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Improving the vitality and viability of the UK High Street by 2020

Identifying priorities and a framework for action

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to document the results and the impact of the ESRC-funded High Street UK 2020 (HSUK2020), a project designed to take the existing academic knowledge relating to retail and high street change directly to UK High Streets, to improve local decision-making and, ultimately, their vitality and viability.

Design/methodology/approach – Through a systematic literature review, and by following the tenets of engaged scholarship, the authors identified 201 factors that influence the vitality and viability of town centres. Through the consensus-building Delphi technique, a panel of 20 retail experts identified the top 25 priorities for action.

Findings – Taking a place management approach led to the development of a more strategic framework for regeneration, which consisted of repositioning, reinventing, rebranding and restructuring strategies (4R's of regeneration). Collaboration with the project towns resulted in identification of the strategy area that would

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add the most value, and the impact of the 4R's and the top 25 priorities is demonstrated via numerous town examples.

Originality/value – Knowledge exchange projects, such as High Street UK2020, have an important contribution to make, not by developing even more theory that is unlikely to get utilised, instead their contribution is to bring existing theory into practical use.

Keywords Retailing, High street, Knowledge exchange, Place management

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

UK High Streets are facing a period of turbulent change. The global economic crisis of 2007-2009 along with the development of out-of-town and online retailing have directly affected the vitality and viability of high streets, leading to store closures and unemployment (Hart *et al.*, 2013). The enormity and complexity of the problem has made it difficult for high street stakeholders to respond effectively. Therefore, this paper argues that it is necessary for academic scholarship not only to develop theory but also to demonstrate how theoretical concepts can be used to better inform practice. The goal of this paper is thus to make an academic contribution that is useful to practitioners and policymakers trying to effect positive change. To meet this need, the ESRC-funded High Street 2020 UK project set out to take existing academic knowledge relating to retail centre change directly to UK High Streets, to improve local decision-making and, ultimately, their vitality and viability. Ten partner locations[1] were selected to work with a team of academics from five universities[2]. Full details of the methodology used can be found in another paper in this special issue *HSUK2020: A model of engaged scholarship* (Ntounis and Parker, 2017), but in summary, the project was carried out in three stages. First, through a systematic review of the literature and a more engaged model of scholarship, the project identified 201 factors that influence the performance of the UK High Street. Second, from this longlist of 201 factors, a combination of experts and the consensus-building Delphi technique distilled the top 25 priorities for action that local stakeholders should focus on. Finally, given the disparate nature of the evidence base, a framework for high street regeneration (repositioning, reinventing, rebranding and restructuring) was built by the research team and applied in the partner towns to give a more coherent and strategic steer for action in the medium to longer term. The paper ends with a brief summary of some of the impact the project has had so far and our overall reflections on the experience.

A brief history of retail centre research

Despite the claims that high streets and towns centres have undergone dramatic changes recently (Wrigley and Lambiri, 2014), dramatic changes have been a constantly recurruing theme in research into retail centres. In the 1920s and 1930s, early research relevant to retail centres came from economists studying agglomeration (Hotelling, 1929; Reilly, 1931) in response to increased urbanisation or geographers studying consumers and travel (Christaller, 1933), as a result of rising car ownership. The principle here being that there are benefits to both the consumer and retailer of co-location. For the consumer, collections of shops are associated with a reduction of effort (Hotelling, 1929) as people can just visit one location rather than have to travel to many. Co-location of similar stores also allows the consumer to comparison shop (Harris and Shonkwiler, 1997) and reduce uncertainties (McLafferty and Ghosh, 1986). For the retailer, agglomerations offer supply-side-type benefits, through, for example, decreasing labour and other input costs (Marshall, 1890) or by the sharing of facilities and infrastructure such as car-parking (Teller and Reutterer,

2008) or transport modes (Brockman, 2008). As The Law of Retail Gravitation (Reilly, 1931) states, the bigger the centre, the more attractive it is and the more successful it will be in attracting customers from a specific catchment area (Carruthers, 1967; Dennis *et al.*, 2002; Reilly, 1931; Teller and Schnedlitz, 2012). The study of retail centre attractiveness has since been extended to include non-traditional centres, such as out-of-town retail parks. For example, Eppli and Shilling (1996) found that in keeping with findings from traditional retail agglomerations, larger shopping centres attract more consumers than smaller shopping centres.

The spatial/economic models of the 1920s and 1930s that dominated retail centre research gradually began to be augmented by more information about groups of consumers. As the 1930s unfolded, initial attempts to understand footfall in a more sophisticated fashion began. Meserole (1935) took into account qualitative variability in pedestrian traffic (such as level of affluence, time of day and proportion of children). The relationships between geographical and catchment areas were further investigated to assist retail managers in the selection of appropriate retailing mixes and strategies based on the geography, demand and heterogeneity of these trade areas (Rosenbloom, 1976). Segmentation and targeting are still seen as crucial when developing marketing and communications activities for retail centres wanting to improve their performance (Teller *et al.*, 2008; Warnaby *et al.*, 2005; Westbrook and Black, 1985).

During the 1940s, the need to identify trade drivers for store location and developments became increasingly important, and quantitative methods of city classifications, based on the activity of greatest importance for each city/town (manufacturing cities, retail centres, diversified cities, wholesale centres, university towns, etc.) and relating it to the kind of business, were proposed (Harris, 1943). These classifications progressed into hierarchical classifications of shopping centres and retail outlets based on number of stores and net attraction of the centres' locations (Carruthers, 1957, 1967), physical characteristics of retail locations (Brown, 1992), number of multiple, comparison goods retailers (Reynolds and Schiller, 1992) and on types of goods sold and types of shopping trips (Guy, 1998b). These classifications can benefit centre development by understanding consumer demand, forecasting future trends and developing appropriate retail mixes, store designs and local marketing strategies (Wood and Reynolds, 2012).

Also during the 1940s, the rise of chain stores continued rapidly at the expense of independents. Better merchandising, marketing, lower pricing and ability to operate on a lower profit margin, as well as advanced location selection, training, productivity, distribution and public relations with consumers (Beattie, 1943; Beckley, 1949; Jones, 1948; Phillips, 1941), are some of the factors that still drive chain store expansion into the current century (Karamychev and van Reeven, 2009). In contrast, the negative impact that large-scale retailing can pose to a local economy began to be identified (Phillips, 1941). Restrictions and the first signs of local resistance started to emerge in favour of local merchants with the creation of anti-chain store movements and the rise of the "localist" ideology (Schragger, 2005). Local resistance is still in evidence in some town centres (Hallsworth and Worthington, 2000) in an attempt to support local businesses as well as long-term town prosperity (Pryor and Grossbart, 2005). However, the overall impact of chain stores on local businesses is not clear as town centres can react differently (both positively or negatively) to these forces of change (Henderson, 2011; Wrigley *et al.*, 2009).

The 1950s saw the introduction of the enclosed, climate-controlled mall (Jackson, 1996) and the scientific study of this new channel began to emerge in the literature, firstly with investigating locational processes used in selecting shopping centres' sites (Kelley, 1956). Subsequently, with the spread of the mall during the 1960s, researchers investigated factors such as mall strategies and shopping goods (Dommermuth and Cundiff, 1967), shoppers' movements outside their local retail areas (Herrmann and Beik, 1968), the influence of drive time in shopping centre preference (Brunner and Mason, 1968) and retail centre patronage (Moore and Mason, 1969).

In the 1970s, retail decentralisation was also starting to occur in the UK and Europe; part of the retail revolution changed retail geographies of cities mainly due to technological, organisational and marketing changes, as well as a loosening of planning constraints (Bromley and Thomas, 1993; Collis *et al.*, 2000) and other forms of retail deregulation, such as the outlawing of retail price maintenance. In an increasingly competitive retail environment, with a growing array of stores and channels, retail researchers responded by investigating non-retail-related consumer motivations to shop at these centres, including physical facilities and clientele (Hansen and Deutscher, 1977), cleanliness, presence/quality of bars, restaurants, leisure/sport facilities (Gentry and Burns, 1977; Moore and Lochhead, 1997) and availability of child-minding centres/baby parks (MacLaurin, 1974). While non-retail related factors were increasingly hypothesised to influence store/centre choice, according to Teller and Reutterer (2008, p. 134), retail remained a key driver of centre success, as "(f)ood and entertainment doesn't drive shoppers' evaluations of satisfaction with retail centres/streets. Shops do". Nevertheless, parking availability and quality, convenience and functionality are still important attributes for car-borne shoppers and partially justify their preference for out-of-town shopping centres rather than town centres (Reimers, 2013).

With more out-of-town development, UK researchers (such as Clarke *et al.*, 2006; Guy, 1998a; Whysall, 1995) assessed its impact on traditional centres, mirroring previous research in the USA where the "move-to-the-suburbs" trend had hit major downtowns hard (Pratt and Pratt, 1960). However, it is not just out-of-town developments that have impacted upon the UK High Street. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, UK urban centres were developed to incorporate covered malls and multi-level shopping (Jones and Orr, 1999). The widespread adoption of a US out of-town format in many UK towns has been heavily criticised. For example, as Hobday (1982, p. 14) asserts, "Large scale retail experience has been mistakenly applied to smaller town centres, which have totally different problems and needs".

During the 1980s, important changes such as the rise of female employment, increasing car ownership and suburbanisation of population led to an increasing length of major grocery shopping trips (Guy, 1985). Researchers also started to more thoroughly examine the experiential and behavioural perspectives of consumer behaviour (Gabbott and Hogg, 1994), such as unplanned impulse/compulsive buying (Weinberg and Gottwald, 1982; O'Guinn and Faber, 1989) or browsing behaviour in retail establishments (Bloch and Richins, 1983). These studies highlighted the importance of shopping centre/mall design and the role of the built environment in streets/malls in facilitating consumption (Gottdiener, 1986). Marketing innovations such as instant credit, credit cards, cash machines and 24-h retailing (Rook, 1987) also contributed to the rise of impulse buying and further increased consumers' demand for convenience, which in turn fuelled the development of more out-of-town malls, supermarkets and retail parks. This eventually triggered government action against edge- and out-of-town retail development (Reynolds and Schiller, 1992).

Planning policy interventions to encourage development in the "town centre first", the town centre management movement was instigated (Jones, 1990). Originally financed by major retailers who saw themselves as long-term high street channel members (such as Boots and Sainsbury's), the "philosophy" of managing and marketing the high street came directly from innovations in shopping centre management (Martin, 1982; Morris, 1988) and the improvement of tenant/manager relations (Prendergast *et al.*, 1987). The premise being cleaner and safer centres, with retailers working in partnership (Williams, 1995), would attract more visitors (Jones, 1990). Retail-led regeneration continued to be the major driver of town and city centre development in the 1990s (Findlay and Sparks, 2008). Researchers, in turn, began to investigate stakeholder power (Pal and Sanders, 1997) and motivations.

In the new millennium, the growth of the internet as a shopping channel has prompted an increasing focus on the "USP" of the high street, with researchers identifying reputation (Hart *et al.*, 2013), place marketing (Kavaratzis, 2007), heritage (Whitehead *et al.*, 2006) and urban design (De Nisco and Warnaby, 2014) as important components. Other authors have looked at the opportunities for local shopping that may come from, for example, an ageing population (De Kervenoael *et al.*, 2006) or an increasing interest from retail into local corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities (Oppewal *et al.*, 2006). Alongside this has been more interest in the models of partnership that are adopted to facilitate collaboration (Coca-Stefaniak *et al.*, 2009) and improve the centre experience, such as the adoption of business improvement districts (De Magalhães, 2012). However, this is against a back-drop of a society that is becoming increasingly critical of neo-liberalism and distrustful of public–private partnerships (Peel, 2003). Currently, town centre research has taken somewhat of a technical turn and is focussing upon the potential for, and integration of, digital technologies (Fletcher *et al.*, 2016) as well as the use of big data (Kitchin, 2014) and application of "smart" solutions (Graham and Peleg, 2017).

The research problem

Our brief review of retail centre research demonstrates that high streets and town centres are subject to a staggering number of forces of change. The difficulties localities face in tackling decline is, in part, due to the complexity and diversity of the problem (Peel, 2010). The people who need to manage the resultant changes in spatial requirement must also understand the complexity of forces that influence change (Clarke *et al.*, 1997; Hernandez *et al.*, 1998; Pioch and Byrom, 2004); the multi-disciplinary nature of the evidence base (Palmer *et al.*, 2006); and the multitude of stakeholders (Pal and Sanders, 1997) that make up the high street if they are to play a proactive role in shaping its future. The problem is that academic and professional knowledge is fragmented, and the study of retail change in particular geographic locations is limited (Wang, 2011).

As urban change is not consistently underpinned by reliable information (Wrigley and Lambiri, 2014), the main aim of the High Street UK 2020 project was to channel existing academic knowledge relating to retail centre change directly to decision makers in individual locations. In particular, the project partners wanted to know what factors/trends were having the most impact upon their high streets and what they could do about these. The approach was informed by the work of Webber, who, in his seminal paper "The Myth of rationality: development planning reconsidered", questions the model of development planning and concludes that comprehensive development planning is blocked on all sides by insufficient knowledge (Webber, 1983). He observed that there is usually a lack of factual data on extant conditions and little explanatory (causal) theory resulting in limited instrumental knowledge (Webber, 1983; also see Slater *et al.*, 2012). Previous research has also identified that many initiatives to support the high street are not nuanced enough to meet the needs of the locality (Byrom *et al.*, 2000; Hudson-Davies *et al.*, 2002; Parker *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, the project worked directly with ten locations, facilitating the exchange of knowledge through the range of methods outlined below.

Method

To improve high street decision-making through exchanging knowledge of relevance and rigour between high street stakeholders and researchers, we applied a model of engaged scholarship. Engaged scholarship is a participative form of research for obtaining the views of key stakeholders to understand a complex problem in its particular context (Van de Ven, 2007). This informed our research methods, as we engaged, communicated and exchanged knowledge and ideas with academics, practitioners and local people. This engaged scholarship provides a useful model of high street performance that not only resonated with the "on the ground" reality (Rescher, 2003) but also could be easily interpreted by all high street stakeholders and inform towns' development plans.

The aim of the research had already been agreed across the project to understand what factors/trends impacted upon high streets and what could be done in response to these. Due to the complexity of forces that shape the high street, no one study had ever attempted to examine all these concurrently. Therefore, to identify the factors, a systematic literature review was undertaken. All the methodological details of the project are contained within a separate paper in this special issue: "HSUK2020: A model of engaged scholarship" (Ntounis and Parker, 2017). However, in brief, the parameters for the review included any peer-reviewed study, published in English, that investigated a factor and related this to retail centre performance, which, for the purposes of the project, we interpreted as "vitality and viability" – a common interpretation of retail centre performance (Barata-Salgueiro and Erkip, 2014).

The findings from the systematic literature review were then reviewed by the partner towns during a full day workshop, with the people present contributing 50 additional factors that they felt, from their practical experience, were missing from our literature review (Parker *et al.*, 2014). This then resulted in a final list of 201 factors that influence the vitality and viability of retail centres. Although this list was of interest to the town stakeholders, it could not help them prioritise their actions. What the stakeholders really wanted to know was:

RQ1. How much *impact* does each factor have on vitality and viability?

RQ2. How much *influence* could the high street (local stakeholders) have over the factor?

A rank order of factors, in terms of:

- their impact on vitality and viability; and
- the influence the location has over the factor was established through the use of the Delphi Technique and a panel of 22 leading retail experts (academics and practitioners).

As stated previously, the full methodology is written up as a separate paper in this special issue (Ntounis and Parker, 2017), as the focus of this paper is the project's findings and application. This ranking was used to develop a model of high street action (High Street UK 2020) for the ten locations. The first stage of the project culminated in a series of local workshops in the ten locations, bringing together retailers and local actors and agencies to use the model to understand the nature of the retail challenge faced by that location and to agree some short-term priorities for action.

The second stage of the project focused upon building a framework for managing medium to longer-term change (interpreted as regeneration or development) from the range of literatures that contain empirical findings relating to interventions. Leading academic experts, who acted as visiting researchers in the project, informed the development of this framework. The research team reviewed and distilled the evidence relating to development interventions and their implications, developing the broad themes of "repositioning", "reinventing", "rebranding" and "restructuring" (The 4Rs). National workshops on these themes were led by the academic experts and attended by stakeholders of the ten high streets. After the workshops, surgery sessions with the towns and the experts were held to identify the regeneration or development strategy that was most likely to have a positive impact if it were to be adopted by the town. This was then followed up with additional workshops in the partner locations and the development and implementation of town specific HSUK2020 plans.

Results

After two rounds of the Delphi process, consensus over both the *impact* upon and *influence* over rankings was reached for 191 of 201 of the factors. This 95 per cent consensus level was deemed acceptable by the project team when compared to similar Delphi studies, and the consensus scores were transferred to the model (a full list of factors with their Delphi scores are contained in Appendix 1). Where consensus had not been reached, the mean scores for these factors were calculated using respondents' scores from both rounds. Plotting each factor on the two axis (impact and influence) generates the scattergram in Figure 1 with four quadrants that the project team along with partners labelled "Get on with it!", "Live with it!", "Ignore it!" and "Forget it!".

Identifying priorities for action

The "Get on with it!" quadrant represents all the factors that the Delphi respondents identified as ones that could be influenced by local stakeholders. The factors in this quadrant are also the ones that have greater influence on high street vitality and viability.

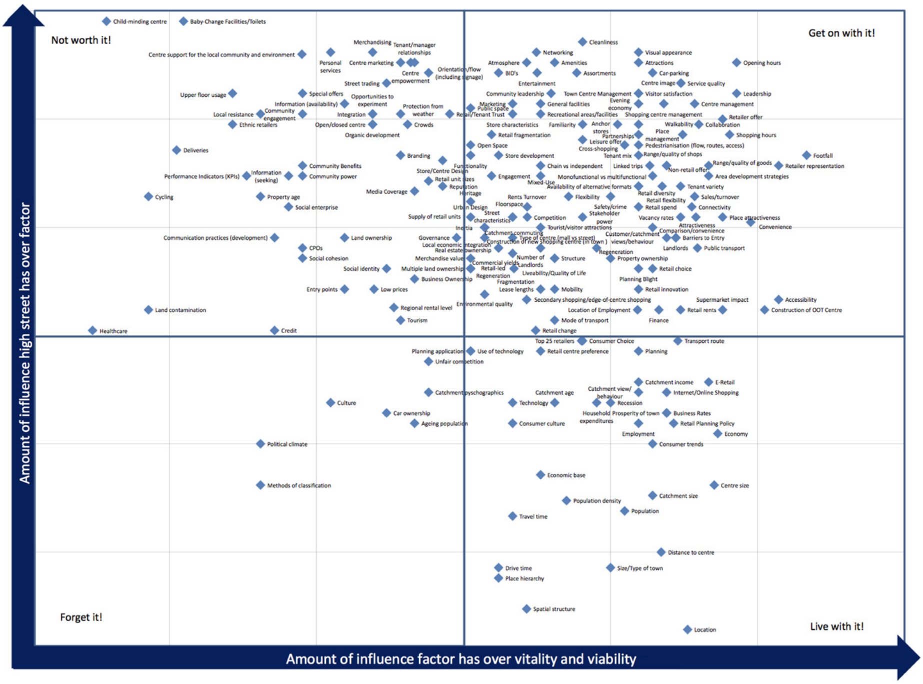

Figure 1.
HSUK2020 scattergram

The very crowded nature of the quadrant means many of the factors identified through the systematic literature review and by our HSUK2020 partners are located here. On the one hand, this is heartening, as one hopes that academics will study those factors of most relevance to High Street change. On the other hand, there are still 99 factors in this area. A number our high street partners (the people that had to put these findings into practice) found this number overwhelming and off-putting.

To bring the number down to one perceived as more manageable, we proceeded to identify the 25 priority actions within this quadrant. These were identified through combining factors that were grouped into meaningful categories, both statistically and in terms of face validity (Ntounis and Parker, 2017). The Top 25 priorities for high street action are presented in Table I. Priorities presented in capitals represent two or more of the original 201 factors. Priorities identified in lower case represent just one factor. The High Street UK 2020 towns used this list to audit their performance and identify areas that they could start to work on straight away. Average feedback from the 180 delegates that attended the workshops to the question "it is helpful to know what factors we can influence locally" was 4.5/5. The overall score for "how worthwhile was the workshop" was was 4.49/5. The score for how much the workshop would help future town centre decision-making was 4.24/5.

Identifying a framework for regeneration

Utilising the Delphi Technique, and engaging experts from a range of disciplines (retail, geography, planning, urban regeneration, public administration, management, marketing, etc.), fostered cross-disciplinary knowledge exchange, helping to broaden the "real-world" understanding of a research problem in context (the changing nature of the high street). A range of other stakeholders were also involved in the identification of the 25 priorities for action (Table I), for example, retailers, retail property owners, consultants, town centre managers, economic development professionals, Councillors and MPs. The 25 priorities were practically orientated and, given their ability to be controlled or influenced at a town level, were fairly internally focussed. This posed a barrier to a more strategic attempt to guide regeneration in the towns. One of the fundamental premises that drives regeneration in town centres is the competitive tension between towns and cities (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990; van den Berg and Braun, 1999), which is obviously externally focussed. Likewise, retailing is one of the many factors identified as necessary to a place's attempt to attract capital from *elsewhere* (Niedomysl and Jonasson, 2012). The next stage of the project entailed taking more of a discipline-led approach to the development of a more strategic framework for regeneration that took account of the more meso and macro factors and trends that were not the focus of the 25 priorities for action.

In addition to the core project team, four leading academics representing discipline or sub-discipline areas were engaged as visiting researchers to help develop more of a strategic approach to managing change, which still complemented the 25 priorities for action. Professor Deborah Peel summarised literatures on planning and governance; Dr Jonathan Reynolds provided insight on economic geography and retailing; Dr Mihalis Kavaratzis undertook a literature review on place marketing and branding; and John Pal summarised relevant developments in retailing and services marketing. Subsequent discussion between all the academics on the project led to the development of a new framework: "The 4 R's of Regeneration" (Figure 2). These R's consist of *repositioning*, *reinventing*, *rebranding* and *restructuring* strategies, and each was the focus of an expert workshop, the content of which is summarised below. Each of the 4Rs is important as town centres adapt to change and seek to improve their prognosis. Through reviewing all the notes from the town workshops, strategic documents, and in partnership with the local project stakeholders, the research

Priority	Considerations
1. Activity hours	Ensuring the centre is open when the catchment needs it. What are the shopping hours? Is there an evening economy? Do the activity hours of the centre match the needs of the catchment?
2. Appearance	Improving the quality of the visual appearance and aesthetics. How clean is the centre? What is the quality of the public realm?
3. Retailers	Offering the right type and quantity of retailers. What retailers are represented (this includes retailers of products and services)?
4. Vision and strategy	Having a common vision and some leadership. Do the High Street stakeholders collaborate? Is the vision incorporated in local plans? Is the vision adopted in stakeholders plans?
5. Experience	Considering the quality of the experience. Measuring levels of service quality and visitor satisfaction. What is the overall image or offer of the centre?
6. Management	Building capacity to get things done. Is there effective management of the shopping centre (s) and town centre?
7. Merchandise	Meeting the needs of the catchment. What is the range and quality of goods on offer?
8. Necessities	Ensuring basic facilities are present and maintained. Is there appropriate car-parking; amenities; general facilities, like places to sit down and toilets?
9. Anchors	The presence of an anchor which drives footfall. This could be retail (like a department store) or could be a busy transport interchange or large employer
10. Networks and partnerships with council	Presence of strong networks and effective formal or informal partnerships. Do stakeholders communicate and trust each other? Can the council facilitate action (not just lead it)?
11. Diversity	A multi-functional centre. What attractions are there, apart from retail? What is the tenant mix and tenant variety?
12. Walking	The "walkability" of the centre. Are linked trips between areas possible – or are the distances too great? Are there other obstacles that stop people walking?
13. Entertainment and leisure	An entertainment and leisure offer. What is it? Is it attractive to various segments of the catchment?
14. Attractiveness	The "pulling power" of a centre. Can it attract people from a distance?
15. Place assurance	Getting the basics right. Does the centre offer a basic level of customer service; is this consistent? Or do some operators, or parts of the offer, let this down?
16. Accessible	Ease of reach. How convenient is the centre to access? Is it accessible by a number of different means, e.g. car, public transport, cycling?
17. Place marketing	Communicating the offer. How does the centre market and promote itself? Do enough stakeholders communicate in a way that builds a coherent message? How well does the centre orientate visitors and encourage flow – with signage and guides
18. Comparison/convenience	The amount of comparison shopping opportunities compared to convenience (usually in percentage terms). Is this sustainable?
19. Recreational space	The amount and quality of recreational areas and public space/open space. Are there places that are uncommodified? Where people can enjoy spending time without spending money?
20. Barriers to entry	Refers to obstacles that make it difficult for interested retailers to enter the local market. What is the location doing to make it easier for new businesses to come onto the High Street?
21. Chain vs Independent	Number of multiples stores and independent stores in the retail mix of a centre/High Street. Is this suitably balanced?

(*continued*)

Table I.
Top 25 priorities for high street action

Priority	Considerations
22. Safety/crime	A centre KPI measuring perceptions or actual crime including shoplifting. Perceptions of crime are usually higher than actual crime rates. Does the centre monitor these and how does it communicate results to stakeholders?
23. Liveable	The resident population or potential for residential in the centre. Does the centre offer the services/environment that residents need? Doctors, schools, playgrounds, etc.
24. Adaptability	The flexibility of the space/property in a centre. Are there inflexible and outdated units that are unlikely to be re-let or re-purposed?
25. Store development	The willingness for retailers/property owners to develop their stores. Are they willing to coordinate/cooperate in updating activities? Or do they act independently (or not at all)?

Table I.

Figure 2.
The 4Rs framework

team identified the strategy area (or R) that could add most value to the existing place management activity, in each of the ten towns. In Market Rasen and Morley this was repositioning. For Ballymena and Barnsley it was reinventing. For Alsager, Altrincham and Holmfirth it was rebranding. Finally, In Congleton, St George Bristol and Wrexham it was restructuring. The 4R's are explored in much more detail within this special issue, as each one has an article dedicated to it.

Repositioning is a strategy focused on identifying a purpose or vision through the effective gathering and analysis of relevant data. Rapid economic, political and social changes are most likely to lead places to repositioning strategies that will allow them to identify potential competitive advantages (Kavaratzis and Ashworth, 2008) or counteract decline (Smith, 2004). Therefore, the focus of the expert workshop was on understanding the forces of change and the value of unique responses that reposition individual high streets and to build on distinct capabilities (such as local identity), whilst remaining accommodative of future trends (such as an ageing population or the growth of m-commerce). Repositioning could thus lead to town centres that are more resilient (Wrigley and Dolega, 2011). The expert workshop drew heavily from theory found in economic geography and principles of market research. An effective analysis of customer needs and the local economy can help high streets to recognise the failures of previous strategies, identify new ways of expanding their economic activities and help them to find opportunities for improving existing retail stores (Kures and Ryan, 2012).

A sustainable or resilient high street is one that adapts to the changing needs and expectations of customers and can identify useful metrics related to the local catchment and demographic change (Wood and Reynolds, 2012). Obtaining up-to-date and relevant data enables towns to position themselves relevant to their catchment, to other towns and to trends, such as the increase in internet shopping and the concentration of comparison retail in the major centres. However, the problem for the HSUK2020 project towns focussing upon repositioning was that the current information or data they had or, more often than not, the information or data that were collected on their behalf, was not useful for strategic repositioning. There was very little focus upon the type of information that would enable them to anticipate and adapt to change, like footfall data, for example. These metrics are important to explain the preference of the users for specific shopping streets (Ercoskun and Ozuduru, 2014) and to support the development of initiatives aimed at changing the nature of, or *reinventing*, the high street (Carmona, 2015).

Reinventing is a strategy that refers to taking action. It is the ability of retail locations to adapt and innovate in unfavourable and uncertain contexts, e.g. the declining high street. The expert workshop drew heavily from retailing and marketing literature – as any new developments should be guided by the marketing principle of meeting the needs/wants of identified target audiences (Ashworth and Voogd, 1990). Likewise, retailing is an important element of the urban place product and "reinventing" this sector along with improvements to complimentary elements of place can contribute to a better understanding of the formation of the "holistic" place product (Warnaby *et al.*, 2005). Retail stores have used different reinventing strategies such as extending opening hours, segmenting store offers to new market niches or reducing the size of the establishment to adapt to the physical conditions of the high street (Pal and Byrom, 2003). These strategies are just as applicable to retail locations, as they are to retail stores. The "reinventing" process of urban places should be built on activities that aim to revitalise a place's identity and image; identity and image can be seen as both static (for communicative purposes in a fixed time) and dynamic, which recognises the uniqueness of each place and the difference in each stakeholder's view about a place (Kalandides, 2011; Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013). It is the latter view of identities and images that can be used as a driver for reinventing places such as high streets and city centres; a framework built on these premises can unarguably assist the development of rejuvenated, competitive retailing spaces, which will merge innovation and local place identity and will be meaningful for all stakeholders (Coca-Stefaniak *et al.*, 2009).

After the economic collapse of 2008, most of the ten towns in the project were suffering from a lack of innovation because there was little investment, thus making reinventing difficult. However, by focussing upon more temporary or pop-up change, the reinventing process could begin, even with limited budgets. One of the most important discoveries of the project was the role of flexible and adaptable space in town centres, such as market places, that could be "reinvented" on different days of the week or at different times of the day, to provide a more relevant offer and to meet the needs and expectations of the catchment

(Millington *et al.*, 2015). Undoubtedly, reinventing relied upon changes on the ground, but on their own, these changes were not enough. People need to know about and experience them.

Rebranding focused upon on the communication of image and identity, as previous studies demonstrate that place consumers may find that the place experience meets or exceeds expectations, whilst the image of the place is "problematic" (Blichfeldt, 2005; Selby, 2004; Stachow and Hart, 2010). For the purpose of this project, rebranding tended to focus upon the application of branding, marketing communications and public relations techniques to deliver an improved place image; a sum of beliefs, ideas and impressions in the minds of potential consumers of a place (Kotler and Gertner, 2002). Overall, rebranding was considered as a communicative strategy aimed at managing the reputation of high streets and drew most inspiration from the place marketing literature.

Even though it is impossible to control all the communication media (e.g. word of mouth and direct experience of the consumer with the high street), high street stakeholders developed promotional activities such as advertising, sales promotion, personal selling, public relations, sponsorships, direct marketing and internet to deliver an attractive image (Warnaby and Yip, 2005). Place branding was also considered as the "organising principle" for integrating measures (e.g. events, media relations, residents' participation). Place branding can evoke favourable place images that transfer emotional and self-expression values, as well as utilitarian attributes to individuals (Caldwell and Freire, 2004). Successful place brand management can lead to positive word-of-mouth and also assist in the transformation of negative images (Hanna and Rowley, 2011; Skinner, 2011). The need to identify how potential stakeholders can co-create the place brand has been the focus of recent developments in place branding (Hatch and Schultz, 2010; Warnaby, 2009), and this aspect was particularly popular amongst the partner towns. High streets, and particularly the retail sector, with the multitude of stakeholders involved in it (e.g. users, brokers and fixers) (Pal and Sanders, 1997), can highlight the desires, needs and views of those stakeholders, which can lead to a better understanding of how place brands are created and evolve (Hanna and Rowley, 2011; Kavaratzis and Hatch, 2013). In particular, the expert workshop explored stakeholder involvement in the creation, development and ownership of place brands (Kavaratzis, 2012).

The towns that embarked upon a strategy of rebranding, in the short-term anyway, made the most progress. Unlike repositioning, which requires a certain amount of evidence and technical expertise in analysis and reinventing, which needs considerable investment (of money and/or time and effort), rebranding was seen as "quick fix" – a strategy that could unite stakeholders in some focussed effort fairly quickly. Unlike planning, governance or retailing, branding was seen as "free space" that did not need huge amounts of expert skills, knowledge or capital. Nevertheless, despite the initial success of a place branding campaign in one of the towns, it did little to solve the problems of division and the entrenched views amongst stakeholder groups. In fact, the brand became associated with the people using it; a tactic used by the rival group who wanted to undermine the success of the campaign. This highlights the importance of people and power in places and the need to, sometimes, restructure governance arrangements.

Restructuring, focused upon these people/power issues through examining different forms of management and governance, including formal and informal (Coca-Stefaniak *et al.*, 2009; Peel, 2003); regulatory, functional and contractual (Lloyd and Peel, 2008; Peel *et al.*, 2009); and structures for communication/knowledge exchange (Peel and Lloyd, 2008). Consequently, the major point of interest was how the organisations or partnerships that manage high streets can be restructured to facilitate all the changes mentioned so far. Restructuring can be interpreted as a management, governance or collaborative strategy focused on understanding the specific role that many parts of the society (i.e. market, government and society) play in the configuration of the high street. The complex nature of the high street requires an effective form of management and leadership capable of creating strategic networks and encouraging the involvement of stakeholders and local community in decision-making processes (De Magalhães, 2012; Peel *et al.*, 2009). Practices that entail both commercial and locational benefits are seen as the best way forward (Bennison *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, restructuring was interpreted to mean the cooperation of place stakeholders and creation of strategic networks and public–private relationships that will nurture conditions for the sustainable development of a place (van den Berg and Braun, 1999; Rainisto, 2003).

Restructuring also involves large urban transformation projects, such as the physical improvements of the town centre. In the case of retailing, the best spaces created from restructuring can enliven the high street and also shape a better image for the place which can enhance retail operations (Pal and Byrom, 2003). However, the drivers of these regeneration projects can often represent quite narrow interests (De Nisco *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, the active involvement of local stakeholders in earlier stages can contribute to their definition, acceptance and, consequently, the success of a regeneration project (Coca-Stefaniak and Bagaeen, 2013). Not surprisingly, restructuring drew primarily from planning and public administration literatures.

Perhaps perceived as the most challenging strategy, the governance structure in one of the towns started to change remarkably quickly. The existing partnership was perceived as not action-orientated enough for some of the retail stakeholders. Therefore, the retailers looked at the 25 priorities for action and identified those they could "get on with". Speaking at a Town Centre Forum Meeting, the Chairman Nigel Lewis said:

> This arose as a result of the work that Manchester (Metropolitan) University had done. They found there are 25 priorities and how we would tackle those. We had a meeting where the university attended, meeting in the council chambers. We broke up into small groups and started actioning things, such as street clean ups, street festivals and we influenced parking charges. We are recognising that the council have officers and members dealing with issues in the town centre, and we have many volunteers. We don't want to duplicate things and together we want to tackle things that need it and make sure that they are prioritized (Wrexham.com, 2016).

This action changed the dynamic of the partnership considerably, and the town has now gone on to develop a new governance structure to manage town centre activity and development (see below).

As a result of applying the framework in the ten locations it became apparent that there was some relationship between the number of stakeholders that needed to be engaged, the amount of resource that was needed to be invested and the likely success of the approach adopted. Repositioning and reinventing appeared to need less stakeholder involvement than rebranding and restructuring. On the other hand, reinventing and restructuring needed significantly more resources (money for reinventing and time for restructuring) than repositioning and rebranding. This finding has been introduced into the 4R's framework in Figure 3.

Impact

Both the 25 priorities, in the short-term, and the 4R's, in the medium term, have enabled a multitude of stakeholders in towns to get involved in making their high streets more vital and viable. Over 180 people attended workshops in their local town centre to contribute to the High Street UK 2020 projects. From now on, any other high street or town centre can use the list of 25 priority actions as a health-check or to focus activity and resources on interventions

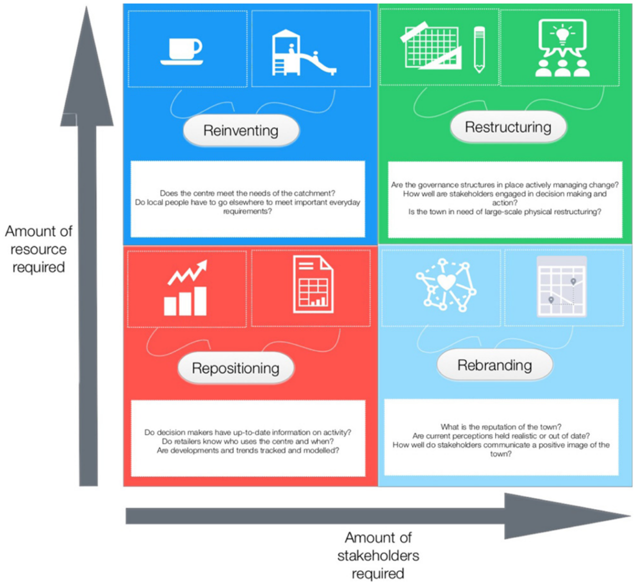

Figure 3.
4Rs framework incorporating stakeholder and resource considerations

that will have the most impact on vitality and viability. The findings from the High Street UK 2020 project have been very popular, and the team have been invited to more than 25 conferences and events worldwide to speak to a collective audience of over 5,000 people.

The "good news" that has been generated from this project is also worth mentioning. Many local papers and radio stations tend to focus on "doom and gloom" stories about the High Street. However, the combination of the range of stakeholders involved, the kudos of quality research and the workshops held in towns made for interesting local news stories. The local media in each of the ten towns covered the High Street UK 2020 project at least once. In total, the project resulted in 80 news articles, in local papers, on local radio and on websites, such as BBC Wales. Whilst getting favorable media coverage was a welcome outcome, the main purpose of the project was to improve the vitality and viability of specific high streets, through the process of knowledge exchange. Whilst the other articles in the special issue cover this process in more detail, we include a brief summary of some of the impact the project has had "on the ground", using the framework of the 4Rs (repositioning, reinventing, rebranding and restructuring).

Morley approached repositioning in several ways. They worked closely with a wide range of stakeholders to share and analyse information and data, including the nearby out of town shopping centre. The group also looked into how to gather missing data, which resulted in a footfall counter being installed in the main street (positioned on the local MPs office as she saw how this would benefit the centre). A better understanding of the town and how it was performing has enabled many new initiatives to be taken. Clear evidence of demand led to the introduction of some additional car parking (Morley Observer, 2016a), whereas trader concerns about quieter shopping areas, in addition to the finding that "89 per cent of all Morley businesses are independently run, allowing the town to offer a bespoke shopping experience" (Morley Observer, 2016b), led to the development of a new monthly outdoor food market.

Ballymena concentrated on reinventing through strengthening its retail offer. The 25 priorities for action were used extensively to focus effort and resources on interventions that would bring more shoppers to the centre. Reinventing Ballymena as a shopping destination has been very successful, as:

> Ballymena celebrated New Year with news that the town centre's overall customer footfall was up 8.1 per cent for December 2016 compared to the same period for 2015. The comprehensive Christmas marketing campaign by Ballymena BID was to encourage shoppers, the local community and visitors to make Ballymena their destination of choice (BallymenaMeans, 2017).

Atrincham focused upon rebranding, and the ambition, contained in Altrincham Town Centre Public Realm Strategy, was to make Altrincham:

> " [. . .] the Modern Market Town" an integral part of people's everyday lives and a place people can be proud of again. Our aim is to change people's perceptions of the town from one which is negative to overriding positive.

Unlike other locations where branding straplines remain unattainable pipe-dreams, Altrincham is delivering on the promise of a "modern market town" as it has, according to the local paper, Altrincham Today (2016), developed a retailer and service mix firmly anchored around a hugely successful food market, offering the catchment something special, as well as benefiting from better access and connectivity, with improved transport links and a £19m overhaul of the Altrincham Interchange.

Finally, relevant to restructuring, a Wrexham Town Centre action plan has since been developed by the Wrexham Town Centre Partnership Steering Group in response to the High Street UK 2020 study. This plan has been agreed by the Town Centre Forum, and although it includes actions that are delivered by the Council, its intention is as *a partnership plan* rather than one specifically articulating the Council's Vision for Wrexham Town Centre. It was agreed *that a single strategy was required* that brings together all the Council's strategies and action plans relating to Wrexham Town Centre, clearly setting out the Council's priorities for making it a vibrant, safe, accessible and prosperous place for people to live, work and visit.

Conclusions and reflections

Our project was timely, as it clearly supported the aim of "ensuring the vitality of town centres" contained within the National Planning Policy Framework 2012; the renewed focus upon town centres found in the regeneration strategies of Scotland and Wales; Northern Ireland's proposed PPS5; a variety of government initiatives designed to promote innovative and multi-stakeholder approaches to town centre change, namely, the High Street Innovation Fund; the Business Improvement District fund; the Portas Pilots; and the Town Team Partners. By working directly with ten different locations, the project helped the local agents of change (e.g. high street stakeholders in the private, public and third sectors), identify and understand their information requirements and get access to accurate and relevant academic knowledge to improve the quality of decision-making and provide solid academic underpinning to their plans for action.

Identifying 25 generic priorities for action was a very popular approach with the stakeholders. The plethora of existing development plans, public realm strategies, action plans, visions and strategies can confuse people and even alienate them. At best, each document appears to stand alone, and at worst, the documents contradict each other. Given the diversity of people that need to collaborate in the collective goal of high street success, much more thought needs to be given to how actions and strategies are communicated. The scattergram and 25 priorities developed within the project could be disseminated clearly and quickly, and we think that is why they were so widely adopted.

In a similar fashion, our 4Rs framework brought a thorough but complicated evidence base to towns in a more coherent fashion, using our academic experts. Of course, given the complex nature of high street change all these strategies overlap. The underpinning theory and principles we used in the project came from a wide range of literatures. However, our high street stakeholders were not interested in engaging in epistemological debates. They looked to us, as academics, to make some sense of this on their behalf, so they could concentrate on putting theory into action. Having a simple framework, where town stakeholders could enter at any point, meant they could approach regeneration in a way that accommodated the path they had already started to take, be sensitive to how they had started to conceptualise the problem or reflect the amount of people and resources they had to hand. Did they feel they needed more information (repositioning); did they want to get on with something (reinventing); did they need to communicate more effectively (rebranding); or did they need to work out who was responsible for what (restructuring)? Given how disciplines and sub-disciplines "spread", the theory and pinciples to answer all these questions are not contained neatly in any one literature stream. Therefore, the chances of practitioners finding comprehensive answers in academic literature are slim. Where do they start looking? Knowledge exchange projects, such as High Street UK2020, have an important contribution to make. The process of engaging more meaningfully with research users not only led to the development of new theory (the 4 R's framework) but also brought existing theory into practical use, through the 25 priorities. By engaging the stakeholders in the whole project, from design all the way through to dissemination, there is no doubt that the quality of the research questions improved, our data collection and analysis methods benefited, and our ability to transfer this knowledge was significantly amplified. We look forward to measuring the impact this project has had on the vitality and viability of the partner locations in 2020.

Notes

1. The partner towns in the project were Alsager, Altrincham, Ballymena, Barnsley, Bristol (St George), Congleton, Holmfirth, Market Rasen, Morley and Wrexham.
2. The universities that took part were Manchester Metropolitan University, University of Manchester, Oxford University, University of Dundee and University of Leicester.

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Appendix 1

Influence factor	Definition/interpretation used in study	Example study/studies	Influence	Control
1. Footfall	Number of pedestrians counted over a specific time period in a specific location	Warnaby and Yip (2005)	4.67	3.33
2. Accessibility	Centre accessible by a variety of transport modes (walking, bike, car, bus, etc.)	Brockman (2008); Clark (2006)	4.57	2.67
3. Retailer representation	Types of retailers in centre (goods/services, independents/multiples, etc.)	Wrigley and Dolega (2011)	4.57	3.29
4. Construction of OOT centre	The construction of out-of-town retail parks or malls	Guy (1998a)	4.52	2.62
5. Convenience	The ability to reach, browse and shop in a centre easily and without much effort	Léo and Philippe (2002)	4.48	3.02
6. Leadership	Refers to the provision of vision and strategy for the High Street/centre	Tomalin and Pal (1994)	4.43	3.62
7. Opening hours	What hours does the town centre, high street, shopping centre, retail park, etc., open?	Hart *et al.* (2013)	4.43	3.76
8. Shopping hours	What hours do the shops in the centre open?	Hart *et al.* (2013)	4.40	3.43
9. Place attractiveness	Links to the overall attractiveness of an urban place and its incentives for visiting it, e.g. shopping	Teller and Elms (2012)	4.38	3.05
10. Retailer offer	Retailer representation, large/small, specialist/generalist, high service/no-frills	Brown (1987)	4.38	3.50
11. Supermarket impact	The impact of supermarket development on small retailers and the High Street	Clulow and Reimers (2009)	4.38	2.62
12. Economy	Refers to the general state of production and supply and supply of money in the country	De Magalhaes (2012)	4.36	2.05
13. Centre size	Size of centre as a measure of overall drawing power	Yuo *et al.* (2004)	4.35	1.81
14. Area development strategies	Ways of redeveloping existing retail centres - e.g. pedestrianisation, new shopping centre, etc.	Kärrholm *et al.* (2014)	4.33	3.24
15. E-retail	The sale of goods and services through the internet	Weltevreden (2007)	4.33	2.29
16. Range/quality of goods	Range (wide vs narrow) of retail goods on the High Street and the overall or perceived quality of them	Hart *et al.* (2013)	4.33	3.29
17. Collaboration	Various stakeholders from different sectors working together for physical, commercial and general improvement of the High Street/Centre	Wood and Reynolds (2012)	4.30	3.48

(continued)

Table AI.
List of factors that influence vitality and viability

Influence factor	Definition/interpretation used in study	Example study/studies	Influence	Control
18. Public transport	Range of fixed route modes of public transportation to and from the High Street	De Nisco and Warnaby (2013)	4.30	2.90
19. Attractiveness	The ability of a centre to attract customers from a catchment area	Dennis *et al.* (2002)	4.29	3.05
20. Centre management	Control, coordination, guidance of a centre's activities and of its tenants/ retailers	Teller and Reutterer (2008)	4.29	3.57
21. Sales/turnover	Total amount of retail sales made in a certain period (specific store or all High Street stores, shopping centre revenue, etc.)	Tomalin and Pal (1994)	4.29	3.14
22. Connectivity	Refers to the number and quality of connection points between the built-up fabric in the High Street/Centre	Nase *et al.* (2013)	4.28	3.10
23. Location	Spatial positioning of the centre	Coelho and Wilson (1976)	4.26	1.14
24. Walkability	Friendliness of an area to walking	Frank *et al.* (2006)	4.25	3.43
25. Service quality	Overall impression of the level of service from centre	DeNisco and Warnaby (2013)	4.24	3.67
26. Retail rents	The cost of renting retail space (usually by m^2)	Yuo *et al.* (2004)	4.24	2.62
27. Tenant variety	Range of goods/services and range of fascias	Teller and Elms (2012)	4.24	3.19
28. Vacancy rates	Unoccupied/non-rented rental units, expressed as a percentage of the number of shops in the town	Wrigley and Dolega (2011)	4.24	3.05
29. Transport route	All public transport routes (railway tracks, bus lanes, tram lanes, cycle routes, etc.) to the centre	Pantano *et al.* (2010)	4.23	2.48
30. Barriers to entry	Refers to obstacles that make it difficult for interested retailers to enter the centre	Clarke *et al.* (1994)	4.22	2.95
31. Landlords	Owners of retail, commercial and other types of property	Roberts *et al.* (2010)	4.22	2.95
32. Retail planning policy	National policy, principles and guidelines for town centres that local councils are encouraged to comply with	Cheshire, Hilber, Kaplanis (2011)	4.21	2.10
33. Business rates	Local tax based on commercial premise's rateable value	Singleton (2014)	4.19	2.14
34. Customer/ catchment views and behaviour (inc. patronage)	The perceptions of the centre held by customers/catchment and use of the centre by customers/catchment	Powe and Hart (2008), Oppewal *et al.* (2007)	4.19	2.95

(*continued*)

Table AI.

Influence factor	Definition/interpretation used in study	Example study/studies	Influence	Control
35. Internet/Online shopping	The ability to browse, compare and shop goods and services via the internet rather than going to the actual store	Weltevreden (2007)	4.19	2.24
36. Non-retail offer	Total amount of units that are not considered as part of a shopping trip and usually augment it (hair salon, banking, amusements, recreational spaces, etc.)	Teller and Schnedlitz (2012)	4.19	3.29
37. Prosperity of town	Links to the financial flourishing of a town's citizens or the town overall	Wrigley *et al.* (2009)	4.19	2.14
38. Range/quality of shops	Range (wide vs narrow) of retail shops on the High Street and the overall or perceived quality of them	Hart *et al.*. (2013)	4.19	3.29
39. Shopping centre management	How the physical space is managed to attract retail traffic to shopping centre tenants	Roberts *et al.* (2010)	4.18	3.57
40. Retail flexibility	Degree of adaptation to change type or style of retailing activities	Findlay and Sparks (2008)	4.18	3.19
41. Distance to centre	Amount of linear space between the consumer and the city centre	Nase *et al.* (2013)	4.17	1.50
42. Finance	A centre's/High Street's funding from inward/outward investment, public or private	Peel (2003)	4.16	2.62
43. Car-parking	The number or availability of parking spaces	van der Waerden *et al.* (1998)	4.14	3.71
44. Catchment size	Whether a catchment area of a centre is large or small	Wood and Reynolds (2012)	4.14	1.76
45. Comparison/ convenience	The amount of comparison shopping opportunities compared to convenience (usually in percentage terms)	Reimers and Clulow (2004)	4.14	3.00
46. Consumer trends	Habits or behaviours currently prevalent among consumers of goods or services	Allport (2005)	4.14	2.00
47. Retail choice	Links to everyday consumer patterns and how they alternate and influence retail offer	Clarke *et al.* (2004)	4.14	2.81
48. Retail diversity	A mix of multiples and independents, range of goods, a strong anchor	Findlay and Sparks (2008)	4.14	3.24
49. Linked trips	Consumers' propensity to visit other stores after fulfilling their main shopping need (e.g. grocery shopping)	Thomas and Bromley (2002)	4.13	3.29
50. Anchor stores	Presence of anchor stores – which give locations their basic character and signify importance	Thorpe (1968)	4.10	3.48

Table AI.

(continued)

Influence factor	Definition/interpretation used in study	Example study/studies	Influence	Control
51. Attractions	Anything that brings people into the centre and is not a part of its fixed retail offer (e.g. Christmas markets, events, museums)	Peel (2003)	4.10	3.76
52. Availability of alternative formats	Department stores, speciality stores, discount stores. Linked to cross-shopping and retail offer	Morganosky (1997)	4.10	3.19
53. Catchment income	Income profile of catchment	Shields and Deller (1998)	4.10	2.29
54. Catchment view/behaviour	Shopping behaviour, preferences and intentions of catchment	Clulow and Reimers (2009)	4.10	2.24
55. Centre image	Merchandising, accessibility, service and atmospherics. Adapted from shopping centre image	Sit *et al.* (2003)	4.10	3.71
56. Employment	The amount of people in the catchment area that have got jobs	Biddulph (2011)	4.10	2.10
57. Evening economy	All economic activity taking place in the evening after many people finish daytime employment, such as eating and drinking, entertainment and nightlife	Biddulph (2011)	4.10	3.57
58. Monofunctional vs multifunctional	Centres used only for retail use (monofunctional) or for other uses as well, e.g. office use (multifunctional)	Irazábal and Chakravarty (2007)	4.10	3.19
59. Pedestrianisation (flow, routes, access)	The provision and type of pedestrian space (streets, open malls, "skywalks", etc.)	Cui *et al.* (2013)	4.10	3.38
60. Place management	A philosophy of how to improve towns and cities through more flexible and inclusive management	Coca-Stefaniak *et al.* (2009)	4.10	3.43
61. Planning	The strategic management of land and buildings for economic and social benefits	Guy (1998)	4.10	2.43
62. Planning blight	Reduction of economic activity or property values in a particular area resulting from expected development or restriction of development	Imrie and Thomas (1997)	4.10	2.81
63. Retail innovation	Representation of new forms of retailing (e.g. click and collect)	Gibbs (1987)	4.10	2.71
64. Retail spend	The amount of money spent during a shopping trip	Dennis *et al.* (2002)	4.10	3.10
65. Tenant mix	Range of goods/services and range of fascias	Teller and Elms (2012)	4.10	3.33
66. Town centre management	Decision of town to use town centre management to coordinate resources and activity	Pal and Sanders (1997)	4.10	3.62

(*continued*)

Table AI.

Influence factor	Definition/interpretation used in study	Example study/studies	Influence	Control
67. Visitor satisfaction	Global attitude gained by visiting the high street, a mental process	Léo and Philippe (2002)	4.10	3.62
68. Visual appearance	Includes building appearance, lightning, cleanliness, is the centre appealing to people?	Hart *et al.*. (2013)	4.10	3.81
69. Location of employment	Refers to whether employers operate in, nearby, or out of the High Street/City Centre	Powe and Hart (2008)	4.09	2.62
70. Cross-shopping	Visiting more than one store when visiting a retail centre	Bodkin and Lord (1997)	4.05	3.38
71. Population	All the inhabitants at a particular place	Hall (2011)	4.05	1.69
72. Partnerships	Integration between public and private high street stakeholders amongst a variety of public, private and community interests	Williams (1999), Peel (2003)	4.02	3.48
73. Property ownership	Type of ownership of retail properties in the high street (sole owner, tenant, landlord, etc.)	De Magalhaes (2012)	4.00	2.86
74. Recession	The overall impact of the economic downturn on the high street	De Magalhaes (2012)	4.00	2.19
75. Safety/crime	A centre KPI measuring perceptions or actual crime including shoplifting	Jones (1990), Hogg *et al.* (2004)	4.00	3.14
76. Size/Type of town	Small town, market town, rural town, metropolitan, etc.	Carruthers (1967)	4.00	1.43
77. Household expenditures	The sum of household consumption expenditure and non-consumption expenditures	Thorpe (1968)	3.95	2.19
78. Regeneration	Strengthening economic linkages, development attracting commercial investment and consumers	Smith (2004)	3.95	2.90
79. Cleanliness	Look of centre, tidiness	Bennison and Davies (1980)	3.90	3.86
80. Consumer choice	Consumer consumption expenditure preferences	Clarke *et al.* (2004)	3.90	2.48
81. Familiarity	How comfortable people feel in the city centre/High Street	Léo and Philippe (2002)	3.90	3.48
82. Leisure offer	Facilities that offer activities which are associated with pleasure, enjoyment and free time in a centre	Howard (2007)	3.90	3.40
83. Stakeholder power	Links to the degree of influence on decision-making by various High Street stakeholder groups	Pal and Sanders (1997)	3.90	3.05
84. Top 25 retailers	Links to the volatility of the covenant strength risk ratings of the top 25 retailers	Hutchison *et al.* (2008)	3.90	2.48

(*continued*)

Table AI.

Influence factor	Definition/interpretation used in study	Example study/studies	Influence	Control
85. Assortments	The breadth and depth of merchandise	Teller and Reutterer (2008)	3.88	3.71
86. Flexibility	The degree of change and adaptability of a centre's built environment and services to meet local conditions, trends and consumer needs	Roberts *et al.* (2010)	3.86	3.14
87. Population density	Measurement of population in a catchment area	Hall (2011)	3.85	1.74
88. Catchment age	Age profile of catchment	Shields and Deller (1998)	3.81	2.19
89. Amenities	Facilities such as toilets, places to sit and rest	Sit *et al.* (2003)	3.81	3.76
90. Liveability	Centres are accessible without a car and consumers can fulfil needs without travelling to another centre	Rotem-Mindali (2012)	3.81	2.86
91. Mobility	How freely and easily can people move to, from and in the high street/shopping centre	Rotem-Mindali (2012)	3.81	2.71
92. Mode of transport	How do customers come to the High Street (bus, car, foot, tram, metro, bicycle, etc.)	Timmermans *et al.* (1992)	3.81	2.57
93. Structure	Physical layout of centre, store location, external appearance (fascias, etc.)	Dawson (1988)	3.81	2.86
94. Community leadership	Used here to describe local authorities leadership role with communities	Kures and Ryan (2012)	3.80	3.62
95. Chain vs independent	Number of multiples stores and independent stores in the retail mix of a centre/High Street	Borgers and Vosters (2011)	3.76	3.29
96. Construction of new shopping centre (in town)	Refers to the construction of new shopping centres and their effects in inner city areas	Timmermans *et al.* (1992)	3.76	2.90
97. Economic base	Total number of businesses that generate employment in a community or a geographical area	Shields and Deller (1998)	3.76	1.86
98. General facilities	Facilities that contribute to a retail centre's/High Street's convenience	Teller and Reutterer (2008)	3.76	3.57
99. Lease lengths	Average time of lease agreements between retailers and landlords for use of retail property	Nase *et al.* (2013)	3.76	2.71
100. Mixed-Use	Developments that include not only retail activities but also offices and even housing ones	Balsas (2008)	3.76	3.24
101. Recreational areas/facilities/activities	Areas to relax or simply spend time in and, therefore, satisfy social needs	Teller and Reutterer (2008)	3.76	3.52
102. Retail centre preference	Type of centre that consumers are choosing based on attitudinal criteria	Clulow and Reimers (2009)	3.76	2.43

(*continued*)

Table AI.

Influence factor	Definition/interpretation used in study	Example study/studies	Influence	Control
103. Tourist/visitor attractions	All place attractions that are associated with spending free time, sightseeing, relaxation, leisure, etc.	De Nisco and Napolitano (2006)	3.76	3.00
104. Entertainment	All activities that can provide enjoyment and amusement to consumers	Teller *et al.* (2008)	3.75	3.71
105. Networking	Interaction between High Street stakeholders for assistance and support	De Magalhaes (2012)	3.75	3.81
106. Retail change	Any change in regulations, infrastructure, technology, consumer behaviour, etc., that influences and alternates the retail offer on the High Street and beyond	Clarke *et al.* (1994), Pioch and Byrom (2004)	3.75	2.52
107. Competition	Refers to the activities of retailers to gain more profit/sales than others in a particular area	Clarke *et al.* (1994)	3.72	3.05
108. Rents turnover	Financial incentive given to tenants in which the rent is calculated by reference to the turnover generated by the tenant	Kirkup and Rafiq (1994)	3.72	3.10
109. Atmosphere	A global assessment of a retail centre, made up of a number of factors such as manoeuvrability, orientation and sales personnel	Teller and Elms (2012)	3.71	3.76
110. Secondary shopping/edge-of-centre shopping	Any type of shopping/retail activity in secondary locations out of High Street, e.g. Edge of City Centre locations	NRPF (2004), Bennison *et al.*. (2010)	3.71	2.67
111. Spatial structure	Links to city centre/high street structures, nodal, bi-nodal, multi-nodal and polycentric regions and how they influence hierarchy of centres within metropolitan areas	Bennison and Davies (1980), Williams (1999)	3.71	1.24
112. Fragmentation	The degree of detachment in the High Street (political, retail, ownership, etc.)	Williams (1999)	3.67	2.81
113. Commercial yields	Level of return on commercial property investment	Hutchison *et al.* (2008)	3.67	2.88
114. Consumer culture	The current state that encourages consumption of goods/services	Clarke *et al.* (2004)	3.67	2.10
115. Floorspace	Total amount of floor area that is used for retail, leisure and other town centre uses	Gibbs (1987)	3.67	3.05
116. Marketing	Town centre effort in marketing	Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008)	3.67	3.57
117. Store characteristics	Perceptions on characteristics such as store location, environment, staff, etc	Pantano *et al.* (2010)	3.67	3.52

(continued)

Table AI.

Influence factor	Definition/interpretation used in study	Example study/studies	Influence	Control
118. Street characteristics	Physical characteristics of the street/ route that leads to or contains shopping/retail areas	Borgers and Timmermans (1986)	3.67	3.05
119. Technology	As an environmental factor that affects retailers, e.g. RFID	Coca-Stefaniak *et al.*. (2005)	3.67	2.19
120. Travel time	Links to length of trip to the shopping centre, high street, etc.	Rotem-Mindali (2012)	3.67	1.67
121. Type of centre (mall vs street)	Retail parks, shopping centres, malls, out-of-town, etc.	Hart *et al.*. (2013)	3.67	2.95
122. BID's	Establishment of a business improvement district enabling local businesses, services and council to collaborate	De Magalhaes (2012)	3.62	3.71
123. Drive time	Total number of minutes travelling by car to a desired location	Lowe (2000)	3.62	1.43
124. Number of landlords	Refers to the number of property owners that are renting out High Street premises	Whysall (2011)	3.62	2.90
125. Place hierarchy	Hierarchy of places based on their centrality and size (national, metropolitan, major regional, minor regional, major district, minor district, etc.)	Reynolds and Schiller (1992), Guy (1998)	3.62	1.38
126. Real estate ownership	Links to type real estate ownership (single or multiple ownership, commercial company)	Teller and Reutterer (2008)	3.62	2.90
127. Store development	The process of building, upgrading, remodelling or renovating retail stores	Clarke (2000)	3.62	3.33
128. Engagement	Formal arrangement between High Street stakeholders (e.g. BIDs and council, community)	De Magalhaes (2012)	3.60	3.24
129. Retail fragmentation	Dividing up areas of high retail activity with areas of low activity	Hart *et al.*. (2013)	3.60	3.43
130. Catchment commuting	Amount of catchment that works in another centre	Shields and Deller (1998)	3.57	2.95
131. Environmental quality	Varied characteristics that refer to the natural fabric and built environment of the High Street/centre	Thomas and Bromley (2002)	3.57	2.69
132. Inertia (behavioural)	Tendency of consumers to repeat the same shopping trip in a centre as part of daily routines	Clarke *et al.* (2004)	3.57	3.00
133. Local economic integration	Coordination of economic activities and reduction of barriers with an aim to reduce costs to both local consumers and retailers	Findlay and Sparks (2008)	3.57	3.00
134. Supply of retail units	Number of units/properties that are available for retail use only	Jones and Orr (1999)	3.57	3.00

(*continued*)

Table AI.

Influence factor	Definition/interpretation used in study	Example study/studies	Influence	Control
135. Functionality	The degree to which a centre fulfils a role – e.g. service centre, employment centre, residential centre, tourist centre	Powe and Hart (2008)	3.52	3.33
136. Heritage	All parts of city centre/High Street "offer" that are part of a place's history (landmarks, old buildings, etc.)	Whitehead *et al.* (2006)	3.52	3.12
137. Merchandise value	Links to the overall value of retail goods and the amount of pricing, discounts, samples and other retail-related factors that customers can benefit from	Teller and Reutterer (2008)	3.52	2.86
138. Multiple land ownership	Pieces of land/buildings/stores on the High Street/Town Centre that are owned by more than one owner	Robertson (1997), Henderson (2011)	3.52	2.81
139. Open space	Amount of space that is not in private ownership that citizens can freely use	Cohen (1996)	3.52	3.38
140. Planning application	Permission to be allowed to build on land, or change the use of existing land or buildings	Dabinett *et al.* (1999)	3.52	2.43
141. Public space	Amount of space that is not in private ownership, that citizens can freely use	Cohen (1996)	3.52	3.55
142. Retail-led Regeneration	The impact that retail has had on the regeneration (in its widest sense – social, economic and physical) of town centres and local high streets	Findlay and Sparks (2008)	3.52	2.81
143. Urban design	Process of designing and shaping cities, towns and villages	De Nisco and Warnaby (2014)	3.52	3.05
144. Use of technology	Use of technology by retailers, to control costs, develop new markets and new strategies	Kures and Ryan (2012)	3.52	2.43
145. Governance	Refers to the manner of governing the area affiliated with a centre (local, regional, metropolitan, community)	Henderson (2011)	3.48	2.95
146. Retail/Tenant trust	Links to the relationships between retail tenants and shopping centre managers or town centre managers, see tenant/managers relationship	Roberts *et al.* (2010)	3.45	3.52
147. Reputation	Links to the town's/city's "presence" as a heuristic for visiting a retail centre/ High Street	Hart *et al.*. (2013)	3.43	3.19
148. Store/centre design	Process of designing shopping centres, stores, malls, etc.	Reimers and Clulow (2004)	3.43	3.31
149. Catchment psychographics	Classification of people in the catchment area according to their attitudes, aspirations and other psychological criteria	Sullivan and Savitt (1997)	3.38	2.24

(*continued*)

Table AI.

Influence factor	Definition/interpretation used in study	Example study/studies	Influence	Control
150. Orientation/ flow (inc. signage)	A system of signs that provides information about the High Street's offering and helps customers to orientate when on shopping trips, visits, etc.	Léo and Philippe (2002)	3.38	3.71
151. Retail unit sizes	Size of a retail unit on the High Street	Yuo *et al.* (2004), Guy (1998)	3.38	3.21
152. Unfair competition	Competitive advantages of multiples vs independents and conventional shops that create disparities	Gibbs (1987)	3.38	2.38
153. Ageing population	People are living longer	Bookman (2008)	3.33	2.10
154. Business ownership	Refers to the type of ownership (sole trader, limited company, partnership, etc.)	Henderson (2011)	3.33	2.76
155. Media coverage	A means of communicating about High Street – usually about events and festivities	Warnaby and Yip (2005)	3.33	3.17
156. Tenant/ manager relationships	Links to the relationships between tenants and shopping centre managers (trust, warmness, friendliness)	Prendergast *et al.* (1987)	3.33	3.76
157. Centre empowerment	The degree to which centre managers provide support and treat tenants as an important element of centre	Roberts *et al.* (2010)	3.32	3.76
158. Crowds	Total number of people gathered in the centre/High Street	Gautschi (1981)	3.31	3.48
159. Branding	Collective centre identity communicated about centre	Roberts *et al.* (2010)	3.29	3.33
160. Centre marketing	The centre's promotional strategies and activities to attract visitors/shoppers	Teller and Reutterer (2008)	3.29	3.76
161. Protection from weather	Store or High Street developments that can provide weather protection	Bennison and Davies (1980)	3.29	3.52
162. Tourism	All tourism attractions, number of tourists visiting, tourism expenditure, etc.	Hernandez and Jones (2005)	3.29	2.57
163. Regional rental level	The total rent per annum or rent per square foot/metre of a region	Yuo *et al.* (2004)	3.26	2.63
164. Car ownership	Households with cars	Kervenoael *et al.* (2006)	3.24	2.14
165. Social identity	A consumer's self-concept derived from perceived membership in a relevant social group, in our case from local shopping and a sense of attachment to the community	Miller (2001)	3.24	2.81

(*continued*)

Table AI.

Influence factor	Definition/interpretation used in study	Example study/studies	Influence	Control
166. Street trading	The retail or wholesale trading of goods and services in streets and other related public areas such as alleyways, avenues and boulevards	Jones *et al.* (2003)	3.24	3.67
167. Low prices	Refers to the ability of some retailers (usually multiples, outlets, pound-shops) to offer permanently low prices	Alport. (2005)	3.20	2.71
168. Integration	Unification of spaces in the city centre for the benefit of the public	Kärrholm *et al.* (2014)	3.19	3.52
169. Merchandising	The activity of promoting the sale of goods at retail centres/shopping centres/High Street	De Nisco and Napolitano (2006)	3.19	3.81
170. Open/closed centre	Links to whether the centre is enclosed or open-air (exit one store before entering another or internal access to all shops)	Bennison and Davies (1980)	3.19	3.48
171. Opportunities to experiment	Links to opportunities for innovativeness and new ideas that can improve the High Street offer	Neal (2013)	3.19	3.52
172. Organic development	Any store/high street/town centre development that stems from existing operations on the High Street/Town Centre	Bennison and Davies (1980)	3.19	3.48
173. Entry points	The number of routes that people choose to access the city centre	Borgers and Timmermans (1986)	3.10	2.71
174. Information (availability)	The type of information towns access and how this information is used	Larkham and Poper (1989)	3.10	3.57
175. Land ownership	Retail or other property or land that is owned by an individual	Henderson (2011)	3.10	2.95
176. Culture	The ideas, customs and social behaviour of a particular people or society	Robertson (1997)	3.05	2.19
177. Personal services	Commercial services such as catering and cleaning that supply the personal needs of customers	Kures and Ryan (2012)	3.05	3.81
178. Community benefits	Gestures from commercial developers to the community in exchange for planning permissions and agreements	Howard (2007)	2.95	3.29
179. Community engagement	The process whereby public bodies reach out to communities to create empowerment opportunities	Depriest-Hricko and Prytherch (2013)	2.95	3.52
180. Community power	Refers to how much power the community has in decision-making for High Street change	Findlay and Sparks (2009)	2.95	3.24
181. CPOs	Compulsory purchase order: Obtaining Land for retail and other purposes without owner's consent	Imrie and Thomas (1997)	2.95	2.90

Table AI. *(continued)*

Influence factor	Definition/interpretation used in study	Example study/studies	Influence	Control
182. Social cohesion	Tendency for a group to be in unity towards a common goal	Williams (1999)	2.95	2.86
183. Special offers	Degree of availability of special offers/discounts on the High Street, shopping centre, retail park, etc.	Marjanen (2000)	2.95	3.62
184. Centre support for the local community and environment	Retailers' CSR actions that benefit the centre's environment and the community overall	Oppewal *et al.* (2006)	2.95	3.80
185. Information (seeking)	Recollection of product/service-related information, or general information for a centre, either internal or external	Brown (1987)	2.90	3.24
186. Social enterprise	Organisations (or even BIDs) that apply commercial strategies to maximize improvements in human and environmental well-being	De Magalhaes (2012)	2.90	3.10
187. Communication practices (development)	Refers to the number of channels and information that is provided to an area's stakeholders for future land/building developments	Henderson (2011)	2.86	2.95
188. Credit	Ability to purchase goods/services by credit cards, etc.	Sullivan and Savitt (1997)	2.86	2.52
189. Local resistance	Degree of support to a local market when "threatened" by large retailers	Hallsworth and Worthington (2000)	2.81	3.52
190. Methods of classification	Classification of High Streets/Town Centres/Shopping Centres by type of goods, shopping trip purpose, size, ownership	Guy (1998)	2.81	1.81
191. Political climate	Current mood and opinions of political issues that affect decision-making	Brown (1987)	2.81	2.00
192. Property age	Age of commercial/retail properties on the High Street	Hardin and Carr (2006)	2.81	3.14
193. Performance indicators (KPIs)	Type of performance measurements that are related to the High Street	Hogg *et al.* (2004)	2.76	3.24
194. Ethnic retailers	The act of retailing by members of minority ethnic groups/immigrants on the High Street	Coca-Stefaniak *et al.* (2010)	2.71	3.48
195. Upper floor usage	What upper-floor developments are needed and how they can assist in the viability of the High Street	Findlay and Sparks (2009)	2.71	3.62
196. Baby-change facilities/Toilets	Hygiene factors of a centre including public toilets, baby rooms, diaper changing rooms	Reimers and Clulow (2000)	2.55	3.95
197. Deliveries	The process of delivering goods to shops/centres	Pickering (1981)	2.52	3.36

(continued)

Table AI.

Table AI.

Influence factor	Definition/interpretation used in study	Example study/studies	Influence	Control
198. Cycling	Refers to all infrastructure and routes available for cyclists	Biddulph (2011)	2.43	3.14
199. Land contamination	Pollution caused by past uses of a site, such as former factories, mines, steelworks, refineries and landfills	Dabinett *et al.* (1999)	2.43	2.62
200. Child-minding centre	A daycare centre for children which is part of the shopping area	Johnston and Rimmer (1967)	2.29	3.95
201. Health care	Organised provision of medical care to individuals or a community	Duff (2011)	2.2381	2.5238

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