



The place of charity shops post Covid-19.

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Manuscripts

~~Where's me jumper?~~ **The place of charity shops post Covid-19.**

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Abstract

- Purpose

Charity shops have met a number of challenges in light of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The paper explores their economic and social impact before going on to review the transformative impact they have on place, the experience of place and the social environment.

- Design/methodology/approach

The paper conducts a review of the extant literature in the field of charity shop retail. Considering the issues that are raised, the article proceeds to discuss the opportunities that arise for [place marketing efforts](#) and charity shops in the retail environment, ~~and~~ the wider sector, [the high street and as a positive, key component of place\(s\)](#).

- Findings

The paper provides novel sectorial insights and recommendations that can be adopted by charity retail outlets. ~~This includes discussion on transformative place marketing, the experience of place and their charity shop' role in the social environment beyond the existing references to charity shops in place(s) and the high street.~~

- Originality

Charity shops play a vital role in society and yet they are an under researched field. The paper contributes knowledge on the role of charity shops in transforming and experiencing place. The paper concludes with observations made from the discussion [on charity shops](#), and states areas for future research [regarding the role of the charity shop and place marketing, place identity and transformation](#).

Keywords: Charity shops, retail, mental health, community, place and kinship

Introduction

We present a consideration of potential new effects ~~of a cause-related place marketing innovation~~ and opportunities regarding charity shops and their role ~~of both in relation to~~ the vitality and viability of high street reinvention, repositioning and uses (Ntounis ~~et al.~~, 2023). Charity shops are highlighted across place marketing, management and related literature as entities taking over vacant high street premises (McDonald and Cassidy, 2017; Hallsworth and Coca-Stefaniak, 2018; Cassidy and Resnick, 2020), but also over the years, several charity shops having similar issues as felt by the private sector regarding competitive conditions (Alexander, Cryer and Wood, 2008). However, due to cost-of-living crisis, post covid-19, charity shops in the UK may see an increase in footfall and engagement, as people seek out more affordable, responsible, and sustainable ways to shop, as well as an impetus to support noble causes. We consider ~~the a cause-related element and~~ potential new role of place marketing, linking to roles of charity shops ~~and similar opportunity shops and retail setting play elsewhere~~ with new effects. Place marketing assists in boosting local economies by promoting the unique quality and offerings of a place, which can attract visitors and investments, historically competing for corporate businesses and retail outlets (Edensor, Kalandides and Kothari, 2020). We present other "effects" with more holistic, positive, transformative service (Skinner, 2008), with people and place at the heart of ~~cause-related~~ place marketing efforts, considering charity shops as an ongoing significant component of the high street and community; a sector with unrivalled retail professionalism and ~~as a~~ safety net for the socially excluded (Horne, 2006).

As people re-evaluate priorities during the cost-of-living crisis and in the post pandemic world, there should ~~be~~ synergistic attempts with increased foci on local communities, sustainability, and social responsibility (Ntounis *et al.*, 2023). ~~Effective place marketing in these sociocultural, environmental, and economic terms, and with those wider effects Skinner (2008) alluded to, Our~~ emphasis is on the

positive impact that charity shop spaces for retail and therapy are certainly opportunities for growth. Such innovations are which are lacking from the extant literature on place marketing. with and a As part of this paper we a call for more research on a transformative place marketing chapter in its theoretical and practical historical developments, pushing beyond destination branding, and more recent, honourable, community-based efforts for diversification and outcomes.

Over approximately two years the UK has been in the grips of a global pandemic (CV-19) that has impacted upon every area of society. These impacts have been both economic, social and physical. At one end of the spectrum the terrible loss of human life has seen huge infrastructure pressure on the NHS and related medical providers and at the other end of the spectrum impacts have been economic and social. In terms of the social impacts of CV-19 these might take years to fully appear within the fabric of society. Issues associated with shortages of essential foods, limited fuel provision, increased costs of living, mental health issues and increasing alcohol and substance abuse have all had an impact over the previous last two years (Aarts *et al.*, 2021; Davillas and Jones, 2021)

Running parallel to the social impacts, the UK high street has seen a huge downturn in footfall resulting in reduced consumption, business closures and a general feeling of desolation and isolation for those shoppers who would have traditionally met, socially interacted with friends, swapped stories, and spent money in the many manifestations of the UKs high street and retail emporiums (Blundell *et al.*, 2020). Whilst the literature has discussed many of those private sector retail outlets and their sad closures (Liu *et al.*, 2021), little has been detailed in relation to the distant cousin, that of the charity shop, that often relies on donations, volunteers, and support from the community. Indeed, not only does the charity shop environment provide many of its customers with low priced apparel, it also in many cases provides social kinship for its visitors (Flores, 2014), information sources associated with housing, social benefits, and general health care awareness. The future for these establishments to re-position themselves in the post CV-19 retail environment and offer additional social provision is endless.

The paper aims to explore the place of charity shops in a post Covid context. The authors have previously discussed the role of vintage fashion in the context of celebrity culture and local rejuvenation (Robinson and Dale, 2019), a genre in which many charity shops trade. This paper will discuss the role that charity shops can play in the brave new world of the retail environment related to social, physical, and mental health provisions, community kinship and arts related ventures. The paper reviews possible charitable retail mechanisms that could be employed to alleviate the negative social impacts caused by CV-19 and discusses how charity shops can be employed to better help disenfranchised community groups to overcome the negative social impacts caused by CV-19. By reviewing charity shops in a post Covid context, the paper contributes to the extant literature in the field which includes the positive re-imagining and positioning of the charity shop in the physical retail environment.

Covid-19 — Business, Economic and Social Impacts

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been widespread and global. From a UK perspective, the pandemic had a significant effect on the regional and national economic output (Dale, Robinson and Sheikh, 2021). It has had a particular impact upon those businesses operating in a service context such as tourism, hospitality, and retail (ibid). In the first year of the pandemic, lockdowns cost the UK economy £251bn (Elliot, 2021). For much of 2020 and 2021, vacation travel was not permitted and entry into the UK was very strictly limited. Business travel, for example, declined by nearly 90% over previous years (ibid).

A key factor, as an outcome of these issues, has been the impact upon the business supply chain and on buyer/consumer behaviour. Mintel (2020) suggested that since Covid-19 eating habits have been changed for a lasting impact, with 69% of British not wasting as much food at home and a 47% increase in the purchase of long-life products. With these factors in mind, businesses have had to learn how to instill confidence and trust among customers and this has become imperative when developing business resilience (Renjen, 2020).

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Though the Covid-19 pandemic has not necessarily been the exclusive factor attributed to these economic pressures, it has been a significant influence. It is acknowledged that war and geo-political factors have also impacted upon an evolving Global economic landscape. This is evidenced in a major financial downturn associated with global trade (IMF, 2022). National economies have had to manage rising energy prices, inflationary pressures and increasing consumer costs, thus resulting in financial pressures on the general population (ONS, 2022). The management of an intangible and relatively unknown virus has compounded an already difficult situation.

Small and ~~medium-Medium~~ sized ~~enterprises-Enterprises~~ (SME) have been at the brunt of these economic pressures. With six million ~~small and medium sized enterprises (SME)~~SME in the UK, they account for 33% of employment and 21% of turnover (SimplyBusiness, 2021). However, the pandemic generated a £126.6 billion cost for small businesses. Finances have been at the root of many worries with 61% of small business owners having had serious financial concerns at some stage of the pandemic (ibid). During the pandemic, UK Government support packages in the form of furlough and loans were provided and proved a lifeline to many small businesses. Though research reveals that 81% of self-employed people felt it was not enough and over two million SMEs were unable to access any financial support (ibid). By definition, social impacts relate to the manner by which any one particular phenomenon (in this case CV-19) impacts upon the wider social / societal environment (British Academy, 2021). In this scenario CV-19 has presented the external global environment with a multitude of health-based challenges associated with the general well-being of a nation's population / health. Whilst the global population of planet earth has in the past (and some might still say) is challenged by pandemics, such impacts on the West has been limited or at least controllable. Fast-forward to 2020 and CV-19 has wreaked havoc on Western society in the form of a pandemic that has had far reaching ramifications for health infrastructure pressures, as well as the potential to impact negatively upon the social fabric of society. In terms of the social impacts of CV-19 these might take years to fully appear within the wider society, in the same way that veterans from Americas involvement in the Vietnam war, saw service personnel return from battle with undiagnosed ~~post-Post traumatic-T-raumatic~~ Sdistress ~~Disorder~~ (PTSD). Such trauma post CV-19 might manifest itself in a long Covid like ~~psychosis~~psychosis of the mind resulting in mental health issues presenting themselves in the future.

Whilst traditionally consumers were able to leave their abode to visit the many offerings of retail delights on a daily basis and peruse, chat, engage and facilitate social kinship within the place environment, overnight such liberal activities, which were often taken for granted, were curtailed. Never before has Europe experienced such curfew like policies (other than when in a war like footing associated with Word War 2) aimed at limiting the spread of CV-19. Whilst many claimed such policies were draconian and robbed us of our social democratic retail liberties (www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk, 2021; Bardosh ~~et-alef al.~~, 2022), others argued that such legislation was needed to halt the spread of such a global pandemic (McIntyre ~~et-alef al.~~, 2022). Whilst such measures proved invaluable at preventing further spread, we must also consider the future invisible impacts of such policies (PTSD related), which often robbed the poor, those traditionally disenfranchised from main stream society and the lonely of their daily fix of social therapy, often manifesting itself in a 'hello' from a stranger, a 'how are you, it's turned out nice again' or simple nod or wink to acknowledge a strangers existence in an attempt to alleviate that individual from their daily mundane existence. Gone were the walks in the parks, conversations on busses whilst travelling to work or the gentle reassuring smile from a stranger, that all was not lost and that your place in society, no matter how small, still had some significance. This resulted in the traditional footfall of the shoppingscape environment being curtailed overnight and such locations becoming off limits to all but a very few.

Running parallel to the social impacts of CV-19 in relation to the retail environment and the simple pleasure that we all often took for granted, issues associated with safety and security were often exacerbated, resulting in those of criminal fraternities, choosing to take advantage of the wider good in society and abuse those deviant opportunities that presented themselves during this timescale. Exemplars include the potential breakdown in law and order, whilst not specifically related to CV-19, we can see how society might / often acts inappropriately during times of adversity. Looking at the wider geographical environment criminal actions were rife and it has been argued that criminal gangs viewed the CV-19 pandemic as an opportunity to gain power through extortion and deviant behaviour (Dale, Robinson and Sheikh, 2021). In addition to the opportunities that have presented themselves for the

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10 criminal community to engage with deviant acts during lockdown, issues associated with the democratic
11 right not to wear a mask has also presented law enforcement authorities with many challenges when
12 attempting to enforce the rule of law. For example, civil disobedience and riots occurred in a number of
13 locations including the Netherlands (BBC, 2021), the Caribbean (Reuters, 2021), South Africa (CNBC,
14 2021) and Australia (The Guardian, 2021).

15 16 C-19 and its Impact on Retail

17 Running parallel to the social impacts, the UK high street has seen a huge downturn in footfall (BBC,
18 2020). This has resulted in reduced consumption, business closures and a general feeling of desolation
19 and isolation for those shoppers who would have traditionally met, socially interacted with friends,
20 swapped stories and spent money in the many manifestations of the UK's high street and retail
21 emporiums (Deloitte, 2021). The continued trend towards out-of-town shopping outlets and retail parks
22 has compounded the decline of the high street shopping experience (Dolega and Lord, 2020).
23 Furthermore, the town centre first policies that emerged during the 1990s have become outdated and
24 potentially impacted upon continued high street development (ibid).

25 Historically, the pandemic is not the first time that consumers have felt excluded from a high street
26 context. The social unrest during the strikes in the 1970s culminating in the "three day three-day week",
27 resulted in limited shop opening times. Such enforced periods of political intervention cause changes
28 in consumer behaviour that have an enduring impact long after the event has occurred. As the
29 discussion has raised the pandemic resulted in a decline in high street footfall, with consumers seeking
30 new ways to fulfil their purchasing needs. This predominately was driven by the online purchasing
31 experience and the growth of online operators that were able to satisfy that need (Dalgleish, 2020). It
32 was not uncommon for consumers to purchase an "insperience" where food, film and clothes were part
33 of a domestic household setting (Mintel, 2020, Stylus 2020). However, this experience excluded those
34 individuals who would not have had the economic or technological resources to gain access.
35 Consumers may also not have had the necessary know-how to access the online channels to engage
36 in such an experience. The insperience also potentially compounded the feeling of isolation amongst a
37 subset of consumers that desired a means for social interaction.

38 Whilst the literature has discussed many of those private sector retail outlets and their sad closures (Liu
39 *et al.*, 2021), little has been detailed in relation to the distant cousin that of the charity shop, that often
40 relies on donations, volunteers and support from the community. Indeed, not only does the charity shop
41 environment provide many of its customers with low priced apparel, it also in many cases provides
42 social kinship for its visitors (Flores, 2014), information sources associated with housing, social
43 benefits and general health care awareness.

44 There are estimated to be around 11200 charity shops in the UK representing 84% in England alone
45 (Charity Retail Association, 2023). Raising a third of a billion pounds in income, employment in the
46 outlets nationwide includes 26,800 paid staff and 186,800 volunteers (Charity Retail Association, 2023).
47 Like the wider retail sector, charity shops were impacted upon by the Covid-19 lockdown but resumed
48 swift trading once measures were reduced and eventually removed (Hargrave, 2021). Operating as part
49 of the second-hand economy they are challenged by competing physical retail outlets and
50 intermediaries trading online (Yrjola *et al.*, 2021). Though there is a growing emphasis in the
51 literature on an exploration of the latter (Abbes, *et al.*, 2020), with the contribution charity shops
52 can make to the sustainability agenda and related business models (Ritter and Schanz, 2019;
53 Gyldmann and Huulgaard, 2020; Coscieme, *et al.*, 2022; Valor, *et al.*, 2022), their role as a
54 physical retail outlet in the context of transforming and experiencing place requires further discussion,
55 and input to place marketing.

56 Charity Shops in Experiencing Place

57 Charity shops play a significant role when experiencing place. It is therefore important to acknowledge
58 this role in the practice of placemaking. Visual identity and uniqueness are important attributes in
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10 attracting people to places (Lin *et al.*, 2011 and Ruzzier & De Chernatony, 2013) and contribute to
11 the positioning of towns and cities in the image making process (Zimmerbauer 2011). Charity shops
12 develop identity of place and can draw visitors to the location where they are existing in number. In this
13 respect, charity shops can contribute to the social and physical features of a place (Urry, 1995). Places
14 engender the collective memories that people may associate with the location (Benjamin, 1979) and
15 charity shops are important for re-invigorating memories of the past. They also have the potential to
develop the sub-culture and spirit of a locality in which they exist (Durrell, 1969).

16 Feelings and those feelings that arise are important to recognise when considering place (Ryan, 1991).
17 Charity shop locations bring together individuals and groups of individuals that have a shared meaning
18 and commonality (McGregor, 2018). These feelings may be altruistic in nature or those in the search of
19 memories from a nostalgic past. These shared feelings can be associated with a "collective
20 effervescence" (Shilling & Mellor, 1998; p.196) that brings together charity shoppers in a common
21 understanding. This commonality becomes a shared experience of place, further denoting a places
22 identity (Bødker & Browning 2012). This coming together brings opportunities for developing
23 relationships with not only fellow charity shoppers but also those residents in the place. This brings
24 shared memories about past charity wear and merchandise, generating potential myths and stories that
25 become associated with place and also possibly about the garment being worn.

26 As noted, an interest in the past and related apparel can be driven by a sense of nostalgia (Davis, 1973;
27 Yeh *et al.*, 2012). Nostalgia is generated when encountering artefacts from the past and feelings of
28 happiness and safety may play out (Ye *et al.*, 2017). This feeling of nostalgiazation (Vasey &
29 Dimanche, 2003) where the past is situated as a romantic place and every garment has a story to tell,
30 ignoring any negative realities that may have occurred. Visiting charity shops has the potential to
31 generate these nostalgic feelings and further play a mental health role in supporting those experiencing
32 dementia or memory loss.

33 As Robinson and Dale (2018) have previously discussed, vintage fashion and its sale in charity shops
34 has played a key role in contemporary society. Furthermore, it has repositioned charity shop outlets as
35 central to the shopping experience for selected markets. The popularity of vintage fashion and its sale
36 in charity shops has been driven by economic factors, including changing levels of disposable income
37 and spending behaviour (Ferraro *et al.*, 2016). This has seen low-price fashion stores including
38 supermarkets rising in popularity. Growing ethical awareness of climate change and sustainability
39 issues have also influenced consumer behaviour. Consumers are seeking outlets that sell and
40 repurpose items that may of otherwise have been disposed of (Roberts-Islam, 2019). To some extent
41 there has been a counter-cultural reaction to the consumerist nature of fast fashion and its potentially
42 exploitative impacts thus offering a resurgence to charity shop outlets selling lost priced regenerative
43 apparel (Robinson and Dale, 2018). The charity shopping experience also provides a place for identity
44 formation, individuality and self-expression, where feelings of yearning for a bygone period may play
45 out (ibid). Celebrity culture has also promoted the popularity of vintage fashion and second-hand charity
46 shopping. Throughout time, musical genres including mods, rockers, grunge and rap have
47 commercialised the popularity of vintage fashion and locations such as Camden Market in London and
48 Afflecks Palace in Manchester have become synonymous with the sale and purchase of second-hand
49 merchandise (ibid).

45 Transformative place marketing

46 A transformative place marketing foci integrating key components of places regarding responsible and
47 sustainable effects is lacking from the extant literature. Rooted in theorising about gaps in provision
48 regarding social support, health, and wellbeing, where so-called "third places" charity shops become
49 apparent to replace or constitute such support and provision., eConsideration of positive transformative
50 serviceplace marketing therefore acts as a lens to consider determinants across non-traditional, place
51 and space, beyond the traditional tourism development efforts, and public sector, social and medical
52 place, space and means for health and wellbeing (see for examples Horne and Madrell, 2002; Horne,
53 2006; Rosenbaum *et al et al.*, 2007; Skinner, 2008).

Place or high street ecosystems with commercial service establishments, such as charity shops or opportunity shops, are 'other' spaces for opportunities of social support and forums that facilitate transformative health and wellbeing outcomes, impacts, and consequences (Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2007). Charity shops and the sector are historically grounded in social service and significant for such outcomes, but beyond consumption of goods, alongside traditionally poverty-driven consumption, they are 'enmeshed within a set of relations between culture, economy and place which has effects in the social sphere' (Edwards and Gibson, 2017, p.70).

Dynamic for participation and engagement, charity shops across the UK, USA, Australia, Canada, Ireland and elsewhere are valued and used as hubs for: customers with strong commitment to the ethos of charity and/or trading practice; volunteering; libraries; to support creative industrious' arts and craft activities; for indie-apparel, trend and fashion; designer label wearers; student groups; thrift; the alternative; the unpredictable; dealers, and collectors' items, the rare and unusual; sociation and as social hangouts for different demographic groups; retail tourism; leisure shopping; coming out of the cold; a cup of tea and a biscuit, a coffee and a chat; meeting different socio-economic groups' needs, wants and experiences; the list is not exhaustive (Alexander, Cryer and Wood, 2008; Horne and Maddrell, 2002). A spectrum of time-rich, diverse volunteers are also in many ways providing a multiplier effect of validity and vitality to the charity shop, the high street, urban and rural locales, and the people who encounter these volunteer communities; the visitor, consumer, prosumer of the charity shop (Parsons, 2004; Whithear, 1999).

Innovations on Place marketing and charity shops in the UK can support the high street retail sector post CV-19 by creating more transformative, vibrant and attractive environments for individual and societal health and wellbeing. Place marketing can be a catalyst to promote the unique offerings of charity shops alongside synergistic, transparent collaborations across thea more sustainable, responsible high street place ecosystem, such as local businesses and community-based initiatives, to attract more engagement, footfall and creative investment which meet the needs of people and place. Additionally, we wish to raise the charity shop presence as a hub to celebrate and promoting place, with equally sustainable and responsible retail offerings, tapping into opportunities and options for consumers and prosumers. Therefore, with the power of a transformative place marketing, charity shops can be communicated to local populations, visitors and investors alike, as contributing to the high street ecosystem for all manner of economic, socio-cultural, and environmental outcomes (Osterley and Williams, 2019; Edwards and Gibson, 2017; Horne, 2006; Horne and Madrell, 2002). Instrumental in the revitalisation and positioning of the high street, charity shops opportunity shops and similar retail sector offer affordable, responsible, and sustainable retail options, as well as providing a positive impact in the community. Charity shops can attract footfall to the high street for an array of reasons, which can be beneficial at many levels. Moreover, in collaboration with local business and organisations across public, private and voluntary sectors, both place marketing and charity shops can support high street vitality and viability. Charity shops as hubs for creating a genius loci and sense of community, with place marketing promoting a place in a different way for the charity retail sector, communicating sustainability and bridging between efforts of place marketing, and place management and development.

It is no surprise that the evolution of the charity shop has led to a diverse array of niche, specialisation, and diversification of services, provision and representation linked in with related service ecosystem' components, public, private, and voluntary. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure integration of charity shops in all their wondrous guises to be considered in any place and service innovation on high street and service ecosystem, design, and development for transformative place marketing effects and synergistic attempts to support the vitality and viability of thea sustainable high street in the UK (Skinner, 2008; Ntounis *et al.*, 2023).

Charity Shops, Place and the Social Environment

By their very nature and based on the purpose of Charities, they are, considered ethical, moral and principled organisations (Chell *et al.*, 2016). Carroll's (1999) early definition of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has 'philanthropy' as the highest component of its meaning. However, there has also been some distrust of charities with consumers in recent years and focusing on responsible business and environmental issues can be used as a way to counter this criticism (Adams, 2019). The

concept of charity shops represents a series of positive benefits in relation to sustainability and the broader environment. To start, the overall product lifecycle of goods sold at charity shops is extended as more products receive prolonged use which may otherwise have gone to landfill (Castellani *et al.*, 2015). Overall transport costs and ecological damage is lower with second hand products as opposed to creating new garments (Farrant *et al.*, 2010). The overall concept of reusing and recycling is much more environmentally friendly than replacing and creating new products and sending older ones to landfill, which may take many years to degrade (Osterley and Williams, 2019).

Larger charities often focus on explicit CSR which is strategised and published (Matten and Moon, 2004). Whereas smaller charities engage more on implicit CSR, where the focus is on the wider formal and informal institutions for society's interests and concerns. Doherty *et al.* (2014) argued that social enterprises and charities act as 'hybrid' organisations in terms of their mission, offering a balance in terms of being commercial (profitable) and addressing the societal needs which they have been set up to tackle. Page and Katz (2010) suggest CSR may not be the most appropriate terminology for charities who endeavour in social and environmental goals and initiatives as they are embedded in the communities they serve and involve collaboration with wider stakeholders. It is clear that Charities' social endeavours centre on local community benefits (Philips and Taylor, 2020) and that there is an intangible contract between the charity and the community in which they operate.

Partnerships are critical to charity shops, as developing collaborations with other stakeholders will attract and maintain donations. One such partner is local government, charity shops can offer and be used as a mechanism to deliver services once deemed government responsibility (Sanzo, Alvarez, Re t and Garcia, 2013). This has a benefit of government who are under pressure to reduce public sector delivery, whilst at the same time improving public image and reputation of the charity. Smaller and local charities are well positioned to fulfil this role and can offer a 'place' for residents and customers as part of their social outreach and CSR which larger mainstream charities would not be able to reach (Philips and Taylor, 2020). This is supported by Warsi (2022) who stressed the importance of the role of charities in improving community cohesion, bringing people together locally, in the form of a community hub (Bateson, 2017). There is already a growing trend of charities who have adopted this social inclusion model by having a side-mission of community cohesion, seeing it as a by-product of their core mission (Chell *et al.*, 2016). It can be argued that implementing such actions can ensure that charities can ensure their methods match their mission for the benefit of all (Adams, 2019).

Transformative Opportunities for Charity Shops

The future of the charity shop in its traditional guise is possibly numbered and to ensure long term survival and to facilitate ongoing provision for its key stakeholders, planned change is needed. This does not have to be some type of seismic change, but one that initially consults with its key users and those in society who wish to have their ideas and opinions further embroidered into the fabric of the retail charity shop environment / place; [an essence of positive transformative place marketing and place management models \(Ntounis, et al., 2023; Edensor, Kalandides and Kothari, 2020; Skinner, 2008\)](#). So, what might these changes look like and fundamental to any change is the manner by which such changes reflect the key needs of its society and ultimately its key end users. Indeed, it is argued that charity shops need to continually evolve to survive in a high street context and to also meet the needs of the buying public (abcmoney.co.uk, 2017; Zurich, 2021). A key issue that is at stake here is the manner by which planned changes are implemented and the manner by which community led ideas and initiatives are disseminated within the public realm to further aid community patronage of the social retail environment. Indeed, in a local community context, charity shops have a key social role to play (Broadbridge and Parsons, 2003) in aiding social cohesion and community support, not only in the context of apparel purchase but also as formal / informal mechanisms to enhance community wellbeing, to offer social support and to further act as signposting systems for those requiring support. Such support is not intended to replace traditional support systems such as The Citizens Advice Bureau and the Local GP's surgery, but instead reduce pressures on such providers and possibly limit seasonal pressures associated by high demand, often exacerbated by recent CV-19 cases. Running parallel to which it can be argued that whilst those who may have been traditionally disenfranchised from such

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10 formal health care providers (GP's surgery etc) and whilst not seeking out such support services and
11 might ultimately fall through the safety net, the charity shop environment offers a safe environment for
12 those who might be socially awkward and or suffer from addictions and mental health issues to seek
13 advice and help in a non-judgmental forum, albeit in the initial confines of the charity shop. Further
14 health provision spin offs associated with this type of forum can be extended to other community groups
15 including (but not exclusive to) LGBTQ+, expectant mothers, single parent supports groups, [ethnic](#)
16 [minority groups](#), foodbanks, mini library's, pop-up shops, disability awareness provision, small
17 business start-ups and cinematography related experiences, [the list is non-exhaustive](#).

17 Not only does such provision offer something for everyone, we must also not under-estimate [the value](#)
18 [of the benefits](#) from a human resourcing supply perspective. From a charity shop volunteer perspective,
19 it is argued that it enables "a way of *regaining meaning, structure and belonging after experiences of*
20 *social dislocation such as retirement and bereavement*" (Flores, 2013, p283). Described as a form of
21 symbolic consumption (Wymer and Samu, 2002) further studies have noted how volunteering brings a
22 sense of altruism, identity formation and increased self-esteem (Ho and O'Donohoe, 2014). Charity
23 shops also play a role in minimising a feeling of isolation and loneliness in old age particularly amongst
24 men (Ratcliffe [et al](#), 2021; Homecare.co.uk, 2013).

25 Conclusion

26 The paper [has](#) explored the role of charity shops in a post covid climate. The pandemic had a significant
27 impact on the business and economic environment and in many ways will continue to do so. Particularly
28 hard hit were [small and medium sized enterprises SME](#), which charity shops constitute. Economic and
29 social impacts include the effects of poverty, alcohol and substance abuse, isolation,
30 [depression and depression](#), and potential criminal behaviour. The pandemic has also influenced shopping
31 behaviour in the retail environment with an increase in online consumer spending. It is too early to say
32 how long these effects may last into the future.

33 Charity shops play a vital role in the high street, developing community spirit and ensuring shoppers
34 have an opportunity for fulfilling socialisation needs. Their place as part of the high street ecosystem
35 can be transformative in nature, bringing together underrepresented groups and uniting people living
36 on the margins of society. Not only does the charity shop forum offer its users affordable apparel it also
37 enables information and community support mechanisms to be more readily available for those users
38 who might have traditionally fallen through the support net, that was historically offered by [the](#) social
39 services. It is not the intention of this paper to advocate that the workload of those kind and ethically
40 focused charity volunteers who donate much of their free time, running and servicing such enterprises
41 should be further burdened with an additional responsibility of information dissemination. Rather the
42 intention of this paper is to, where possible, empower those that run such charity enterprises and those
43 that have a managerial role to be gatekeepers and signpost those vulnerable in society, who may fall
44 through the traditional safety net or those who might not have initially felt confident visiting their local
45 GP (General Practitioner) or CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau), [whilst being key stakeholders in place](#)
46 [marketing](#).

47 The potential here for pop-up vendors and providers using the charity shop environment as the forum
48 to provide information services, kinship, retail experiences and health related information channels is
49 endless. In the post CV-19 brave new world which has already seen many retail place providers
50 experiencing financial problems associated with rising business taxes, energy cost and a downturn in
51 customer demand, the pop-up information charity exchange enterprise offers many facets to its
52 customers. Not only does the one stop shop benefit its users, but it will also have potential revenue
53 implications and savings for those enterprises that chose to pool their resources and share the related
54 business costs. In this scenario, the pop-up forum sees historically high street placed providers such
55 as the Post Office, Banks and in some cases art installations ([m](#)Museums, theatres and cinemas) using
56 the charity shop location at specific times during the week to sell and promote their wares.

57 Charity shops play a vital role in the future fabric of society and social consciousness. This is in terms
58 of wider philanthropic endeavours and fulfilling local community needs.

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The Our paper adds to the emerging literature on charity shops and its relationship to place and place marketing. The paper further expands on the role charity shops have in the context of a transformative place marketing, innovation, reinvention and repositioning. In particular, the paper illustrates the power of transformative place marketing and charity shops in a sustainable and responsible the high street ecosystem. -Charity shops are an under researched area and this paper has gone some way to exploring the issues that exist in this sector. Opportunities arise for future research in charity shop provision potentially focussing specifically on their economic and social impacts and their influence on place identity and transformation, with opportunities to innovate on what we promote as transformative place marketing developments.

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Where's me jumper? The placeThe future of charity shops post Covid-19.

Abstract

- Purpose

Charity shops have met a number of challenges in light of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The paper explores their economic and social impact before going on to review the transformative impact they have on place, the experience of place and the social environment.

- Design/methodology/approach

The paper conducts a review of the extant literature in the field of charity shop retail. Considering the issues that are raised, the article proceeds to discuss the opportunities that arise for charity shops in the retail environment and the wider sector.

- Findings

The paper provides novel sectorial insights and recommendations that can be adopted by charity retail outlets.

- Originality

Charity shops play a vital role in society and yet they are an under researched field. The paper contributes knowledge on the role of charity shops in transforming and experiencing place. The paper concludes with observations made from the discussion and states areas for future research.

Keywords: Charity shops, retail, mental health, community, place and kinship

Introduction

We present a consideration of potential new effects of a cause-related place marketing innovation and opportunities regarding charity shops and the role of both in relation to the vitality and viability of high street reinvention, repositioning and uses (Ntounis *et al et al.*, 2023). Charity shops are highlighted across place marketing, management and related literature as entities taking over vacant high street premises (McDonald and Cassidy, 2017; Hallsworth and Coca-Stefaniak, 2018; Cassidy and Resnick, 2020), but also over the years, several charity shops having similar issues as felt by the private sector regarding competitive conditions (Alexander, Cryer and Wood, 2008). However, due to cost-of-living crisis, post covid-19, charity shops in the UK may see an increase in footfall and engagement, as people seek out more affordable, responsible, and sustainable ways to shop, as well as an impetus to support noble causes. We consider a cause-related element and potential new role of place marketing linking to roles of charity shops and similar opportunity shops and retail setting play elsewhere with new effects. Place marketing assists in boosting local economies by promoting the unique quality and offerings of a place, which can attract visitors and investments, historically competing for corporate businesses and retail outlets (Edensor, Kalandides and Kothari, 2020). We present other "effects" with more holistic, positive, transformative service (Skinner, 2008), with people and place at the heart of cause-related place marketing efforts, considering charity shops as an ongoing significant component of the high street and community; a sector with unrivalled retail professionalism and safety net for the socially excluded (Horne, 2006). As people re-evaluate priorities during the cost-of-living crisis and in the post pandemic world, there should synergistic attempts with increased foci on local communities, sustainability, and social responsibility (Ntounis *et al et al.*, 2023). Effective place marketing in these sociocultural, environmental, and economic terms, and with those wider effects Skinner (2008) alluded to, our emphasis is on the positive impact that charity shop spaces for retail and therapy are certainly opportunities for growth. Such innovations are lacking from the extant literature on place marketing, with a call for more research on a transformative place marketing chapter in its theoretical and practical historical developments.

Over approximately two years the UK has been in the grips of a global pandemic (CV-19) that has impacted upon every area of society. These impacts have been both economic, social and physical. At

one end of the spectrum the terrible loss of human life has seen huge infrastructure pressure on the NHS and related medical providers and at the other end of the spectrum impacts have been economic and social. In terms of the social impacts of CV-19 these might take years to fully appear within the fabric of society. Issues associated with shortages of essential foods, limited fuel provision, increased costs of living, mental health issues and increasing alcohol and substance abuse have all had an impact over the previous last two years (Aarts *et al*, 2021, Davillas and Jones, 2021)

Running parallel to the social impacts, the UK high street has seen a huge downturn in footfall resulting in reduced consumption, business closures and a general feeling of desolation and isolation for those shoppers who would have traditionally met, socially interacted with friends, swapped stories and spent money in the many manifestations of the UKs high street and retail emporiums (Blundell *et al*, 2020). Whilst the literature has discussed many of those private sector retail outlets and their sad closures (Liu *et al*, 2021), little has been detailed in relation to the distant cousin that of the charity shop, that often relies on donations, volunteers and support from the community. Indeed, not only does the charity shop environment provide many of its customers with low priced apparel, it also in many cases provides social kinship for its visitors (Flores, 2014), information sources associated with housing, social benefits and general health care awareness. The future for these establishments to re-position themselves in the post CV-19 retail environment and offer additional social provision is endless.

The authors have previously discussed the role of vintage fashion in the context of celebrity culture and local rejuvenation (Robinson and Dale, 2019), a genre in which many charity shops trade. This paper will further discuss the role that charity shops can play in the brave new world of the retail environment related to social, physical and mental health provisions, community kinship and arts related ventures. The paper aims to explore the place of charity shops in a post Covid context. investigate the economic and social impacts of CV-19 within the context of the UK. The paper reviews possible social enterprise/charitable retail mechanisms that could be employed to alleviate the negative social impacts caused by CV-19 and discusses how charity shops can be employed to better help disenfranchised community groups to overcome the negative social impacts caused by CV-19. By reviewing charity shops in a post Covid context, the paper contributes to the extant literature in the field.

Covid-19 – Business, Economic and Social Impacts

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been widespread and global. From a UK perspective, the pandemic had a significant effect on the regional and national economic output (Dale, Robinson and Sheikh, 2021). It has had a particular impact upon those businesses operating in a service context such as tourism, hospitality and retail (ibid). In the first year of the pandemic, lockdowns cost the UK economy £251bn (Elliot, 2021). For much of 2020 and 2021, vacation travel was not permitted and entry into the UK was very strictly limited. Business travel, for example, declined by nearly 90% over previous years (ibid)

A key factor, as an outcome of these issues, has been the impact upon the business supply chain and on buyer/consumer behaviour. Mintel (2020) suggested that since Covid-19 eating habits have been changed for a lasting impact, with 69% of British not wasting as much food at home and a 47% increase in the purchase of long-life products. With these factors in mind, businesses have had to learn how to instill confidence and trust among customers and this has become imperative when developing business resilience (Renjen, 2020).

Though the Covid-19 pandemic has not necessarily been the exclusive factor attributed to these economic pressures, it has been a significant influence. It is acknowledged that war and geo-political factors have also impacted upon an evolving Global economic landscape. This is evidenced in a major financial downturn associated with global trade (IMF, 2022). National economies have had to manage rising energy prices, inflationary pressures and increasing consumer costs, thus resulting in financial pressures on the general population (ONS, 2022). The management of an intangible and relatively unknown virus has compounded an already difficult situation.

Small and medium sized enterprises have been at the brunt of these economic pressures. With six million small and medium sized enterprises (SME) in the UK, they account for 33% of employment and

21% of turnover (SimplyBusiness, 2021). However, the pandemic generated a £126.6 billion cost for small businesses. Finances have been at the root of many worries with 61% of small business owners having had serious financial concerns at some stage of the pandemic (ibid). During the pandemic, Government support packages in the form of furlough and loans were provided and proved a lifeline to many small businesses. Though research reveals that 81% of self-employed people felt it was not enough and over two million SMEs were unable to access any financial support (ibid). By definition, social impacts relate to the manner by which any one particular phenomenon (in this case CV-19) impacts upon the wider social / societal environment (British Academy, 2021). In this scenario CV-19 has presented the external global environment with a multitude of health-based challenges associated with the general well-being of a nation's population / health. Whilst the global population of planet earth has in the past (and some might still say) is challenged by pandemics, such impacts on the West has been limited or at least controllable. Fast-forward to 2020 and CV-19 has wreaked havoc on Western society in the form a pandemic that has had far reaching ramifications for health infrastructure pressures as well as the potential to impact negatively upon the social fabric of society. In terms of the social impacts of CV-19 these might take years to fully appear within the wider society, in the same way that veterans from Americas involvement in the Vietnam war, saw service personnel return from battle with undiagnosed ~~post-Post traumatic-T-raumatic Sdis~~ stress Disorder (PTSD). Such trauma post CV-19 might manifest itself in a long Covid like sycosis of the mind resulting in mental health issues presenting themselves in the future. Issues associated with shortages of essential foods, limited fuel provision, increased costs of living, mental health issues and increasing alcohol and substance abuse have had a huge impact over the previous last two years (WHO, 2022).

Whilst traditionally consumers were able to leave their abode to visit the many offering of retail delights on a daily basis and peruse, chat, engage and facilitate social kinship within the place environment, overnight such liberal activities which were often taken for granted were curtailed. Never before has Europe experienced such curfew like policies (other than when in a war like footing associated with Word War 2) aimed at limiting the spread of CV-19. Whilst many claimed such policies were draconian and robbed us of our social democratic retail liberties (www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk, 2021; Bardosh *et al et al.*, 2022), others argued that such legislation was needed to halt the spread of such a global pandemic (McIntyre *et al et al.*, 2022). Whilst such measures proved invaluable at preventing further spread, we must also consider the future invisible impacts of such policies (PTSD related), which often robbed the poor, those traditionally disenfranchised from main stream society and the lonely of their daily fix of social therapy, often manifesting itself in a hello from a stranger, a how are you, it's turned out nice again or simple nod or wink to acknowledge a strangers existence in an attempt to alleviate that individual from their daily mundane existence. Gone were the walks in the parks, conversations on busses whilst travelling to work or the gentle reassuring smile from a stranger that all was not lost and that your place in society no matter how small still had some significance. This resulted in the traditional footfall of the shopping landscape environment being curtailed overnight and such locations becoming off limits to all but a very few.

Running parallel to the social impacts of CV-19 in relation to the retail environment and the simple pleasure that we all often took for granted, issues associated with safety and security were often exacerbated, resulting in those of criminal fraternities, choosing to take advantage of the wider good in society and abuse those deviant opportunities that presented themselves during this timescale. Exemplars include the potential breakdown in law and order, whilst not specifically related to CV-19 we can see how society might / often acts inappropriately during times of adversity. Looking at the wider geographical environment and in the case of Jamaica, Italy and & Mexico criminal actions were rife. In the case of Italy, many criminal gangs viewed the CV-19 pandemic as an opportunity to gain power through extortion and deviant behaviour (Dale, Robinson and Sheikh, 2021). In addition to the opportunities that have presented themselves for the criminal community to engage with deviant acts during lockdown, issues associated with the democratic right not to wear a mask has also presented law enforcement authorities with many challenges when attempting to enforce the rule of law. For example, civil disobedience and riots occurred in a number of locations including the Netherlands (BBC, 2021), the Caribbean (Reuters, 2021), South Africa (CNBC, 2021) and Australia (The Guardian, 2021).

For the love of retail In search of retail

Running parallel to the social impacts, the UK high street has seen a huge downturn in footfall (BBC, 2020). This has resulted in reduced consumption, business closures and a general feeling of desolation and isolation for those shoppers who would have traditionally met, socially interacted with friends, swapped stories and spent money in the many manifestations of the UK's high street and retail emporiums (Deloitte, 2021). The continued trend towards out-of-town shopping outlets and retail parks has compounded the decline of the high street shopping experience (Dolega and Lord, 2020). Furthermore, the town centre first policies that emerged during the 1990s have become outdated and potentially impacted upon continued high street development (ibid).

Historically, the pandemic is not the first time that consumers have felt excluded from a high street context. The social unrest during the strikes in the 1970s culminating in the "three day week", resulted in limited shop opening times. Such enforced periods of political intervention cause changes in consumer behaviour that have an enduring impact long after the event has occurred. As the discussion has raised the pandemic resulted in a decline in high street footfall, with consumers seeking new ways to fulfil their purchasing needs. This predominately was driven by the online purchasing experience and the growth of online operators that were able to satisfy that need (Dalglish, 2020). It was not uncommon for consumers to purchase an "insperience" where food, film and clothes were part of a domestic household setting (Mintel, 2020, Stylus 2020). However, this experience excluded those individuals who would not have had the economic or technological resources to gain access. Consumers may also not have had the necessary know how to access the online channels to engage in such an experience. The insperience also potentially compounded the feeling of isolation amongst a subset of consumers that desired a means for social interaction.

Whilst the literature has discussed many of those private sector retail outlets and their sad closures (Liu *et al*, 2021), little has been detailed in relation to the distant cousin that of the charity shop, that often relies on donations, volunteers and support from the community. Indeed, not only does the charity shop environment provide many of its customers with low priced apparel, it also in many cases provides social kinship for its visitors (Flores, 2014), information sources associated with housing, social benefits and general health care awareness. Operating as part of the second-hand economy they are challenged by competing physical retail outlets and intermediaries trading online (Yrjola *et al*, 2021). Though there is a growing emphasis in the literature on an exploration of the latter (Abbes, *et al*, 2020), with the contribution charity shops can make to the sustainability agenda and related business models (Ritter and Schanz, 2019; Gyldmann and Huulgaard, 2020; Coscieme, *et al*, 2022; Valor, *et al*, 2022), their role as a physical retail outlet in the context of transforming and experiencing place requires further discussion.

Transformative Service, place-making

Transformative place marketing

A transformative place marketing foci integrating key components of places regarding responsible and sustainable effects is lacking from the extant literature. Rooted in theorising about gaps in provision regarding social support, health, and wellbeing, where so-called "third places" become apparent to replace or constitute such support and provision, consideration of positive transformative serviceplace marketing therefore acts as a lens to consider determinants across non-traditional, place and space, beyond the traditional tourism development efforts, and public sector, social and medical place, space and means for health and wellbeing (see for examples Horne and Madrell, 2002; Horne, 2006; Rosenbaum *et al*, 2007; Skinner, 2008).

Place or high street ecosystems with commercial service establishments, such as charity shops or opportunity shops, are 'other' spaces for opportunities of social support and forums that facilitate transformative health and wellbeing outcomes, impacts, and consequences (Rosenbaum *et al*, 2007). Charity shops and the sector are historically grounded in social service and significant for such

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3 outcomes, but beyond consumption of goods, alongside traditionally poverty-driven consumption, they
4 are 'enmeshed within a set of relations between culture, economy and place which has effects in the
5 social sphere' (Edwards and Gibson, 2017, p.70).

6
7 Dynamic for participation and engagement, charity shops across the UK, USA, Australia, Canada,
8 Ireland and elsewhere are valued and used as hubs for: customers with strong commitment to the ethos
9 of charity and/or trading practice; volunteering; libraries; to support creative industrious' arts and craft
10 activities; for indie-apparel, trend and fashion; designer label wearers; student groups; thrift; the
11 alternative; the unpredictable; dealers, and collectors' items, the rare and unusual; sociation and as
12 social hangouts for different demographic groups; retail tourism; leisure shopping; coming out of the
13 cold; a cup of tea and a biscuit, a coffee and a chat; meeting different socio-economic groups' needs,
14 wants and experiences; the list is not exhaustive (Alexander, Cryer and Wood, 2008; Horne and
15 Maddrell, 2002). A spectrum of time-rich, diverse volunteers are also in many ways providing a multiplier
16 effect of validity and vitality to the charity shop, the high street, urban and rural locales, and the people
17 who encounter these volunteer communities; the visitor, consumer, prosumer of the charity shop
18 (Parsons, 2004; Whithear, 1999).

19 Innovations on Pplace marketing and charity shops in the UK can support the high street retail sector
20 post CV-19 by creating more transformative, vibrant and attractive environments for individual and
21 societal health and wellbeing. PlaceSuch marketing can be a catalyst to promote the unique offerings
22 of charity shops alongside synergistic, transparent collaborations across the high street place
23 ecosystem, such as local businesses and community-based initiatives, to attract more engagement,
24 footfall and creative investment which meet the needs of people and place. Additionally, we wish to
25 raise the charity shop presence as a hub to celebrate and promoting place, with sustainable and
26 responsible retail offerings, tapping into opportunities and options for consumers and prosumers.
27 Therefore, with the power of a transformative place marketing, charity shops can be communicated to
28 local populations, visitors and investors alike, as contributing to the high street ecosystem for all manner
29 of economic, socio-cultural, and environmental outcomes (Osterley and Williams, 2019; Edwards and
30 Gibson, 2017; Horne, 2006; Horne and Madrell, 2002). Instrumental in the revitalisation and positioning
31 of the high street, charity shops, opportunity shops and similar retail sector offer affordable, responsible,
32 and sustainable retail options, as well as providing a positive impact in the community. Charity shops
33 can attract footfall to the high street for an array of reasons, which can be beneficial at many levels.
34 Moreover, in collaboration with local business and organisations across public, private and voluntary
35 sectors, both place marketing and charity shops can support high street vitality and viability. Charity
36 shops as hubs for creating a genius loci and sense of community, with place marketing promoting a
37 place in a different way for the charity retail sector, communicating sustainability and bridging between
38 efforts of place marketing, and place management and development.

39 It is no surprise that the evolution of the charity shop has led to a diverse array of niche, specialisation,
40 and diversification of services, provision and representation linked in with related service ecosystem'
41 components, public, private, and voluntary. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure integration of charity
42 shops in all their wondrous guises to be consider in any place and service innovation on high street and
43 service ecosystem, design, and development for transformative place marketing effects and synergistic
44 attempts to support the vitality and viability of the high street in the UK (Skinner, 2008; Ntounis *et al*
45 *et al.*, 2023).

46 47 48 **Charity Shops in Experiencing Place**

49
50 Charity shops play a significant role when experiencing place. It is therefore important to acknowledge
51 this role in the practice of placemaking. Visual identity and uniqueness are important attributes in
52 attracting people to places (Lin *et al et al.*, 2011 and Ruzzier & De Chernatony, 2013) and contribute to
53 the positioning of towns and cities in the image making process (Zimmerbauer 2011). Charity shops
54 develop identity of place and can draw visitors to the location where they are existing in number. In this
55 respect, charity shops can contribute to the social and physical features of a place (Urry, 1995). Places
56 engender the collective memories that people may associate with the location (Benjamin, 1979) and
57 charity shops are important for re-energizing memories of the past. They also have the potential to
58 develop the sub-culture and spirit of a locality in which they exist (Durrell, 1969).
59
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Feelings and those feelings that arise are important to recognise when considering place (Ryan, 1991). Charity shop locations bring together individuals and groups of individuals that have a shared meaning and commonality (McGregor, 2018). These feelings may be altruistic in nature or those in the search of memories from a nostalgic past. These shared feelings can be associated with a “collective effervescence” (Shilling & Mellor, 1998; 196) that brings together charity shoppers in a common understanding. This commonality becomes a shared experience of place, further denoting a places identity (Bødker & Browning 2012). This coming together brings opportunities for developing relationships with not only fellow charity shoppers but also those residents in the place. This brings shared memories about past charity wear and merchandise, generating potential myths and stories that become associated with place and also possibly about the garment being worn.

As noted, an interest in the past and related apparel can be driven by a sense of nostalgia (Davis, 1973; Yeh *et al.*, 2012). Nostalgia is generated when encountering artefacts from the past and feelings of happiness and safety may play out (Ye *et al.*, 2017). This feeling of nostalgization (Vasey & Dimanche, 2003) where the past is situated as a romantic place and every garment has a story to tell, ignoring any negative realities that may have occurred. Visiting charity shops has the potential to generate these nostalgic feelings and further play a mental health role in supporting those experiencing dementia or memory loss.

As Robinson and Dale (2018) have previously discussed, vintage fashion and its sale in charity shops has played a key role in contemporary society. Furthermore, it has repositioned charity shop outlets as central to the shopping experience for selected markets. The popularity of vintage fashion and its sale in charity shops has been driven by economic factors including changing levels of disposable income and spending behaviour (Ferraro *et al.*, 2016). This has seen low-price fashion stores including supermarkets rising in popularity. Growing ethical awareness of climate change and sustainability issues have also influenced consumer behaviour. Consumers are seeking outlets that sell and repurpose items that may of otherwise have been disposed of (Roberts-Islam, 2019). To some extent there has been a counter-cultural reaction to the consumerist nature of fast fashion and its potentially exploitative impacts thus offering a resurgence to charity shop outlets selling lost priced regenerative apparel (Robinson and Dale, 2018). The charity shopping experience also provides a place for identity formation, individuality and self-expression, where feelings of yearning for a bygone period may play out (*ibid*). Celebrity culture has also promoted the popularity of vintage fashion and second-hand charity shopping. Throughout time, musical genres including mods, rockers, grunge and rap have commercialised the popularity of vintage fashion and locations such as Camden Market in London and Afflecks Palace in Manchester have become synonymous with the sale and purchase of second-hand merchandise (*ibid*).

Charity Shops, Place and the Social Environment

By their very nature and based on the purpose of Charities, they are, considered ethical, moral and principled organisations (Chell *et al.*, 2016). Carroll’s (1999) early definition of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has ‘philanthropy’ as the highest component of its meaning. However, there has also been some distrust of charities with consumers in recent years and focusing on responsible business and environmental issues can be used as a way to counter this criticism (Adams, 2019). The concept of charity shops represents a series of positive benefits in relation to sustainability and the broader environment. To start, the overall product lifecycle of goods sold at charity shops is extended as more products receive prolonged use which may otherwise have gone to landfill (Castellani *et al.*, 2015). Overall transport costs and ecological damage is lower with second hand products as opposed to creating new garments (Farrant *et al.*, 2010). The overall concept of reusing and recycling is much more environmentally friendly than replacing and creating new products and sending older ones to landfill, which may take many years to degrade (Osterley and Williams, 2019).

Larger charities often focus on explicit CSR which is strategised and published (Matten and Moon, 2004). Whereas smaller charities engage more on implicit CSR, where the focus is on the wider formal and informal institutions for society’s interests and concerns. Doherty *et al.*, (2014) argued that social enterprises and charities act as ‘hybrid’ organisations in terms of their mission, offering a balance

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3 in terms of being commercial (profitable) and addressing the societal needs which they have been set
4 up to tackle. Page and Katz (2010) suggest CSR may not be the most appropriate terminology for
5 charities who endeavour in social and environmental goals and initiatives as they are embedded in the
6 communities they serve and involve collaboration with wider stakeholders. It is clear that Charities'
7 social endeavours centre on local community benefits (Philips and Taylor, 2020) and that there is an
8 intangible contract between the charity and the community in which they operate.
9

10 Partnerships are critical to charity shops, as developing collaborations with other stakeholders will
11 attract and maintain donations. One such partner is local government, charity shops can offer and be
12 used as a mechanism to deliver services once deemed government responsibility (Sanzo, Alvarez, Re
13 t and Garcia, 2013). This has a benefit of government who are under pressure to reduce public sector
14 delivery, whilst at the same time improving public image and reputation of the charity. Smaller and local
15 charities are well positioned to fulfil this role and can offer a 'place' for residents and customers as part
16 of their social outreach and CSR which larger mainstream charities would not be able to reach (Philips
17 and Taylor, 2020). This is supported by Warsi (2022) who stressed the importance of the role of charities
18 in improving community cohesion, bringing people together locally, in the form of a community hub
19 (Bateson, 2017). There is already a growing trend of charities who have adopted this social inclusion
20 by having a side-mission of community cohesion, seeing it as a by-product of their core mission (Chell
21 [et al et al.](#), 2016). It can be argued that implementing such actions can ensure that charities can ensure
22 their methods match their mission for the benefit of all (Adams, 2019).
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26 **Opportunities for Charity Shops**

27 The future of the charity shop in its traditional guise is possibly numbered and to ensure long term
28 survival and to facilitate ongoing provision for its key stakeholders, planned change is needed. This
29 does not have to be some type of seismic change, but one that initially consults with its key users and
30 those in society who wish to have their ideas and opinions further embroidered into the fabric of the retail
31 charity shop environment / place; [an essence of positive transformative place marketing and place
32 management models \(Ntounis, et al., 2023; Edensor, Kalandides and Kothari, 2020; Skinner, 2008\).](#)
33 So, what might these changes look like and fundamental to any change is the manner by which such
34 changes reflect the key needs of its society and ultimately its key end users. Indeed, it is argued that
35 charity shops need to continually evolve to survive in a high street context and to also meet the needs
36 of the buying public (abcmoney.co.uk, 2017; Zurich, 2021). A key issue that is at stake here is the
37 manner by which planned changes are implemented and the manner by which community led ideas
38 and initiatives are disseminated within the public realm to further aid community patronage of the social
39 retail environment. Indeed, in a local community context, charity shops have a key social role to play
40 (Broadbridge and Parsons, 2003) in aiding social cohesion and community support, not only in the
41 context of apparel purchase but also as formal / informal mechanisms to enhance community wellbeing,
42 to offer social support and to further act as signposting systems for those requiring support. Such
43 support is not intended to replace traditional support systems such as The Citizens Advice Bureau and
44 the Local GP's surgery, but instead reduce pressures on such providers and possibly limit seasonal
45 pressures associated by high demand, often exacerbated by recent CV-19 cases. Running parallel to
46 which it can be argued that whilst those who may have been traditionally disenfranchised from such
47 formal health care providers (GP's surgery etc) and whilst not seeking out such support services and
48 might ultimately fall through the safety net, the charity shop environment offers a safe environment for
49 those who might be socially awkward and or suffer from addictions and mental health issues to seek
50 advice and help in a non-judgmental forum, albeit in the initial confines of the charity shop. Further
51 health provision spin offs associated with this type of forum can be extended to other community groups
52 including (but not exclusive to) LGBTQ+, expectant mothers, single parent supports groups, foodbanks,
53 mini library's, pop up shops, disability awareness provision, small business start-ups and
54 cinematography related experiences.
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57 Not only does such provision offer something for everyone, we must also not underestimate the value the
58 benefits from a human resourcing supply perspective. From a charity shop volunteer perspective, it is
59 argued that it enables "*a way of regaining meaning, structure and belonging after experiences of*
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3 | *social dislocation such as retirement and bereavement*" (Flores, 2013, p283). Described as a form of
4 | symbolic consumption (Wymer and Samu, 2002) further studies have noted how volunteering brings a
5 | sense of altruism, identity formation and increased self-esteem (Ho and O'Donohoe, 2014). Charity
6 | shops also play a role in minimising a feeling of isolation and loneliness in old age particularly
7 | amongst men (Ratcliffe *et al.*, 2021; Homecare.co.uk, 2013).
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10 11 12 13 14 **Conclusion**

15
16 | The paper as explored the role of charity shops in a post covid climate. The pandemic had a significant
17 | impact on the business and economic environment and in many ways will continue to do so. Particularly
18 | hard hit were small and medium sized enterprises which charity shops constitute. Economic and social
19 | impacts include the effects of poverty, alcohol and substance abuse, isolation, depression and potential
20 | criminal behaviour. The pandemic has also influenced shopping behaviour in the retail environment
21 | with an increase in online consumer spending. It is too early to say how long these effects may last into
22 | the future.
23

24 | Charity shops play a vital role in the high street, developing community spirit and ensuring shoppers
25 | have an opportunity for fulfilling socialisation needs. Their place as part of the high street ecosystem
26 | can be transformative in nature, bringing together underrepresented groups and uniting people living
27 | on the margins of society. Not only does the charity shop forum offer its users affordable apparel it also
28 | enables information and community support mechanisms to be more readily available for those users
29 | who might have traditionally fallen through the support net, that was historically offered by the social
30 | services. It is not the intention of this paper to advocate that the workload of those kind and ethically
31 | focused charity volunteers who donate much of their free time running and servicing such enterprises
32 | should be further burdened with an additional responsibility of information dissemination. Rather the
33 | intension of this paper is to, where possible, empower those that run such charity enterprises and those
34 | that have a managerial role to be gatekeepers and signpost those vulnerable in society, who may fall
35 | through the traditional safety net or those who might not have initially felt confident visiting their local
36 | GP (General Practitioner) or CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau).
37

38 | The potential here for pop up vendors and providers using the charity shop environment as the forum
39 | to provide information services, kinship, retail experiences and health related information channels is
40 | endless. In the post CV-19 brave new world which has already seen many retail place providers
41 | experiencing financial problems associated with rising business taxes, energy cost and a downturn in
42 | customer demand, the pop-up information charity exchange enterprise offers many facets to its
43 | customers. Not only does the one stop shop benefit its users, but it will also have potential revenue
44 | implications and savings for those enterprises that chose to pool their resources and share the related
45 | business costs. In this scenario, the pop-up forum sees historically high street placed providers such
46 | as the Post Office, Banks and in some cases art installations (Museums, theatres and cinemas) using
47 | the charity shop location at specific times during the week to sell and promote their wares.
48

49 | Charity shops play a vital role in the future fabric of society and social consciousness. This is in terms
50 | of wider philanthropic endeavours and fulfilling local community needs. *The paper adds to the emerging
51 | literature on charity shops and its relationship to place. The paper further expands on the role charity
52 | shops have in the context of place marketing, innovation, reinvention and repositioning. -Charity shops
53 | are an under researched area and this paper has gone some way to exploring the issues that exist in
54 | this sector. Opportunities arise for future research in charity shop provision potentially focussing
55 | specifically on their economic and social impacts and their influence on place identity and
56 | transformation.*
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Where's me jumper? The future of charity shops post Covid-19.

Abstract

- Purpose

Charity shops have met a number of challenges in light of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. The paper explores their economic and social impact before going on to review the transformative impact they have on place, the experience of place and the social environment.

- Design/methodology/approach

The paper conducts a review of the extant literature in the field of charity shop retail. Considering the issues that are raised, the article proceeds to discuss the opportunities that arise for charity shops in the retail environment and the wider sector.

- Findings

The paper provides novel sectorial insights and recommendations that can be adopted by charity retail outlets.

- Originality

Charity shops play a vital role in society and yet they are an under researched field. The paper concludes with observations made from the discussion and states areas for future research.

Keywords: Charity shops, retail, mental health, community, place and kinship

Introduction

Over approximately two years the UK has been in the grips of a global pandemic (CV-19) that has impacted upon every area of society. These impacts have been both economic, social and physical. At one end of the spectrum the terrible loss of human life has seen huge infrastructure pressure on the NHS and related medical providers and at the other end of the spectrum impacts have been economic and social. In terms of the social impacts of CV-19 these might take years to fully appear within the fabric of society. Issues associated with shortages of essential foods, limited fuel provision, increased costs of living, mental health issues and increasing alcohol and substance abuse have all had an impact over the previous last two years (Aarts et al, 2021, Davillas and Jones, 2021)

Running parallel to the social impacts, the UK high street has seen a huge downturn in footfall resulting in reduced consumption, business closures and a general feeling of desolation and isolation for those shoppers who would have traditionally met, socially interacted with friends, swapped stories and spent money in the many manifestations of the UKs high street and retail emporiums (Blundell et al, 2020). Whilst the literature has discussed many of those private sector retail outlets and their sad closures (Liu et al, 2021), little has been detailed in relation to the distant cousin that of the charity shop, that often relies on donations, volunteers and support from the community. Indeed, not only does the charity shop environment provide many of its customers with low priced apparel, it also in many cases provides social kinship for its visitors (Flores, 2014), information sources associated with housing, social benefits and general health care awareness. The future for these establishments to re-position themselves in the post CV-19 retail environment and offer additional social provision is endless.

The authors have previously discussed the role of vintage fashion in the context of celebrity culture and local rejuvenation (Robinson and Dale, 2019), a genre in which many charity shops trade. This paper will further discuss the role that charity shops can play in the brave new world of the retail environment related to social, physical and mental health provisions, community kinship and arts related ventures. The paper aims to investigate the economic and social impacts of CV-19 within the context of the UK. The paper reviews possible social enterprise/charitable retail mechanisms that could be employed to alleviate the negative social impacts caused by CV-19 and discusses how charity shops can be employed to better help disenfranchised community groups to overcome the negative social impacts caused by CV-19.

Covid-19 Business and Economic Impacts

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been widespread and global. From a UK perspective, the pandemic had a significant effect on the regional and national economic output (Dale, Robinson and Sheikh, 2021). It has had a particular impact upon those businesses operating in a service context such as tourism, hospitality and retail (ibid). In the first year of the pandemic, lockdowns cost the UK economy £251bn (Elliot, 2021). For much of 2020 and 2021, vacation travel was not permitted and entry into the UK was very strictly limited. Business travel, for example, declined by nearly 90% over previous years (ibid)

A key factor, as an outcome of these issues, has been the impact upon the business supply chain and on buyer/consumer behaviour. Mintel (2020) suggested that since Covid-19 eating habits have been changed for a lasting impact, with 69% of British not wasting as much food at home and a 47% increase in the purchase of long-life products. With these factors in mind, businesses have had to learn how to instill confidence and trust among customers and this has become imperative when developing business resilience (Renjen, 2020).

Though the Covid-19 pandemic has not necessarily been the exclusive factor attributed to these economic pressures, it has been a significant influence. It is acknowledged that war and geo-political factors have also impacted upon an evolving Global economic landscape. This is evidenced in a major financial downturn associated with global trade (IMF, 2022). National economies have had to manage rising energy prices, inflationary pressures and increasing consumer costs, thus resulting in financial pressures on the general population (ONS, 2022). The management of an intangible and relatively unknown virus has compounded an already difficult situation.

Small and medium sized enterprises have been at the brunt of these economic pressures. With six million small and medium sized enterprises (SME) in the UK, they account for 33% of employment and 21% of turnover (SimplyBusiness, 2021). However, the pandemic generated a £126.6 billion cost for small businesses. Finances have been at the root of many worries with 61% of small business owners having had serious financial concerns at some stage of the pandemic (ibid). During the pandemic, Government support packages in the form of furlough and loans were provided and proved a lifeline to many small businesses. Though research reveals that 81% of self-employed people felt it was not enough and over two million SMEs were unable to access any financial support (ibid).

Covid-19 Social Impacts

By definition, social impacts relate to the manner by which any one particular phenomenon (in this case CV-19) impacts upon the wider social / societal environment (British Academy, 2021). In this scenario CV-19 has presented the external global environment with a multitude of health-based challenges associated with the general well-being of a nation's population / health. Whilst the global population of planet earth has in the past (and some might still say) is challenged by pandemics, such impacts on the West has been limited or at least controllable. Fast-forward to 2020 and CV-19 has wreaked havoc on Western society in the form a pandemic that has had far reaching ramifications for health infrastructure pressures as well as the potential to impact negatively upon the social fabric of society. In terms of the social impacts of CV-19 these might take years to fully appear within the wider society, in the same way that veterans from Americas involvement in the Vietnam war, saw service personnel return from battle with undiagnosed post traumatic distress disorder (PTSD). Such trauma post CV-19 might manifest itself in a long Covid like sycosis of the mind resulting in mental health issues presenting themselves in the future. Issues associated with shortages of essential foods, limited fuel provision, increased costs of living, mental health issues and increasing alcohol and substance abuse have had a huge impact over the previous last two years (WHO, 2022).

Whilst traditionally consumers were able to leave their abode to visit the many offering of retail delights on a daily basis and peruse, chat, engage and facilitate social kinship within the place environment, overnight such liberal activities which were often taken for granted were curtailed. Never before has

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3 Europe experienced such curfew like policies (other than when in a war like footing associated with
4 Word War 2) aimed at limiting the spread of CV-19. Whilst many claimed such policies were draconian
5 and robbed us of our social democratic retail liberties (www.libertyhumanrights.org.uk, 2021; Bardosh
6 et al, 2022), others argued that such legislation was needed to halt the spread of such a global pandemic
7 (McIntyre et al, 2022). Whilst such measures proved invaluable at preventing further spread, we must
8 also consider the future invisible impacts of such policies (PTSD related), which often robbed the poor,
9 those traditionally disenfranchised from main stream society and the lonely of their daily fix of social
10 therapy, often manifesting itself in a hello from a stranger, a how are you, it's turned out nice again or
11 simple nod or wink to acknowledge a strangers existence in an attempt to alleviate that individual from
12 their daily mundane existence. Gone were the walks in the parks, conversations on busses whilst
13 travelling to work or the gentle reassuring smile from a stranger that all was not lost and that your place
14 in society no matter how small still had some significance. This resulted in the traditional footfall of the
15 shoppingsscape environment being curtailed overnight and such locations becoming off limits to all but
16 a very few.

17
18 Running parallel to the social impacts of CV-19 in relation to the retail environment and the simple
19 pleasure that we all often took for granted, issues associated with safety and security were often
20 exacerbated, resulting in those of criminal fraternities, choosing to take advantage of the wider good in
21 society and abuse those deviant opportunities that presented themselves during this timescale.
22 Exemplars include the potential breakdown in law and order, whilst not specifically related to CV-19 we
23 can see how society might / often acts inappropriately during times of adversity. Looking at the wider
24 geographical environment and in the case of Jamaica, Italy and Mexico criminal actions were rife. In
25 the case of Italy, many criminal gangs viewed the CV-19 pandemic as an opportunity to gain power
26 through extortion and deviant behaviour (Dale, Robinson and Sheikh, 2021). In addition to the
27 opportunities that have presented themselves for the criminal community to engage with deviant acts
28 during lockdown, issues associated with the democratic right not to wear a mask has also presented
29 law enforcement authorities with many challenges when attempting to enforce the rule of law. For
30 example, civil disobedience and riots occurred in a number of locations including the Netherlands (BBC,
31 2021), the Caribbean (Reuters, 2021), South Africa (CNBC, 2021) and Australia (The Guardian, 2021).

32 33 34 35 **For the love of retail**

36
37 Running parallel to the social impacts, the UK high street has seen a huge downturn in footfall (BBC,
38 2020). This has resulted in reduced consumption, business closures and a general feeling of desolation
39 and isolation for those shoppers who would have traditionally met, socially interacted with friends,
40 swapped stories and spent money in the many manifestations of the UK's high street and retail
41 emporiums (Deloitte, 2021).

42
43 Historically, the pandemic is not the first time that consumers have felt excluded from a high street
44 context. The social unrest during the strikes in the 1970s culminating in the "three day week", resulted
45 in limited shop opening times. Such enforced periods of political intervention cause changes in
46 consumer behaviour that have an enduring impact long after the event has occurred. As the discussion
47 has raised the pandemic resulted in a decline in high street footfall, with consumers seeking new ways
48 to fulfil their purchasing needs. This predominately was driven by the online purchasing experience and
49 the growth of online operators that were able to satisfy that need (Dalglish, 2020). It was not
50 uncommon for consumers to purchase an "insperience" where food, film and clothes were part of a
51 domestic household setting (Intel, 2020, Stylus 2020). However, this experience excluded those
52 individuals who would not have had the economic or technological resources to gain access.
53 Consumers may also not have had the necessary know how to access the online channels to engage
54 in such an experience. The insperience also potentially compounded the feeling of isolation amongst a
55 subset of consumers that desired a means for social interaction.

56
57 Whilst the literature has discussed many of those private sector retail outlets and their sad closures (Liu
58 et al, 2021), little has been detailed in relation to the distant cousin that of the charity shop, that often
59 relies on donations, volunteers and support from the community. Indeed, not only does the charity shop
60 environment provide many of its customers with low priced apparel, it also in many cases provides

social kinship for its visitors (Flores, 2014), information sources associated with housing, social benefits and general health care awareness. The future for these establishments to re-position themselves in the post CV-19 retail environment and offer additional social provision is endless.

Transformative Service, place making

Charity shops are highlighted across place management and related literature as entities taking over vacant high street premises (Hallsworth and Coca-Stefaniak, 2018; Cassidy and Resnick, 2020), but also over the years, several charity shops having similar issues as felt by the private sector regarding competitive conditions (Alexander, Cryer and Wood, 2008).

Transformative Service Research (TSR) (Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2007; Anderson *et al.*, 2010) is lacking from the extant literature on place management and development, despite places being intrinsically linked to Transformative Service (TS) and *vice versa*. Rooted in theorising about gaps in provision regarding social support, health, and wellbeing, where so-called “third places” become apparent to replace or constitute such support and provision, TSR provides the lens to consider determinants across non-traditional, place and space, beyond the traditional public sector, social and medical place, space and means (see for examples Rosenbaum *et al.*, 2007).

Place or high street ecosystems with commercial service establishments, such as charity shops or opportunity shops, are other spaces for opportunities of social support and forums that facilitate transformative health and wellbeing outcomes, impacts, and consequences. Charity shops and the sector are historically grounded in social service and significant for such outcomes, but beyond consumption of goods, alongside traditionally poverty-driven consumption, they are ‘*enmeshed within a set of relations between culture, economy and place which has effects in the social sphere*’ (Edwards and Gibson, 2017, p.70).

Dynamic for participation and engagement, charity shops across the UK, USA, Australia, Canada, Ireland and elsewhere are valued and used as hubs for: customers with strong commitment to the ethos of charity and/or trading practice; volunteering; libraries; to support creative industrious’ arts and craft activities; for indie-apparel, trend and fashion; designer label wearers; student groups; thrift; the alternative; the unpredictable; dealers, and collectors’ items, the rare and unusual; sociation and as social hangouts for different demographic groups; retail tourism; leisure shopping; coming out of the cold; a cup of tea and a biscuit, a coffee and a chat; amongst other TS, meeting different socio-economic groups’ needs, wants and experiences; the list is not exhaustive (Alexander, Cryer and Wood, 2008; Horne and Maddrell, 2002).

TS because of a spectrum of time-rich, diverse volunteers are also in many ways providing a multiplier effect of validity and vitality to the charity shop, the high street, urban and rural locales, and the people who encounter these volunteer communities; the visitor, consumer, prosumer of the charity shop (Parsons, 2004; Whithear, 1999).

It is no surprise that the evolution of the charity shop has led to a diverse array of niche, specialisation, and diversification of services, provision and representation linked in with related service ecosystem’ components, public, private, and voluntary. Therefore, it is imperative to ensure integration of charity shops in all their wondrous guises to be consider in any place and service innovation on high street and service ecosystem, design, and development for TS (Alkire *et al.*, 2020; Anderson *et al.*, 2010; Field *et al.*, 2021; Fisk *et al.*, 2021).

Charity Shops in Experiencing Place

Charity shops play a significant role when experiencing place. It is therefore important to acknowledge this role in the practice of placemaking. Visual identity and uniqueness are important attributes in attracting people to places (Lin *et al.*, 2011 and Ruzzier & De Chernatony, 2013) and contribute to the positioning of towns and cities in the image making process (Zimmerbauer 2011). Charity shops develop identity of place and can draw visitors to the location where they are existing in number. In this respect, charity shops can contribute to the social and physical features of a place (Urry, 1995). Places

1
2
3 engender the collective memories that people may associate with the location (Benjamin, 1979) and
4 charity shops are important for re-invigorating memories of the past. They also have the potential to
5 develop the sub-culture and spirit of a locality in which they exist (Durrell, 1969).
6

7 Feelings and those feelings that arise are important to recognise when considering place (Ryan, 1991).
8 Charity shop locations bring together individuals and groups of individuals that have a shared meaning
9 and commonality (McGregor, 2018). These feelings may be altruistic in nature or those in the search of
10 memories from a nostalgic past. These shared feelings can be associated with a “collective
11 effervescence” (Shilling & Mellor, 1998; 196) that brings together charity shoppers in a common
12 understanding. This commonality becomes a shared experience of place, further denoting a places
13 identity (Bødker & Browning 2012). This coming together brings opportunities for developing
14 relationships with not only fellow charity shoppers but also those residents in the place. This brings
15 shared memories about past charity wear and merchandise, generating potential myths and stories that
16 become associated with place and also possibly about the garment being worn.

17
18 As noted, an interest in the past and related apparel can be driven by a sense of nostalgia (Davis, 1973;
19 Yeh et al, 2012). Nostalgia is generated when encountering artefacts from the past and feelings of
20 happiness and safety may play out (Ye et al, 2017). This feeling of nostalgiazation (Vasey & Dimanche,
21 2003) where the past is situated as a romantic place and every garment has a story to tell, ignoring any
22 negative realities that may have occurred. Visiting charity shops has the potential to generate these
23 nostalgic feelings and further play a mental health role in supporting those experiencing dementia or
24 memory loss.

25
26 As Robinson and Dale (2018) have previously discussed, vintage fashion and its sale in charity shops
27 has played a key role in contemporary society. Furthermore, it has repositioned charity shop outlets as
28 central to the shopping experience for selected markets. The popularity of vintage fashion and its sale
29 in charity shops has been driven by economic factors including changing levels of disposable income
30 and spending behaviour (Ferraro et al 2016). This has seen low-price fashion stores including
31 supermarkets rising in popularity. Growing ethical awareness of climate change and sustainability
32 issues have also influenced consumer behaviour. Consumers are seeking outlets that sell and
33 repurpose items that may of otherwise have been disposed of (Roberts-Islam, 2019). To some extent
34 there has been a counter-cultural reaction to the consumerist nature of fast fashion and its potentially
35 exploitative impacts thus offering a resurgence to charity shop outlets selling lost priced regenerative
36 apparel (Robinson and Dale, 2018). The charity shopping experience also provides a place for identity
37 formation, individuality and self-expression, where feelings of yearning for a bygone period may play
38 out (ibid). Celebrity culture has also promoted the popularity of vintage fashion and second-hand charity
39 shopping. Throughout time, musical genres including mods, rockers, grunge and rap have
40 commercialised the popularity of vintage fashion and locations such as Camden Market in London and
41 Afflecks Palace in Manchester have become synonymous with the sale and purchase of second-hand
42 merchandise (ibid).
43
44

45 **Charity Shops, Place and the Social Environment**

46
47 By their very nature and based on the purpose of Charities, they are, considered ethical, moral and
48 principled organisations (Chell et al, 2016). Carroll’s (1999) early definition of Corporate Social
49 Responsibility (CSR) has ‘philanthropy’ as the highest component of its meaning. However, there has
50 also been some distrust of charities with consumers in recent years and focusing on responsible
51 business and environmental issues can be used as a way to counter this criticism (Adams, 2019). The
52 concept of charity shops represents a series of positive benefits in relation to sustainability and the
53 broader environment. To start, the overall product lifecycle of goods sold at charity shops is extended
54 as more products receive prolonged use which may otherwise have gone to landfill (Castellani et al.
55 2015). Overall transport costs and ecological damage is lower with second hand products as opposed
56 to creating new garments (Farrant et al. 2010). The overall concept of reusing and recycling is much
57 more environmentally friendly than replacing and creating new products and sending older ones to
58 landfill, which may take many years to degrade (Osterley and Williams, 2019).
59
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3 Larger charities often focus on explicit CSR which is strategised and published (Matten and Moon,
4 2004). Whereas smaller charities engage more on implicit CSR, where the focus is on the wider formal
5 and informal institutions for society's interests and concerns. Doherty et al (2014) argued that social
6 enterprises and charities act as 'hybrid' organisations in terms of their mission, offering a balance in
7 terms of being commercial (profitable) and addressing the societal needs which they have been set up
8 to tackle. Page and Katz(2010) suggest CSR may not be the most appropriate terminology for charities
9 who endeavour in social and environmental goals and initiatives as they are embedded in the
10 communities they serve and involve collaboration with wider stakeholders. It is clear that Charities'
11 social endeavours centre on local community benefits (Philips and Taylor, 2020) and that there is an
12 intangible contract between the charity and the community in which they operate.
13

14 Partnerships are critical to charity shops, as developing collaborations with other stakeholders will
15 attract and maintain donations. One such partner is local government, charity shops can offer and be
16 used as a mechanism to deliver services once deemed government responsibility (Sanzo, Alvarez, Re
17 t and Garcia, 2013). This has a benefit of government who are under pressure to reduce public sector
18 delivery, whilst at the same time improving public image and reputation of the charity. Smaller and local
19 charities are well positioned to fulfil this role and can offer a 'place' for residents and customers as part
20 of their social outreach and CSR which larger mainstream charities would not be able to reach (Philips
21 and Taylor, 2020). This is supported by Warsi (2022) who stressed the importance of the role of charities
22 in improving community cohesion, bringing people together locally, in the form of a community hub
23 (Bateson, 2017). There is already a growing trend of charities who have adopted this social inclusion
24 by having a side-mission of community cohesion, seeing it as a by-product of their core mission (Chell
25 et al., 2016). It can be argued that implementing such actions can ensure that charities can ensure their
26 methods match their mission for the benefit of all (Adams, 2019).
27
28
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30 **Opportunities for Charity Shops**

31
32 The future of the charity shop in its traditional guise is possibly numbered and to ensure long term
33 survival and to facilitate ongoing provision for its key stakeholders, planned change is needed. This
34 does not have to be some type of seismic change, but one that initially consults with its key users and
35 those in society who wish to have their ideas and opinions further embroidered into the fabric of the retail
36 charity shop environment / place. So, what might these changes look like and fundamental to any
37 change is the manner by which such changes reflect the key needs of its society and ultimately its key
38 end users. Indeed, it is argued that charity shops need to continually evolve to survive in a high street
39 context and to also meet the needs of the buying public (abcmoney.co.uk, 2017; Zurich, 2021). A key
40 issue that is at stake here is the manner by which planned changes are implemented and the manner
41 by which community led ideas and initiatives are disseminated within the public realm to further aid
42 community patronage of the social retail environment. Indeed, in a local community context, charity
43 shops have a key social role to play (Broadbridge and Parsons, 2003) in aiding social cohesion and
44 community support, not only in the context of apparel purchase but also as formal / informal
45 mechanisms to enhance community wellbeing, to offer social support and to further act as signposting
46 systems for those requiring support. Such support is not intended to replace traditional support systems
47 such as The Citizens Advice Bureau and the Local GP's surgery, but instead reduce pressures on such
48 providers and possibly limit seasonal pressures associated by high demand, often exacerbated by
49 recent CV-19 cases. Running parallel to which it can be argued that whilst those who may have been
50 traditionally disenfranchised from such formal health care providers (GP's surgery etc) and whilst not
51 seeking out such support services and might ultimately fall through the safety net, the charity shop
52 environment offers a safe environment for those who might be socially awkward and or suffer from
53 addictions and mental health issues to seek advice and help in a non-judgmental forum, albeit in the
54 initial confines of the charity shop. Further health provision spin offs associated with this type of forum
55 can be extended to other community groups including (but not exclusive to) LGBTQ+, expectant
56 mothers, single parent supports groups, foodbanks, mini library's, pop up shops, disability awareness
57 provision, small business start-ups and cinematography related experiences.
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3 Not only does such provision offer something for everyone, we must also not under estimate value the
4 benefits from a human resourcing supply perspective. From a charity shop volunteer perspective, it is
5 argued that it enables “a way of regaining meaning, structure and belonging after experiences of social
6 dislocation such as retirement and bereavement” (Flores, 2013, p283). Described as a form of symbolic
7 consumption (Wymer and Samu, 2002) further studies have noted how volunteering brings a sense of
8 altruism, identity formation and increased self-esteem (Ho and O’Donohoe, 2014). Charity shops also
9 play a role in minimising a feeling of isolation and loneliness in old age particularly amongst men
10 (Ratcliffe et al, 2021; Homecare.co.uk, 2013).
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14 **Conclusion**

15
16 The paper as explored the role of charity shops in a post covid climate. The pandemic had a significant
17 impact on the business and economic environment and in many ways will continue to do so. Particularly
18 hard hit were small and medium sized enterprises which charity shops constitute. Economic and social
19 impacts include the effects of poverty, alcohol and substance abuse, isolation, depression and potential
20 criminal behaviour. The pandemic has also influenced shopping behaviour in the retail environment
21 with an increase in online consumer spending. It is too early to say how long these effects may last into
22 the future.
23

24 Charity shops play a vital role in the high street, developing community spirit and ensuring shoppers
25 have an opportunity for fulfilling socialisation needs. Their place as part of the high street ecosystem
26 can be transformative in nature, bringing together underrepresented groups and uniting people living
27 on the margins of society. Not only does the charity shop forum offer its users affordable apparel it also
28 enables information and community support mechanisms to be more readily available for those users
29 who might have traditionally fallen through the support net, that was historically offered by the social
30 services. It is not the intention of this paper to advocate that the workload of those kind and ethically
31 focused charity volunteers who donate much of their free time running and servicing such enterprises
32 should be further burdened with an additional responsibility of information dissemination. Rather the
33 intension of this paper is to, where possible, empower those that run such charity enterprises and those
34 that have a managerial role to be gatekeepers and signpost those vulnerable in society, who may fall
35 through the traditional safety net or those who might not have initially felt confident visiting their local
36 GP (General Practitioner) or CAB (Citizens Advice Bureau).
37

38 The potential here for pop up vendors and providers using the charity shop environment as the forum
39 to provide information services, kinship, retail experiences and health related information channels is
40 endless. In the post CV-19 brave new world which has already seen many retail place providers
41 experiencing financial problems associated with rising business taxes, energy cost and a downturn in
42 customer demand, the pop-up information charity exchange enterprise offers many facets to its
43 customers. Not only does the one stop shop benefit its users, but it will also have potential revenue
44 implications and savings for those enterprises that chose to pool their resources and share the related
45 business costs. In this scenario, the pop-up forum sees historically high street placed providers such
46 as the Post Office, Banks and in some cases art instillations (Museums, theatres and cinemas) using
47 the charity shop location at specific times during the week to sell and promote their wares.
48

49 Charity shops play a vital role in the future fabric of society and social consciousness. This is in terms
50 of wider philanthropic endeavours and fulfilling local community needs. Charity shops are an under
51 researched area and this paper has gone some way to exploring the issues that exist in this sector.
52 Opportunities arise for future research in charity shop provision potentially focussing specifically on their
53 economic and social impacts and their influence on place identity and transformation.
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