website was very stylish and modern, with an emphasis on four themes: diamonds, fashion, Rubens, and the port. Unusually compared to the other two DMOs, this gave a particular image of the city geared towards luxury goods, nostalgia and romance. Visit Antwerp therefore offered a much more tailored view of the city than other DMO platforms.

Visit Antwerp has run the “This is Antwerp” campaign since 2012, developed as a response to the large proportion of 18-29 year olds visiting the city. Local knowledge was placed centre stage for this new initiative. Antwerpians were believed to have great pride in their city, which the DMO sought to encourage; locals were also thought to be more credible and relatable than traditional marketing techniques.

This is Antwerp was extremely comprehensive; the mobile application listed over 500 attractions, including “useful” sites such as ATMs, night shops and hairdressers. Over 60 per cent of their recommendations were for food and drink; another 20 per cent were for shops. The mobile application seems to aim towards usefulness and comprehensiveness rather than giving a partial and “local” view of the city.

In contrast, the magazine was much more niche. The focus was in line with Visit Antwerp's aspirations for the service, highlighting young creative life in the city. The focus was also on characterising and describing neighbourhoods, splitting the city into more manageable spatial units with their own character and style. Mainstream tourism was disparaged as being unfashionable, painting a very clear picture of their intended target market. There was a definite sense of a city awaiting exploration: the sites recommended were not only believed to be unknown to tourists, but unknown to locals as well. The magazine sought to appeal to creative people who are (or believed themselves to be) at the cutting edge of fashion trends.

As in Manchester, Spotted by Locals commissioned five locals who together had recommended 112 sites across Antwerp. 44 per cent of these recommendations were for food and drink venues, and there was in general a more equal spread of recommendations, unlike the

Spotters in Manchester. There were significant differences between the recommendations of Spotted by Locals and This is Antwerp, reflecting that the mobile application of This is Antwerp seeks to be comprehensive, whilst the Spotters seek to limit tourist choice. The language used emphasises experience rather than hiddenness and authenticity. The city is characterised as small but international and cosmopolitan, with something for everyone.

7.3 Visit Birmingham, Familiar Faces

Visit Birmingham has invested heavily in social media, and has begun the long term process of putting a human face on the organisation in order to improve their credibility. In June 2014 the "Familiar Faces' Favourite Places" campaign was launched, using video interviews with well-known personalities to ask them their favourite things about Birmingham. Whilst some of the figures were not local to Birmingham, the use of faces that readers "already trust" was believed to be important.

The official Visit Birmingham website is extremely comprehensive, though the emphasis on the home page is on current events. As in Manchester, this seems to emphasise the liveliness of the city and encourage the user to visit as quickly as possible. The map offers over 2,000 points of interest spread over a wide area; casual browsers may find this daunting, although it is likely to be useful to those with something specific in mind. Under the "what to do" page, a wide offer is displayed, collected under 18 lifestyle and interest headings. This illustrates that there is something for everyone in the region, whether it's heritage or extreme sports.

Those interviewed as part of the Familiar Faces campaign offer a fairly balanced picture of the city, with roughly equal numbers of attractions in every category. However, considering the relatively small number of videos there is an unusually high degree of repetition. There was less of an emphasis on the connection between the locals and the city, and less of an emphasis on the language of local travel. The key themes to emerge were food, shopping, culture and canals.

7.4 Answering my hypotheses

1. Due to their public function and all-encompassing remit, DMOs will offer diverse and comprehensive advice that seeks to cater to all types of tourist.

This is clearly the case for Manchester and Birmingham, where the number of recommendations stretched to over 1,000 across both regions. Both websites had similar outlooks, with a focus on imagery and events. Birmingham's "What to do" page had 14 categories listed by interest or demographic group (heritage, family fun, students, etc.), illustrating that there was felt to be something for everyone.

Visit Antwerp offered a much more tailored picture of the city, with a focus on four themes. However, the "to do" and "people like you" pages all offered a diverse selection of themes

and attractions. However, these were not as numerous or extensive as in Manchester and Birmingham.

2. Locals will seek to justify their choices based on their local expertise – thus referencing their backgrounds as a “qualification”.

This is a key part of the rationale of Spotted by Locals, and all Spotters had to provide information on their background and interests. This also came through in articles. This is Antwerp also placed an emphasis on the credibility of the locals; there was a section of interviews with locals and city trippers on their website, and the local guides in the magazine talk about where they live and what they do.

In Manchester, the locals of Locals Like gave their names and occupation, with about one third of them going beyond this minimum to state a more personal connection with the city. In Birmingham, fewer of the videos referenced their background or connection with the city.

3. Locals will use language that taps into notions of authenticity and experience – in particular “hidden secrets”, “unique”, “not well known”.

There was not as much as an emphasis on this as I had expected. It was very much a part of Spotted by Locals and particularly for This is Antwerp. Fewer of the Manchester locals in Locals Like referenced these sorts of attractions; they were just as likely to refer to a well-known attraction. The language of local travel was hardly used at all for Familiar Faces.

8. Conclusion

To return to my research question:

- How does the depiction of the city as a tourist destination differ between local residents and Destination Marketing Organisations?

I have sought to answer this question using a variety of research techniques, analysing the official websites for Visit Manchester, Visit Antwerp and Visit Birmingham. I have compared their depiction of the city with that offered by campaigns that the three DMOs run using “local knowledge”. In Manchester and Birmingham's case, this is through filming interviews with carefully selected locals who recommend their top things to do in the city. Antwerp runs a multimedia campaign with young locals involved in creative industries. As another layer of comparison, I also analysed the offering of Spotted by Locals, an independently operated platform using local recommendations in Manchester and Antwerp.

I have sought to use expert interviews and critical discourse analysis to look at the image of the city created in these campaigns, considering three sub-questions:

- What is driving the emergence of new online and offline interaction between locals and tourists?
- How are DMOs recognising and responding to this?
- How do the approaches of locals and DMOs differ? What sorts of attractions are being recommended, and what sort of language is being used to promote them?

In a “fragmented and flexible” world of postmodern tourism, where consumers are better travelled, more socially conscious and better connected than ever before, “travelling like a local” has emerged as a ‘new’ trend in city tripping. According to many theorists of tourism and consumption more generally (Yeoman, Brass and McMahon Beattie 2007; Gilmore and Pine 2007; Germann Molz 2013), tourists are now looking to consume authentic, personalised and individual experiences. The internet enables them to look beyond the slick marketing campaigns of Destination Management Organisations, and connect with local people. These locals are now better able than ever before to make money from tourism; they may also share their favourite places for altruistic reasons, seeking to connect with travellers as part of the sharing economy.

This research has sought to explore the ways that DMOs are responding to this trend, and has looked at what differences are promoted in “local advice” and “official” advice. What aspects of the city are promoted? Do locals offer something different? I have discovered that:

- DMOs generally promote a universal, all-encompassing view of the city and the wider region as having something for everyone. This was observed in Visit Manchester and Visit Birmingham, and to a lesser extent in Visit Antwerp – although the mobile application of This is Antwerp also promoted this omniscient view.
- Locals generally offer a more personalised approach, explaining their background and connection to the city in an attempt to build trust and reinforce their authentic status. This was particularly true of Spotted by Locals and the This is Antwerp magazine.
- Locals Like in Manchester offered a picture of a foodie, shopping and leisure destination, whilst Spotted by Locals depicted the city as rainy and post-industrial. This is Antwerp promoted a young, hip and trendy destination, where users sought to shun conventional tourist sites and connect with something more authentic. Spotted by Locals presented Antwerp as small but international and cosmopolitan. Familiar Faces in Birmingham depicted the city as a foodie, sport and leisure destination.

This thesis has sought to explore and expand some of the discourses that surround the trend of “travel like a local”. It has been brief and partial. Future research may want to further explore the motivations of the tourist in seeking to holiday in this manner, and explore the effects on neighbourhoods and attractions being labelled as “off the beaten track” or a

“hidden gem”. Is the discourse of local travel acting as a force for gentrification, a cynical marketing ploy to offer up new areas for the ever-consuming forces of international tourism? Or is it bringing much needed revenue to poorer areas, encouraging more sustainable and thoughtful travel? Indeed, is it a widespread phenomenon or limited to short-haul European or American destinations?

I believe that this trend in tourists approaching local voices to get information will only grow. As my Birmingham interviewee stated, “If you are a faceless organisation you’re not trusted – you’re just an organisation.” In May 2014, Visit London launched its own “local voices” campaign, called The London Story⁵: “London is a city brought to life by its people and the unique and fascinating stories they have to tell.” Meanwhile, Spotted by locals has just expanded into five North American cities, with plans to expand further. It is therefore a trend that looks set to grow into the future, and one that Destination Marketing Organisations should seek to explore in order to remain relevant and engaging.

Words: 22,301

Characters: 136,929

⁵ <http://www.visitlondon.com/story>

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Visit Manchester website:

- <http://www.visitmanchester.com/> homepage
- <http://www.visitmanchester.com/what-to-do/> general description of attractions
- <http://www.visitmanchester.com/map/> comprehensive list of attractions
- <http://www.visitmanchester.com/articles/locals-like/> “Locals Like” campaign

Visit Birmingham website:

- <http://visitbirmingham.com/> homepage
- <http://visitbirmingham.com/what-to-do/> general description of the attractions
- <http://visitbirmingham.com/what-to-do/top-5-films/> “Familiar Faces’ Favourite Places” campaign
- <http://visitbirmingham.com/explore-birmingham/> comprehensive list of attractions

Visit Antwerp website:

- <http://www.visitantwerpen.be/> Choose your language homepage
- <http://www.visitantwerpen.be/bze.net?id=1470> English language homepage
- <http://thisisantwerp.be/> “This is Antwerp” campaign
- <http://thisisantwerp.be/magazine/antwerp-magazine-7> magazine of This is Antwerp

Spotted by Locals:

- <http://www.spottedbylocals.com/> homepage
- <http://www.spottedbylocals.com/antwerp/> Antwerp’s homepage
- <http://www.spottedbylocals.com/antwerp/map/> list of Antwerp reviews
- <http://www.spottedbylocals.com/manchester/> Manchester’s homepage
- <http://www.spottedbylocals.com/manchester/map/> list of Manchester reviews

The Local Travel movement

<http://www.localtravelmovement.com/>

Appendix 1

Interviews for section 5 and codes for videos and articles analysed in section 6:

Interviews:

- Visit Manchester, Leah Vyse – Digital Content Manager, 3rd March 2014
- Visit Antwerp, Charis de Craene and Rik Seniow – heads of This is Antwerp, 19th March 2014
- Visit Birmingham, Ellie Schofield – head of digital communications, 25th March 2014

Locals Like, Manchester:

- Video 1: Simon Tetlow, gardener, 4:22
- Video 2: Jennie McAlpine, Coronation St, 4:39
- Video 3: Lee Crompton, tour guide Coronation Street, 3:05
- Video 4: Joe Gates, Director of Golf, 1:39
- Video 5: Dame Sarah Storey, cyclist, 2:00
- Video 6: John Consterdine, Manchester Taxi Tours, 0:45
- Video 7: Annie Lennox, pop star, 2:30
- Video 8: Anthony Cotton, Coronation Street actor, 1:56
- Video 9: Bonnie Yeung, Yang Sing restaurant. 4:22
- Video 10: Nick Coppack, journalist, 4:26
- Video 11: Jodie Prenger, actress. 0:58
- Video 12: The Wanted, pop band, 0:57
- Video 13: Lucy Noone, waitress, 3:38
- Video 14: Russ Green, head concierge at The Lowry 1:13
- Video 15: Naomi Kashiwagi, artist, 2:37
- Video 16: Kathryn Heaton, National Football Museum, 0:42
- Video 17: Robert Martin, Manchester International Festival, 1:54
- Video 18: Sarah Wilson, Hey Little Cupcake, 1:47
- Video 19: Lee Isherwood, editor Manchester's Finest, 1:25
- Video 20: Lutalo Muhammad and Jade Jones, taekwondo Olympians. 1:34.
- Video 21: Elliott West, The Oast House, 1:22
- Video 22: Erika Curbelo, international student, 1:22
- Video 23: Roger Ward, Manchester chop houses, 2:08
- Video 24: Ruth Seneviratne-Bratt, Wandering Duck, 1:48
- Video 25: David Fox, founder of Tampopo, 1:22
- Video 26: Megan Al-Ghailani, Cornerhouse film critic, 1:13
- Video 27: Drew Hemment, Future everything festival, 1:31
- Video 28: Jess Todd, Visit Manc, 0:25
- Video 29: Gavin Warbrick, Hatters Hostel, 1:05
- Video 30: John Clarke, CAMRA, 1:50
- Video 31: Ruth Daniel, co-founder of Un-Convention, 2:35
- Video 32: Tom Norwood, Craft and Design Centre, 2:27
- Video 33: Emma Fox, Manchester Guided Tours – 4:03
- Video 34: Peter Pan and Wendy, 1:24

Familiar Faces, Birmingham:

- Video 1: Lucy Kite, ITV News, 1:32
- Video 2: Jenny, Cadbury World Chocolatier, 2:41
- Video 3: Laura Mvula, singer, 4:15
- Video 4: Steven Knight, film director, 1:07
- Video 5: Jasper Carrott, comedian, 0:37
- Video 6: Ashley Westwood, footballer 0:54
- Video 7: Glynn Purnell, chef, 1:42
- Video 8: Nick Owen, newsreader, 2:06
- Video 9: Chris Burke, footballer, 2:01
- Video 10: Jake Hughes, BMW Junior Driver, 1:08
- Video 11: Danielle O'Hara, model, 0:23
- Video 12: Aktar Islam, chef, 1:23
- Video 13: Jonathan Spector, footballer, 1:27
- Video 14: Jed Steer, AVFC, 1:01

Spotted by Locals, Antwerp:

- Spotter 1: Britt Marien (1986)
- Spotter 2: Igor Daems (1976)
- Spotter 3: Kevin Ducheyne (1982)
- Spotter 4: Marcia Poelman (1979)
- Spotter 5: Niko Caignie (1977)
- Article 1: 71 Markt van Morgen – New designer talent
- Article 2: 106 Yuna – Sushi, a guilty pleasure!
- Article 3: 91 Queen of waffles – Transcendent waffles in A-town!
- Article 4: 37 Den Draak – LGBT bar and general Zurenborg hot spot
- Article 5: 86 Permeke Library – Reading in a former car workshop
- Article 6: 27 Ciné Pistolé – Breakfast at the movies
- Article 7: 81 Normo – Coffee haven & heaven
- Article 8: 93 Saint Paul's church – 16th century splendor!
- Article 9: 56 Illy Espresso Shop – My Italian Coffee fix
- Article 10: 62 King of Bombay – For spicy & mild curry enthusiasts
- Article 11: 43 Estrela Do Mar – Portugal & Karaoke

Spotted by Locals, Manchester

- Spotter 1: Gareth Wane (1979)
- Spotter 2: Ioana Craescu (1986)
- Spotter 3: Kirsty Tyre (1982)
- Spotter 4: Paul Coleman (1972)
- Spotter 5: Roisin Weintraub (1978)
- Article 1: 42 Hulme Garden Centre – Quirky plants
- Article 2: 84 Rutherford Building – Manchester splits the atom
- Article 3: 58 Montpellier's – Continental cafe & restaurant
- Article 4: 98 The Cheese Hamlet – Cheesy heaven
- Article 5: 36 Grindsmith – Coffee science in a pod
- Article 6: 109 The Ritz – It's got a bouncy dance floor!
- Article 7: 26 Eastern Bloc Records – If only the shop could talk

- Article 8: 86 Sam's Chop House – Have a drink with LS Lowry
- Article 9: 67 OutHouse Project – A super artsy public toilet
- Article 10: 51 Manchester Art Gallery – Arts for all
- Article 11: 88 Seoul kimchi – My favourite Ajima
- Article 12: 71 PopupBikes – Quirky bike repair & coffee shop