Anatomy of a Successful High Street Shopping Centre

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Abstract

High street shopping centres are at the core of cities. The continuing design challenge is to adapt a built environment inheritance to meets the present commercial needs of retailers, maximise the potential of the physical environment and address the social amenities that are expected from a city/town centre public realm. It is in this context this paper addresses the question, what is that makes a successful high street shopping centre? The essence of the analysis is to understand the relationship between property values, location, physical characteristics, diversity of retailing and use, and social vitality within two successful city centre retailing environments. Within the central areas with the highest property values there are overlapping positive scores on indicators of spatial syntax locational measures of integration and connectivity, stationary activities, diversity and visual quality assessment. However, locational factors are more complex than a simple centrality perspective. The message from this paper is that urban design does not need to be concerned with the retail offering, but focus on locational relationships, and the social and physical environment of public spaces. The research also demonstrates the blurring between commercial and public space, and supports Carmona’s argument that successful social space also creates economic value.
Introduction

Shopping areas are at the historic core of cities and towns and the centre piece of an urban landscape. They also represent a major economic function for an urban area. Shopping townscape reflects this dual role and is the culmination of overlain historic retail market forces and planning processes. The continuing planning design challenge is to adapt a built environment inheritance to meet the present commercial needs of retailers and the wider business community, maximise the potential of the physical environment and address the social amenities that are expected from a city/town centre public realm.

The paper sets out to review the ingredients that constitute a thriving/successful high street shopping centre, or more specifically a collection of high streets that contribute to a city centre shopping centre. While these public spaces encompass more than just shops, the analysis is confined to their function as shopping areas. A specific aim is to consider the relationships between shopping locations defined in terms of accessibility within an urban area, physical urban quality, diversity of retailing and use, and social vitality within city centre retailing environments. The paper also considers the implications for urban design. It recognises the limitations to the role of urban design and place shaping and potential tensions with market forces (Dobbins, 2009). Indirectly, the paper considers the commercialisation of public space (Sorkin, 1992) and tests Carmona’s (2014) view that the key to creating social value is achieving economic value.

The paper unusually triangulates different dimensions of retailing centres based on the economic benefits of clustering (reflected in rents), centrality (measured using space syntax) and the use of the public realm which are normally treated in isolation.
Drawing on these perspectives the essence of the analysis is to assess the key characteristics of successful high street shopping centres by reference to two distinctive case studies in the UK. By looking at these centres it is in effect, and rather unusually, undertaking a post evaluation of urban design. The paper begins by setting out a conceptual underpinning that examines the multi-dimensional nature of shopping centres. It then explains the choice of case studies in more detail and the detailed interdisciplinary research methods. The fieldwork was undertaken in 2009 and 2010 and the results are presented in the next section. The conclusion draws on these findings and the wider local context to the case study shopping areas to inform the urban design of town centres.

**Conceptual Underpinning of Successful Retail Centres**

Retail centres can be seen within the context of the historical development of consumption manifested as “spaces of consumption” (Mullins et al, 1999, p. 47). From this perspective it is argued by Mullins et al (1999) that all these spaces share similar fundamental characteristics to each other and use similar techniques to attract users. These sites of consumption employ and arouse taste, sight, sound, touch, and smell - the full range of sensations. The smell of food preparation, the sound of music played in the background, theatrical performances performed, and various other forms and techniques are routinely to be found at consumption spaces (Mullins et al, 1999). These strategies that aim to attract shoppers apply whether it is an arcade, a department store, a boulevard, a shopping mall or a locus of shopping streets. Accessibility to high quality sites of consumption is of prime importance, especially to middle and high income groups. They have therefore become more than just places to acquire goods, but also places to fulfil higher values such as self actualisation (Mullins et al, 1999).
The success of retail centres as places of consumption is likely to be based on their appeal to the ‘leisure-tourist-shopper’ rather than just the functional/utilitarian shopper (Howard, 2007). Indeed the most successful retailing centres by attracting tourists and day trip shoppers have enabled a locality to support a greater range of shops than the local population on its own could afford (URBED, 1994). It is probable that the attractiveness of the retail morphology of centres to leisure shoppers enables them to successfully compete with the threats from surrounding out of town shopping malls where they exist.

A further potential threat is from online sales. Currently internet sales as a percentage of consumer spending in the UK are the highest in the world but they still only represented 11.2% of retail spending in 2014. The internet is undeniably driving change in shopping habits in some countries, and large physical retailers have responded by offering consumers online stores, and the opportunity to ‘click and collect’ so there is a symbiotic relationship between online and the ‘high street’. In the UK some retailers have enhanced the physical shopping experience with stores as ‘showrooms’ and emphasise the leisure dimension of shopping (O2, 2014). The physical store remains, and will continue to be, a central element of retailing (Jones and Livingstone, 2015). The evidence from the UK so far is that online sales do not challenge the leisure aspect of shopping and are unlikely to have any transformatory impact on the urban morphology of successful retail centres.

Nevertheless a retail centre is more than a collection of units or attractive sensations. An economic underpinning of this phenomenon sees stores cluster to benefit from agglomeration economies in the form of economies of scope that enable customers to minimise not only searching cost but also purchase costs. These economies are seen in
the range of shops and their diversity. In this way shopping centres therefore capture the highest possible number of customers and compete by a combination of price and non-price competition (Konishi, 2005). The point of highest footfall, usually the most accessible point in a city, will be the summit of an urban rent gradient reflecting the site of highest turnover (Alonso, 1964).

In parallel to these economic arguments, the importance of centrality of location within urban areas to the vitality of a shopping centre, both in the geometric and the topological sense, is emphasised by space syntax theories. Space syntax focuses on the importance of (road) networks. The proximity of particular points therefore depends not just on distance but on the intelligible distance created by the angular structure of the street network in which high street shopping centres fit with the natural movement of the area at various scales (Hillier, 2009). Space syntax argues that where spatial order is fragmented, and there is not a sense of centrality, the importance of a cultural and social centre is reduced significantly. Strong centrality and high integration values are argued to naturally generate higher volumes of vehicular and pedestrian movements that are desired for most businesses, albeit subject to management.

While high rental/capital values are a sign of success that stem partly from the agglomeration economies and location within a city they also emanate from the internal characteristics of a shopping centre. In particular Gehl (1987) has identified a street as a social space, rather than just a channel for movement. Gehl is a strong advocate of pedestrianisation, and stresses the importance of urban furniture in public space, particularly the siting of seating (Gehl, 2008). The street, as a social space is enhanced through the placement of attractions. These ideas have been extended by amongst others Mehta (2007, 2013) who sees streets offering a social experience as people stop,
gather, or linger, especially in a form of passive sociability in which there is a shared interaction with passers-by. He argues for the personalisation of streets to create sensory pleasure through the design of pedestrian friendly streets (reduction of car use), pavement widths and seating. But he also sees sensory pleasure as a function of both building facades that have a multiplicity, informality, and ambiguity in form; and also types of land uses, incorporating active shop fronts, independent stores and communal facilities such as coffee shops.

Gehl (2008) also emphasises the role of active shop frontage to encourage pedestrian movement (stressed by the retail industry too) as a key ingredient for successful urban design. Attractive tenant mix is another key related dimension to attractiveness often referred to in location retail studies (Abratt et al, 1985; Building Design Partnerships, 2002). Mehta (2013) stresses the role of independent retailers in the success of neighbourhood commercial centres. Recently these arguments have been extended to ensuring a representation of independent retailers in town centres. The benefits of these shops are not seen in the types of goods they sell but in the diversity they create, for example by the individuality of the products rather than selling national brands. Portas (2011) in her blueprint for the salvation of UK high streets sees retail mix as a crucial ingredient that should be achieved through planning (via use class orders) and urban management. However, there is little supporting evidence and the argument is essentially an act of faith, constrained by the proclivity of independent shops to locate in prime shopping areas and their decline in many western economies.

To summarise the success of retail centres can be seen in multi-dimensional terms. The economic bedrock is of stores clustering, enabling agglomeration economies reflected in a wide range of shops. Within this framework the most accessibility location is the
greatest point of footfall/turnover and the pinnacle of a retail rent gradient. Centrality of location is also emphasised as the core of the vitality for a shopping centre within space syntax theories. Strong centrality and a high degree of integration within the urban road network are seen by these theories as engendering high volumes of vehicular and pedestrian movements advantageous to attracting shoppers.

The internal characteristics of a shopping centre are the focus of the urban design literature in which streets are seen as a social space shaped by the building facades, the shop fronts, the retail mix, the location of and seating, plus the ease of movement of pedestrians and their upkeep. It is the right combination of these ingredients of the public realm that generates a social experience for a successful shopping centre. The adoption of these ideas of streetscape in the context of shopping centres can also be viewed as the commercialisation of public space (Sorkin, 1992). The premise of this research is that it is the relationship between these physical and social factors of urban design that contribute to the creation of successful high street shopping centres is reflected in economic vitality. This issue is taken up in the case studies below.

**Research Methods and Choice of Case Studies**

Two successful but different case study city centres are analysed: Glasgow and York in the UK. The two case studies were selected because of their strong and compact central retail offering but most important of all that they have very different street patterns reflecting their historical development. Both localities are also different in terms of their specific role – Glasgow is a post-industrial provincial city and York is a free standing historic town. A further difference is that while shopping malls are of limited significance in York they do have a strong influence on the prime shopping areas in Glasgow (Javelin, 2014). Both central shopping areas of Glasgow and York are typical
of UK ‘in town’ shopping localities in competing with out of town shopping centres. York has several large out-of-town shopping centres and retail outlets such as Clifton Moor Shopping Centre, which houses more than 30 stores and restaurants. It is located just two miles from the city centre and has more than 3,000 car parking spaces. In addition, Monk Cross Shopping Park is located just outside York’s ring road; it has more than 30 department stores, shops and restaurants, and provides 1,000 free parking spaces. York Designer Outlets is another huge shopping centre with more than 120 stores and is only ten minutes’ drive from the city centre. A parallel picture applies in Glasgow with a ring of out of town shopping centres including Silverburn shopping centre with 109 stores that opened in 2007 and Glasgow Fort (2004), the top retail park in the UK (Javelin, 2014). These out of town centres benefit not from centrality within urban areas but from accessibility within a sub-regional context, particularly through linkages to the road system.

Glasgow’s city centre is considered to be one of the UK’s major retailing centres. In 2008 it was ranked second after London’s West End and before Manchester, Birmingham and Nottingham (Experian, 2009). It is a strong retailing hub, where 85% of the top national retailers are present in the town centre (Focusnet, 2009). The top three ranked streets, defined by the intensity of multiple shops are Buchanan Street, Sauchiehall Street and Argyle Street (Focusnet, 2009). Similarly, based on evidence from property consultants, rental value is highest at the centre of Buchanan Street; while Sauchiehall Street comes second and Argyle Street is third ranked. These three streets (together with nearby retail malls) comprise the Glasgow primary shopping centre (see Error! Reference source not found.). York city centre can be viewed as one of the UK’s major retailing centres outside a major city. In 2008 it was ranked 27th by Experian (2009). Rental value was highest at the centre of Davygate and Coney Street; followed
by the central segment of Stonegate and Parliament Street as the second ranked areas, while the remaining fringes came third. These streets represent the primary shopping area and are shown in Figure 2.

The two case studies are assessed by a series of metrics that examine their social environmental, accessibility and economic/diversity dimensions. In particular the research seeks to examine the relationship between public behaviour, the physical characteristics of the most successful shopping streets defined by economic/property values. The details of these metrics are now explained.

Space Syntax

The essential idea of space syntax is that street patterns can be analysed as networks (other parallel algorithms could have been employed) and that spatial layout can be quantified as a system of linked geometrical elements (Hillier, 2009). Using this technique the concept of centrality can be decomposed and a street can be scored on the basis of different aspects of its accessibility within a city. In particular for each street in the three high street shopping centres the study measured:

* Accessibility for through movement (Global Integration) relates to the accessibility to all other streets in the city. A high integration value means that a street is more accessible, more useful for through movement than other streets in the city as a whole.

* Local Integration relates to pedestrian movement within the high street shopping area. When the number of steps it takes to get from one line to all others in the system is low, then the line is well integrated; highly integrated streets are taken
to correspond to high levels of movement. It therefore measures the ease of physical movement through a centre and the number of alternative routes running through it.

* Connectivity is defined as the number of nodes (or points) directly linked to each other. It gives an indication of how well a specific street is integrated within the immediate urban fabric and as a result gives an indication of its ability to generate movement (Klarqvist, 1993; Moughtin, 2003).

**Behavioural Mapping and Visual Quality Assessment**

This element of the research is grounded in Gehl’s approach to urban design that is summarised in the following statement,

“A high number of pedestrians walking in the city does not necessarily indicate a high-quality walking experience. However, if a large number of people choose to engage in voluntary activities (having an outdoor lunch, playing or sunbathing) then a city most likely has an excellent public realm” (Gehl, 2008, p16).

It begins by first researching public behaviour, then studying public spaces and the spaces between buildings, and finally, analysing the buildings themselves. This behavioural mapping and the visual quality assessment was employed by Gehl (2004, 2007). Observations were collected in the following way:

- The research mapped stationary activities every second hour between 10am and 8pm.
• The survey took place twice in each centre, once on a summer day with fine, sunny weather and the other on a fine winter’s day. In order to identify factors affecting the counts, the survey noted the prevailing weather conditions at each hour as well as any unusual events or circumstances that might affect pedestrian movements, such as road works, sporting events and public markets.

• The observations were made on weekdays (Tuesday/Wednesday) and Saturdays.

Stationary counts were conducted by walking through selected internal locations and recording activities on a map, using different symbols to plot what people were doing, where they were and how many there were. The survey mapped people standing, sitting, lying, playing and involved in cultural and/or commercial activities. Commercial activities were those where people are using public space to sell goods or services in order to make a living, such as vendors, outdoor cafés, and kiosks.

The level of environmental quality and the quality of building frontage were observed and evaluated at eye level derived from a six point grade criteria set out by Gehl (2004). According to these criteria, each street can be evaluated according to the number of doors per 100 metres, diversity of function, closed or passive units, interesting reliefs at facades, quality of materials and details. Active shop footage was evaluated by examining each building in turn and active locations plotted as vector points. These points were used as input for a “kernel density” analysis using Geographical Information System (available on ArcGIS software) to calculate a magnitude per unit area and hence create a smoothly tapered surface along streets. However, beyond this quantification the spatial aggregation of the Gehl approach to other ‘less significant’ environmental characteristics such as quality of materials raises issues about weighting
and subjectivity. Instead we proffer an overall environmental evaluation in the empirical results section below.

A parallel and overlapping, but wider vista, on environmental quality is embedded in many UK local planning studies that have considered two related tasks: town centre health checks and assessing retail vitality. However, despite their importance to UK planning policy there is no consistent measurement practice, although it covers broadly the same indicators noted above (Hargest et al, 2007). Cox et al (2000) argue that vitality as a nebulous concept requires ‘joined up’ consideration and evaluation and measuring indicators (especially qualitative ones) is no substitute for quality evaluation. This argument further justifies our approach to environmental quality.

_Diversity of Retailing_

Diversity of retailing as noted above is often seen as an essential element of the economic vitality of a centre. It was measured for each street by the percentage of the different types of retailers in the following categories:

- National multiples,
- Independent traders,
- Specific retailer categories from food through to furniture as shown in Tables 2 to 4.

The streets of the case studies were therefore assessed specifically by looking at the level of diversity of retailers and the presence of food outlets such as cafes and restaurants. In addition case study streets were compared in terms of the presence of independent and multiple retailers. The empirical results of the analysis of the role of centrality, social environment and diversity are now presented in the next section. The
supporting space syntax, rent value maps, etc and the fundamental theoretical analysis are given in Al-Shaheen (2012).

**Empirical Results**

*Centrality based on Space Syntax Analysis*

The space syntax results represent three different perspectives on centrality based on road networks. For each centre an axial map model is produced that demonstrates the integration values of the city’s streets measuring accessibility for through movement. Each line represents a street and an “integration value” is assigned to every line. A high value of integration is an indication of ease of accessibility so that it attracts a high volume of movement (Hillier and Hanson, 1984). It is useful to begin to examine the results with an overview of how the cities compared.

As expected (in the choice of case studies) the scores on these factors vary given the different types of city centre street patterns – the simple grid iron patterns of Glasgow versus the complexity of York. The **local integration** street scores (for ease of pedestrian movement) for Glasgow’s centre range from 1.53 up to 3.41 while those for York are generally lower between 0.86 and 2.68. **Connectivity** scores also follow a similar pattern with Glasgow’s streets generally higher with scores from 4 to 20, whereas York’s range from 2 to 10. Taking a wider spatial perspective, streets in Glasgow city centre have in general a higher level of **global integration** with its wider hinterland represented by scores of 1.16-1.75 compared to York’s with 0.73-1.56.

Focusing on the primary retail area of each city the scores for these streets are summarised in Table 1. In Glasgow the primary shopping streets have high local integration values and are strong movement corridors within their local setting but they
are not among the highest scorers. Sauchiehall Street has the highest local integration value (3.15) and is ranked fifth out of the 321 streets in the city. Overall they rank higher in terms of connectivity between 6 and 10, but again they are not the streets at the top of this ranking.

The primary shopping centre in York is more highly ranked in terms of both local integration and connectivity values. Parliament Street has the second highest local integration value, 2.63, out of the 212 streets in the city. Davygate, Stonegate and Coney Street are ranked fourth, fifth and sixth respectively. At the same time these four primary shopping streets are the highest ranked streets in terms of connectivity.

These results show that location per se within a city centre based on these parameters only fully explains the location of the primary shopping area in York. Clearly other factors are at work, including the location of car parks and transportation hubs. In Glasgow the dominance of Buchanan Street can be in part attributed to the location of large covered malls (with car parks) at each end acting as anchors and a further shopping centre whose entrance is on the street (see Figure 1). The street is also easily accessible and served by several transportation hubs such as two rail stations, one underground station and a central bus station. This is not captured by the space syntax scores based only on road networks.

Social Environmental based on Behavioural Mapping and Visual Quality Assessment

Environmental quality of the primary shopping areas in each city is considered via observation of stationary activity, active shop frontages and the visual environment. The detailed research methods were set out earlier and this section summarises the
results for both cities in turn in qualitative terms, with the spatial pattern of stationary activities in Glasgow and York shown in Figures 1 and 2 respectively.

Buchanan Street is at the centre of the primary shopping area of Glasgow offering an opportunity for a wide range of activities. During most parts of the day, the place is busy and the presence of people attracts more people. The following observations can be drawn:

- Pedestrianisation has been consciously designed to encourage public use and engagement. One encounters people who are shopping, walking, sitting, standing, playing and socialising. The availability of benches, steps and café seats throughout the site encourages the active use of space.
- The visual richness of the buildings from different periods contributes to attracting users to the area. The street facades are covered with a wide range of materials. The buildings are a variety of sizes and colours in different styles. Many facades offer well-designed reliefs and setbacks which provide a place to lean on to stand and watch and/or chat with others. The projecting cantilever and shading devices that many buildings have provide protected space during rainy weather.
- A good mix of activities and the existence of changing arbitrary activities add to the attractiveness of the site. Although retailing is the major component, there are leisure facilities, cafés, restaurants, offices and residential units, as well the presence of several informal independent activities from booths, vendors and performers.
• Most buildings face the street directly and open up toward the public side (see Figure 3). In some cases, the entrance to semi-private areas such as offices or residential properties is through a niche or a setback.

The most active shop frontage segments of the Glasgow centre are shown in Figure 3. They are located in the centre of Buchanan Street, the intersection of Buchanan Street and Sauchiehall Street, and the centre of Sauchiehall Street.

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The central area of York is well preserved and possesses a high-quality environment of distinctive historical character both in terms of buildings and street patterns. Together with the high concentration of mixed activities this makes it a successful and vital centre with the following characteristics:

• The pedestrianisation of the streets encourages public use and engagement.

• The city has a strong distinctive form comprising an organic street network with different street widths, many churches and squares.

• The visual richness that the buildings provide adds to the overall quality of the space. The buildings are designed in different styles and are different colours. The projecting cantilever and shading devices that many buildings provide protected space during the rainy weather.

• While retailing is the major land use there are diverse activities including cafés, restaurants, offices and residential units. It also benefits from the presence of several informal independent activities from booths, vendors and performers.

• Street furniture plays a major role in creating functional and appealing outdoor spaces for public use. There are areas that provide well-designed and
conveniently located street furniture that can attract users and promote outdoor activity.

Figure 4 demonstrates that active shop frontages predominate across the whole centre. Stonegate Street and Coney Street have slightly more active scores due the high number of small shops that are located on them.

These profiles demonstrate a range of commonalities across the two cities in terms of stationary activity, active shop frontages and the visual environment. Although each city has its own distinctive character as shown in Figures 5 to 10 all provide a compelling social experience established through the individuality of the architecture of the buildings (not just shops), the vigorous bustle of human activity and interaction within (effective) pedestrianisation, and accessible shops. They are not only attractive places to shop whatever the weather but the streets also incorporate a mix of other land uses, that stimulate/combine other overlapping activities particularly leisure.

Diversity of Retailing based on Shop Types

The diversity of retailing in the primary high street shopping area of each city is reviewed by reference to the types of goods sold and the proportion of independent rather multiple retailers. The presence of independent retailers is arguably an indicator of a strong local business environment and can offer a certain location a distinctive feature that differentiates it from competing shopping areas.
In assessing the vitality of Glasgow it is important to note that there are two large indoor shopping centres at the northern and southern ends of Buchanan Street, the ‘main’ shopping street. These two centres, of 55,740 and 65,520 sq metres, contain principally well-known multiple retailers and act as major anchors that are generators of major pedestrian movements along Buchanan Street. The existence of such centres are common place in many Western cities and an essential part of the retail offering of the city centre. However, as this section is concerned with the urban design and the vitality of the streets in the prime ‘high street’ shopping area these are excluded from the analysis here.

Within the primary shopping streets Table 2 shows that Sauchiehall Street has the highest diversity of shop types as its retailers are more distributed among the retail classifications. In contrast more than 50% of the retailers on both Buchanan Street and Argyle Street are clothing and footwear stores (including department stores). Sauchiehall Street also has the highest percentage of cafés and restaurants among the three streets. On Buchanan Street and Argyle Street most of the cafés and restaurants are located within shopping malls and arcades.

In York there are no major shopping centres and instead a few major variety/department stores such as Marks & Spencer, BHS, WH Smith and ‘Browns of York’ act the same role as anchors. Stonegate Street has the highest diversity as its retailers are evenly distributed among the retail classifications with clothing and footwear, the most common type, accounting for only 22% of shops. In comparison for both Parliament/Davygate and Coney Street/Spurriegate Street clothing and footwear stores represent 35% of the retailers (Table 4).
The three primary shopping streets have a high percentage of cafés and restaurants contributing to the liveliness of the area. Parliament/Davygate has the highest proportion among the three streets. This is probably explained by the fact that it is a relatively wide street that can easily accommodate outdoor seating. In contrast, Stonegate has the smallest percentage of cafés and restaurants, perhaps because of the narrow profile of the street. The differences in retailer type between the streets are also seen in the balance between independent and multiple retailers. Stonegate has by far the highest percentage of independent retailers while both Parliament/Davygate and Coney Street have almost an equal division of multiples and independent retailers. In fact, as Table 3 shows the percentage of independent retailers is 85% in Stonegate relative to around 25% in the other two streets. Although lacking major retailers, department stores, cafés and restaurants Stonegate is still one of the primary shopping streets as judged by retail rents (see earlier).

Comparison of the two cities reveals that clothing shops are dominant across centres, albeit at different levels of significance, but that each street has its own individual distribution of shop types. Stonegate in York has a particularly individual character not only in terms of types of goods sold but also because the shops are small and run overwhelmingly by independent traders. In Glasgow there is a lower proportion of independent traders and they are more evenly spread across the primary shopping area. Strikingly Buchanan Street which has the highest rents also has nearly half of the area’s traders of this type.

Food retailers have a minor role in the two cities. Only in Stonegate in York does the percentage of food retailers rise above 10% reflecting the rise of out of town supermarkets. The case studies have other similarities, namely the small sprinkling of
shops selling books etc, furniture and toys and the absence of DIY (do it yourself) and electrical goods. There is also (in 2009) virtually no discount shops in the primary shopping areas (referred in the tables as Poundland), only 4 (2%) in Glasgow and none in York.

The findings from these case studies are that there is a considerable variation in the diversity of retailing between these case studies, and even within high street areas. In terms of shop types, whether it be defined in goods sold or ownership, there is no one size fits all in the identification of a successful shopping street or area. In fact there are clear distinctions in the shop types between each street that comprise our case study localities. One street will have primarily multiple retailers while another adjoining will have a greater predominance of independent retailers. There are equivalent differences with respect of goods sold between streets. These variations are partly a reflection of the individual physical streetscape differences but it is also likely that the specialisms complement each other and contribute to the overall attractiveness to shoppers.

**Conclusions and Policy Implications**

This study has considered two contrasting case studies. These high street shopping centres are selected because of their success, difference in size and distinct street patterns. They are also embedded within different regional contexts. Nevertheless it is not their precise role in a retail hierarchy or the regional economy with which they are located that is important to their success but their urban design/morphology characteristics. Both attract leisure shoppers including tourists/day trippers and this appears to be one of the keys to their success.
The research has been ambitious in drawing together different theoretical strands about the workings of high street shopping centres, although by only looking at two places there is inevitably a need for further confirmatory research. The analysis has not dwelled on the theoretical underpinnings but on outcomes and particularly the requisite measures of ‘success’. It is interesting to note that there are strong correlations in both case studies between the areas of highest rental value, greatest accessibility based on space syntax measures, active shop frontage and the most attractive public realm. Drawing wide definitive conclusions must be tempered by the limitations of only two case studies but the degree of commonality and the wide acceptance of the underpinning theories support the following observations.

The ingredients of these successful high street shopping centres appear to be a combination of location, layout, market forces and physical environment. High rental/market values signify retailing attractiveness and define the primary shopping areas. Within these areas there are overlapping positive scores on indicators of spatial syntax locational measures of street integration and connectivity, activities within the public spaces, visual quality assessment and others. The research demonstrates the blurring between commercial and public space and supports Carmona’s (2014) argument that successful social space also creates economic value.

Location at the centre of the city is crucial but it is not a simple relationship. With the advent of ‘in-town’ shopping malls in some western cities simple measures of space syntax centrality based on street patterns no longer fully explain the location of the most successful streets. Location relative to public transport and social infrastructure, car parks and ‘in town’ shopping malls can modify the essential role of centrality in the UK case studies. In Glasgow the primary shopping streets have an important symbiotic
relationship with ‘in-town’ shopping malls that together makes the city centre more attractive as a shopping destination. The corollary is that the building of these ‘in-town’ shopping malls in Glasgow will have changed and shaped the location of the primary shopping area. These findings emphasise the importance of the recognition of micro-locational and economic relationships as essential to the urban design ingredients of high street shopping centres.

The distinctive streetscapes/physical environment of each successful high street shopping area is based on historic indigenous development. In this regard it is interesting to note that each city has a contrasting streetscape from the other – Glasgow streets are long and the product primarily of a nineteenth century grid iron network, while York’s street pattern is more complex, much of it stemming from medieval times. Furthermore Glasgow’s shopping streets are all wide and York’s are a mixture. What the shopping centres have in common is individuality.

Each shopping area has also been nurtured by planning decisions and public investment/management of the public realm in order to capitalise on their heritage. Urban design policies have contributed to the success of these high street shopping areas through pedestrianisation and conservation policies. This has been essential in York where there are strong conservation policies. The condition and current pedestrianisation layout of Buchanan Street in Glasgow, for example, is the result of an international design competition held by Glasgow City Council and Glasgow Development Agency in 1997. However, place shaping while necessarily adapting historic streetscapes to modern needs also requires to offer accessibility for shoppers to car parks, and probably most importantly to take account of retail anchors such as major stores or in-town centres.
The message from this paper is that these successful high street shopping centres do have clear individuality in terms of streetscape but that it has been exploited by a combination of urban planning and town management. In addition the evidence from these case studies is that independent traders are not a complete panacea in the UK but a supporting contribution to the vitality of a high street shopping centre. Retail diversity is not essential as the primary city centre shopping case study areas have a focus on clothing and there is a predominance of multiple retailers. The distribution of retail store types in these successful localities varies with different streets in each city centre having their own specialisms which complement the others and contribute to the attractiveness of the whole. This in one sense good news for urban design as it does not need to be concerned with the retail offering, but a focus on the locational relationships, and the interaction with the social and physical environment of the public spaces. The successful high street shopping centre formula presented here is of a retail area which integrates accessible locations with an attractive public domain in terms of streetscape offering character and individuality. The positive message is that these characteristics are all within the ambit of urban design.
References


Table 1 Axial Analysis Results for the Primary Shopping Streets with the Highest Rental Values in each City

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<td></td>
<td>Argyle Street</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>Stonegate</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Davygate</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coney Street</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parliament Street</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Diversity in the Prime Shopping Area of Glasgow by Type of Retailer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Buchanan St</th>
<th>Sauchiehall St</th>
<th>Argyle St</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books, Stationery &amp; Newspaper Stores</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing &amp; Footwear Stores</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Stores</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIY Stores</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Stores</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture Stores</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Beauty Stores</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music Stores</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cafés &amp; Restaurants</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronics &amp; Phone Stores</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys &amp; Games</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pound Shops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>72</td>
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</table>
Table 3 Proportions of Independent and Multiple Retailers on the Primary Shopping Streets in each City

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Study</th>
<th>Street</th>
<th>Multiple Retailers</th>
<th>Independent Retailers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
<td>Buchanan Street</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sauchiehall Street</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Argyle Street</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>York</td>
<td>Stonegate</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coney Street</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parliament Street/Davygate</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4 Diversity in the Prime Shopping Area of York by Type of Retailer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Retailer Type</th>
<th>Parliament St/Davygate</th>
<th>Stonegate</th>
<th>Coney St</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books, Stationery &amp; Newspaper Stores</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing &amp; Footwear Stores</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department Stores</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIY Stores</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Stores</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture Stores</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health &amp; Beauty Stores</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electronics &amp; Phone Stores</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banks</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toys &amp; Games Stores</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pound Shops</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1 Glasgow Primary Shopping Area with Street Activities Mapped
Figure 2 York Primary Shopping Area with Winter Street Activities Mapped
Figure 3 Active Shop Frontage in Buchanan Street and Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow
Figure 4 Active Shop Frontage in York City Centre
Figure 5 Glasgow Argyle Street Eye Level Photograph
Figure 6 Glasgow Buchanan Street Eye Level Photograph
Figure 7 Glasgow Sauchiehall Street Eye Level Photograph
Figure 8 York Coney Street Eye Level Photograph
Figure 9 York Stonegate Eye Level Photograph
Figure 10 York Parliament Street Eye Level Photograph