



Reinvigoration of Secondary and Tertiary High Streets

Understanding perceptions and behaviours of stakeholders

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Executive Summary

This work focused on understanding the impact of small-scale urban interventions in declining secondary/tertiary high streets on their progress and development, as well as on the perceptions and behaviours of stakeholders.

The study gathered quantitative and qualitative data from a number of interventions in a secondary high street in collaboration with traders, community groups and a Local Authority (LA).

Results show that different views and priorities between stakeholders strongly affect the perceived success of small-scale interventions.

Success Metrics

- A typology of possible interventions for secondary and tertiary high streets was developed and three of them were tested in the case study.
- The challenges of engaging with stakeholders for a collective approach in regenerating a secondary retail area were identified.
- The project evaluated the effectiveness of interventions in altering perceptions and behaviours of stakeholders to assist in the redevelopment of secondary retail areas.

About

The project investigated a case study (East Street) in Southampton city centre, one of the first cities in the UK to experience a city centre retail-led regeneration scheme. The case study exhibits many of the factors effecting declining secondary retail streets across the UK, such as isolation, large number of vacancies, decreasing footfall and declining urban environment. This study designed urban interventions and conducted pre and post-event investigation of their effect on stakeholders' be-

haviours, perceptions and the street's liveability.



Figure 1. The secondary high street case study.

Challenges

Over recent decades retail-led regeneration has risen, with the introduction of large-scale shopping centres in inner city regions recentring the retail core. Secondary streets have not had extensive regeneration/renovation with most retail-led regeneration schemes focusing on primary retail in the established city core. At the same time retail has changed greatly in the last decade, with the emergence of e-commerce and the changing needs of consumers requiring retail sectors to become experiences. This has posed further stress on the viability of secondary retail.

Research has shown a lack of monitoring processes in secondary regions, which has compromised our understanding with conflicting methods of assessment across the UK.

Southampton's city centre has a clear divide in primary and secondary retail sectors, most notably expressed by the level of footfall and occupancy. The case study was found to have suffered markedly by the closure of two secondary shopping centres further reducing connectivity with the retail core, a situation observed across the UK.

Goals

The aim of this work is to increase our understanding of stakeholders' baseline perceptions and behaviours and learn how different small-scale interventions alter these, determining whether they can be used as a means to regenerate an area or create a collective approach.

How has this research helped?

The study has given traders impetus and allowed ideas to begin to be trialled, generating conversation among the key actors (traders, City Council and the community) involved in the regeneration of the case study. A blog has also been created to further promote the case study, with traders beginning to adapt to the changing face of retail; studies will unearth the potential of this online intervention. As part of one of the interventions a website was set up to provide information on the event and act as a catalyst for business involvement.

The study has shown how research can contribute to the local area, generating discussion among the key actors and giving traders impetus to take ownership of the future of their streets and implement change.

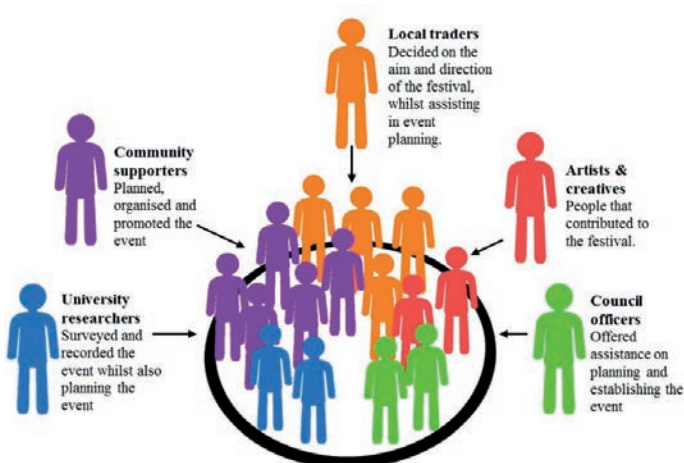


Figure 2. Stakeholders involved in organising and hosting an event-based intervention



Figure 3. Two interventions (activity & quality of space) undertaken in the case study

Results

The results show that secondary areas in their current form predominantly cater for established specialist businesses, which are destinations in their own right. They do not however cater for new businesses reliant on passing trade as the areas themselves are not destinations suited for the changing needs of consumers. Small-scale interventions, whilst having a localized impact on footfall, turnover and perceptions, have been found to have a far greater impact on trader wellbeing.

This study has highlighted the complexity of undertaking interventions in the interest of retailers and visitors, through surveys & interviews, observational studies and analysis of second hand data. Retailers are more concerned with 'static' improvements, such as parking provisions or building façade improvements, while visitors are concerned with active and spatial improvements, with street level interventions being the most important. The results also show that (a) whilst retailers may believe that they understand what visitors require; they differ greatly and (b) many aspirations of retailers are costly or dependent on other businesses' intentions. Visitor's desires include the reuse of vacant stores and creation of public space, which are far more viable, and can be enacted by governance. Such options should be trialled as a means to educate and improve understanding of less traditional interventions. A multitude of stakeholders have to be considered from retailers and Local Authority Councillors to visitors, be they local or regional.

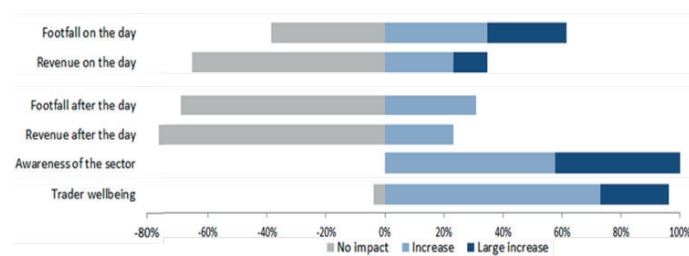


Figure 4. Impact of small-scale intervention on businesses

'Trialing interventions introduces retailers to concepts such as car free retail, increasing their understanding & desire to participate in collaborative regeneration.'