# Town Centres Research

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# Town Centres Research Group

- **TC Customer Experience research** – 3 funded studies (ESRC, project partners) 2012-2016
- **National and retail partners** – BRC, ACS, Argos, Boots, Loughborough BID
- **Local town centre partners** – Borough Council, LCC (& individual towns)
- **Location analytics partners** – Indestinate, Elephant Wifi.
- **Digital High Street research** – assessing infrastructure, capabilities, online presence.

# Consumer or consuming data?

- Reported in physical, aggregate terms - mass footfall
- What happens beyond the store?
- Where / when does the TC visit start or end?
- What limits length of physical town centre journeys?
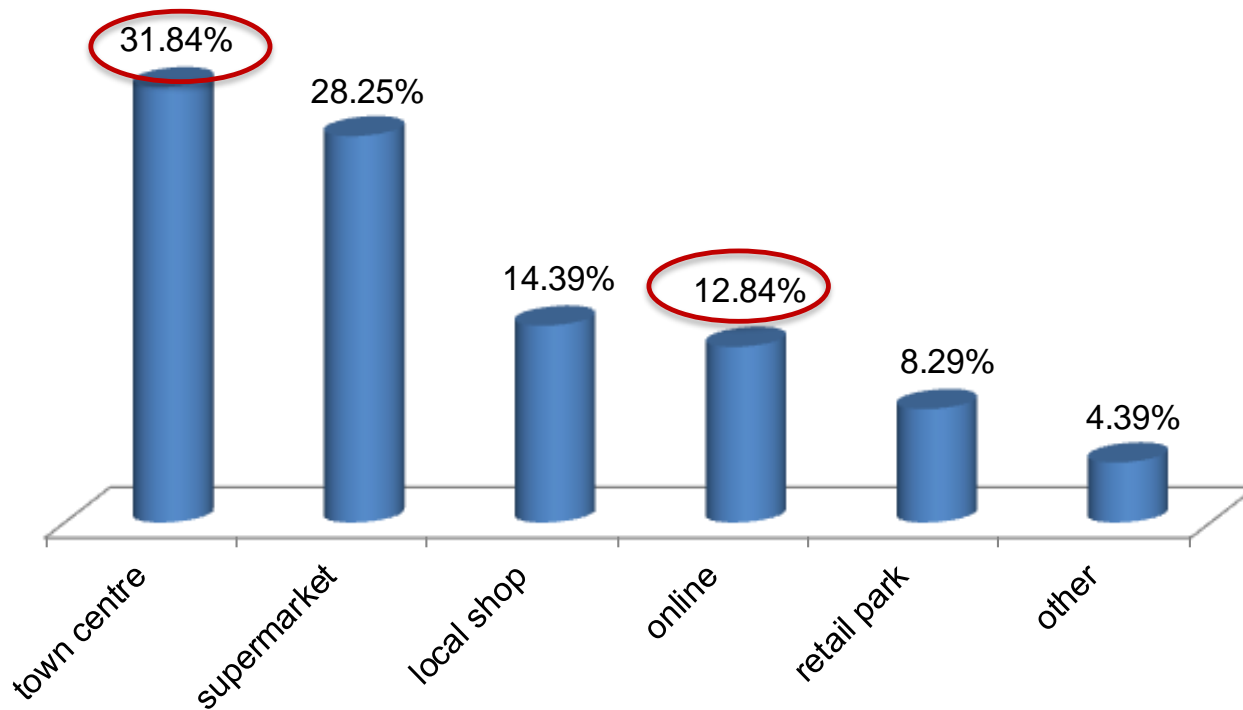- What influences TC behaviour?
- Where does digital fit in?

*"High streets must adapt to meet the changing needs of today's consumers."*
UK High Streets Minister

**High street journey data ?**

**Consumer behaviour ?**

Catchment data

Footfall data

Store data

# Where do consumers shop?

**% of visits recorded during 4-week period**
(online consumer 'diary')



31.84%
28.25%
14.39%
12.84%
8.29%
4.39%

town centre
supermarket
local shop
online
retail park
other

**WHY that town?**
1. Local / close to home
2. Convenient / easy to get to
3. Close to work
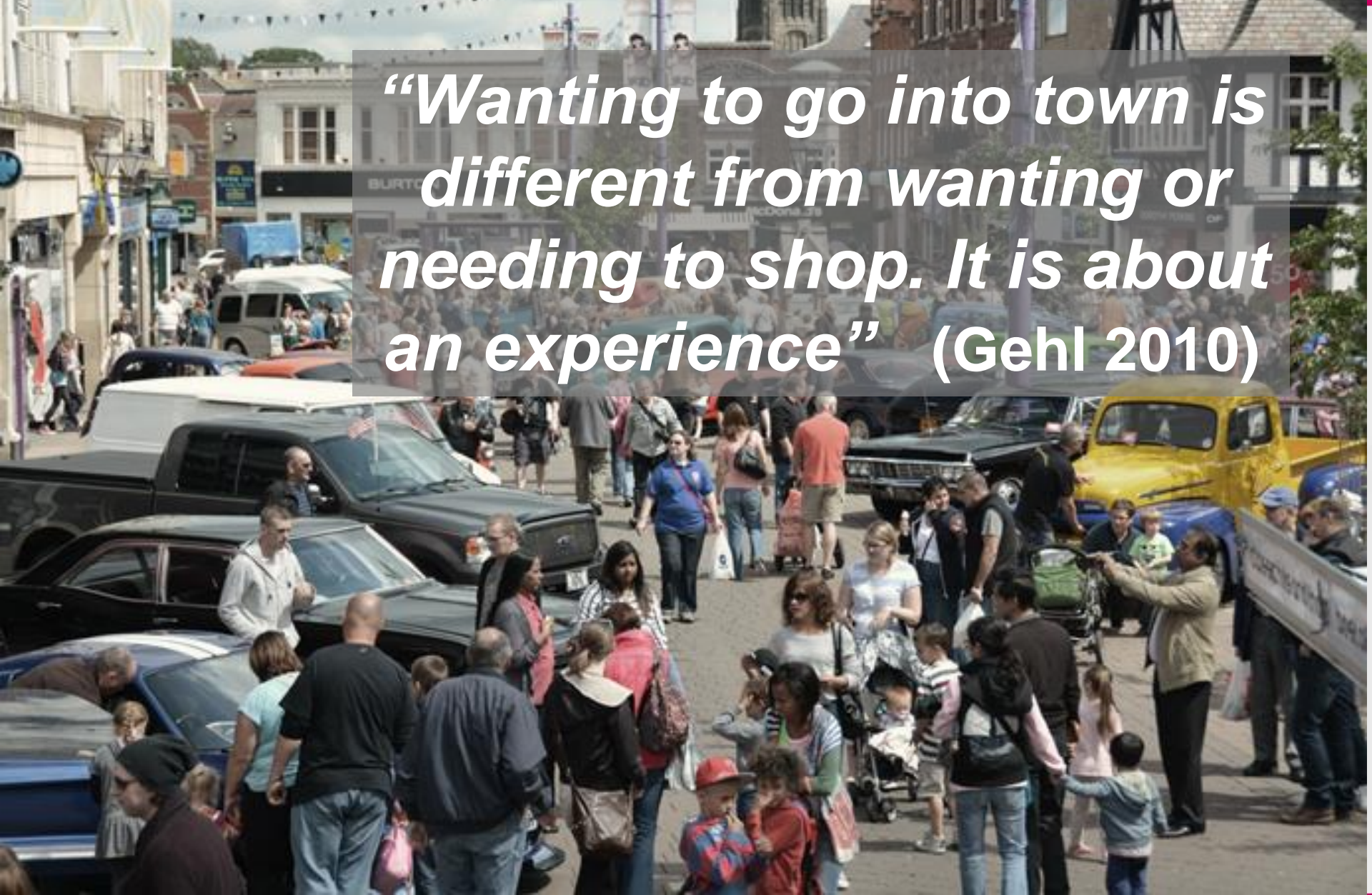4. Has everything I need

*This town centre is the closest to where I live, I know where to park and where all the shops are*

*I looked at clothes online but there was so much to look at I thought it would be easier to go to the shop and look*
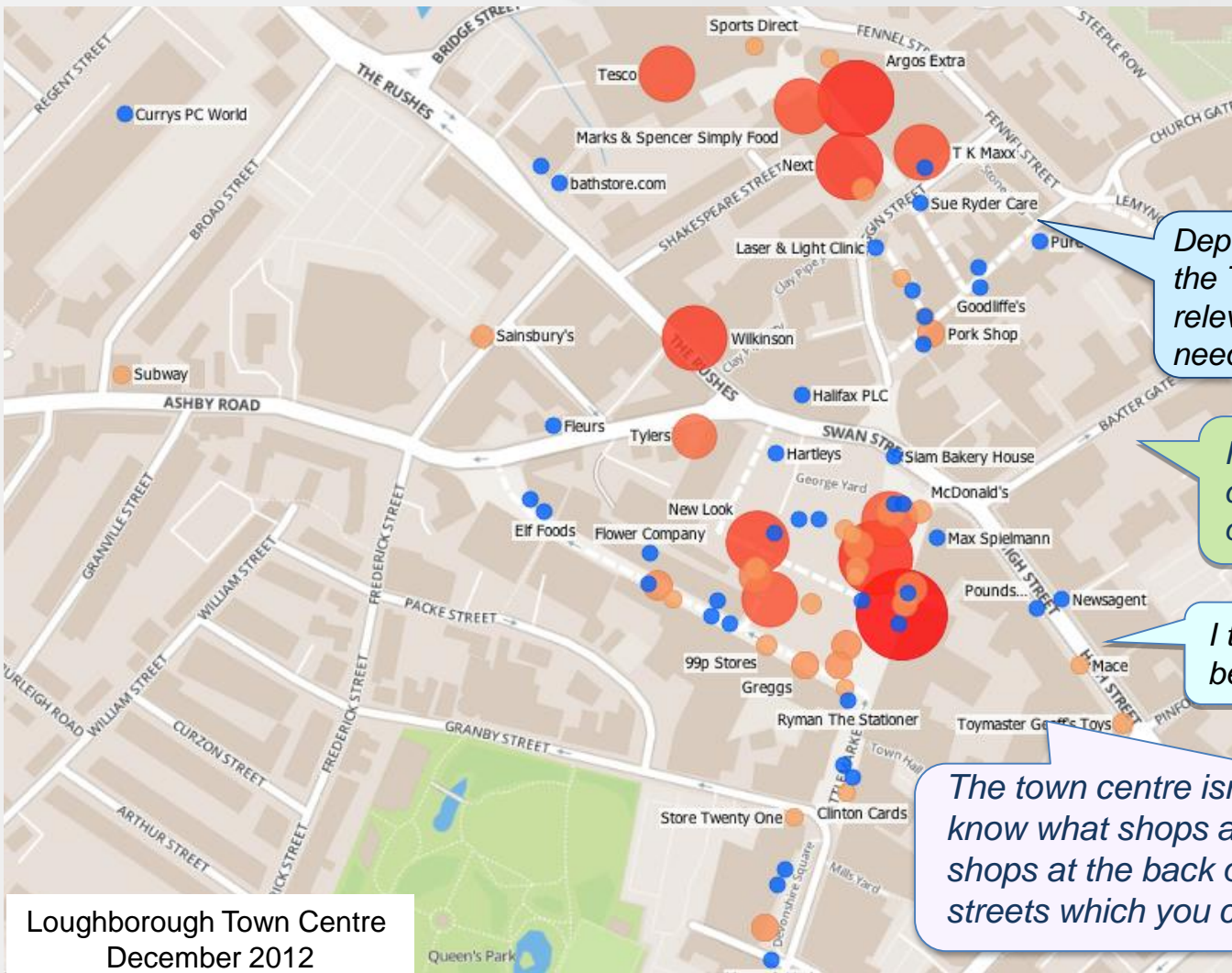
*There are lots of little independent shops so you can buy one off gifts. You've got 2 separate markets plus the shopping centre so it caters for all*

*"Wanting to go into town is different from wanting or needing to shop. It is about an experience"* **(Gehl 2010)**

# Town centre journey experiences



**Town centre routes are habitual…**

*Depending on my reason for going to the Town Centre I would park in the relevant car park nearest to the store I needed*

*If some of the empty properties down the side streets were occupied I would change my route.*
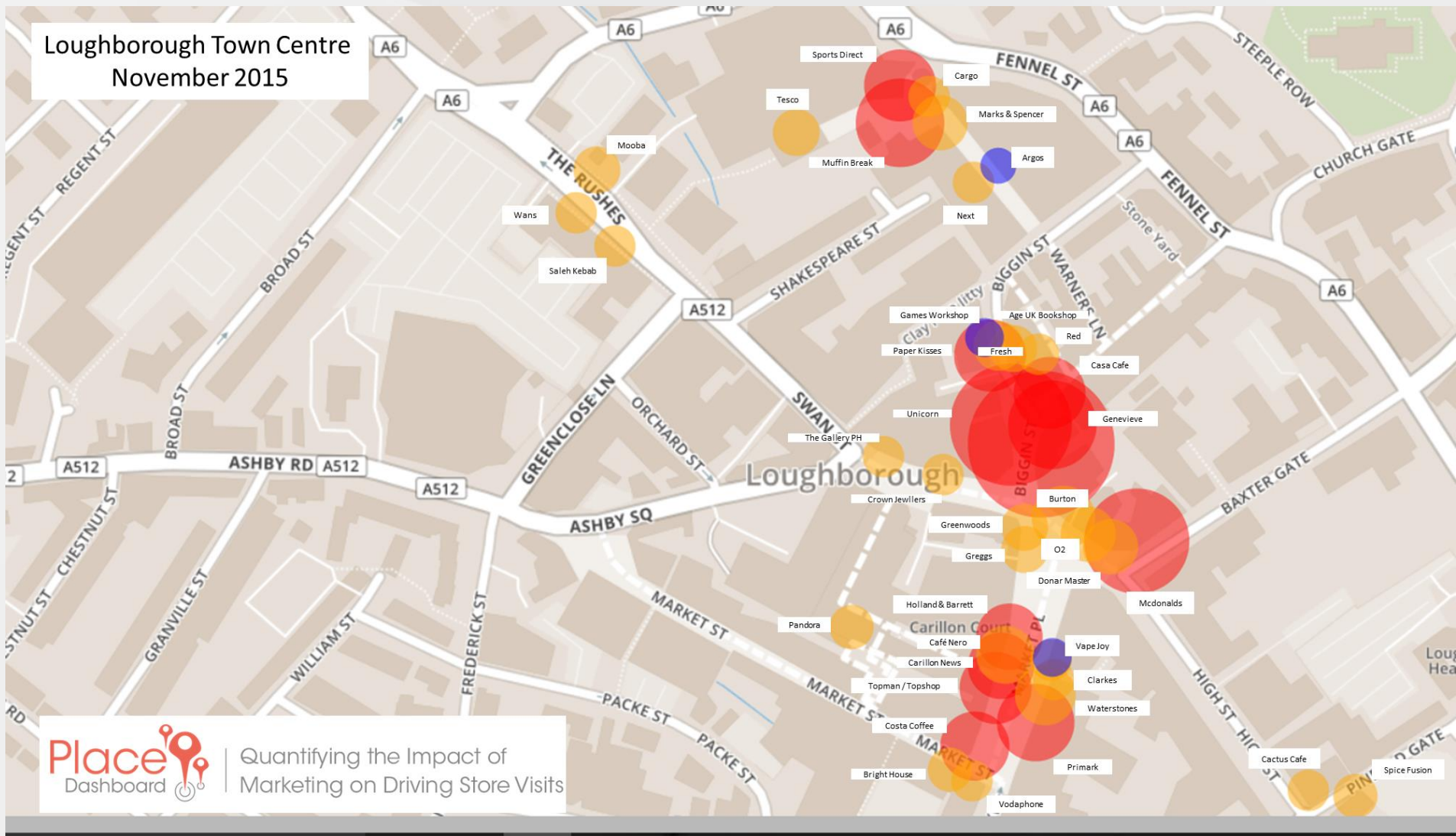
*I try to avoid the main route because of traffic*

*The town centre isn't well signposted, so you don't know what shops are available. There are a lot of shops at the back of the High Street - on side streets which you could be made more aware of.*

Loughborough Town Centre
December 2012

# Tracking consumer activity in town



Loughborough Town Centre
November 2015

Place Dashboard — Quantifying the Impact of Marketing on Driving Store Visits

Loughborough University

#InspiringWinners since 1909

# Customer journeys comprise touch points…

- **Functional Touch Points (FTP)** *satisfy practical purposes, convenience, efficiency*

  - **Stores and products** – range and availability
  - **Access and layout** – transport links & movement
  - **Parking** – pricing, convenience and space
  - **Information** – appropriate and up to date

  **Larger towns performed better on functional touch points…**
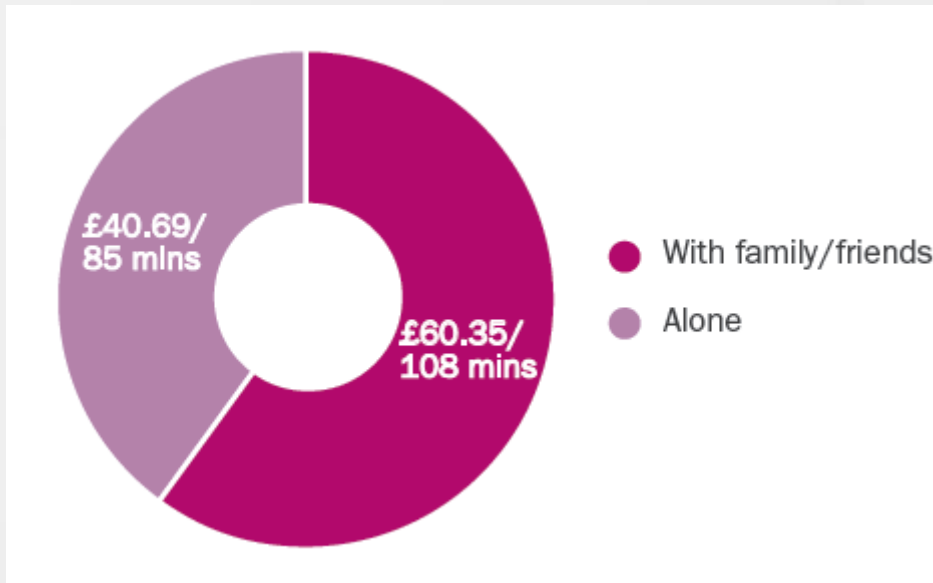
- **Experiential Touch Points (ETP)** *engage senses, feelings, emotions*

  - **Customer service** – encourages / deters customers return
  - **Social Interaction** - other people enhances experience
  - **Savings / bargains** – disappointed if charged unfairly
  - **Special events** – increase desire to shop
  - **Refreshments / eating out** – increase dwell time
  - **Atmosphere** – generates sensory reactions
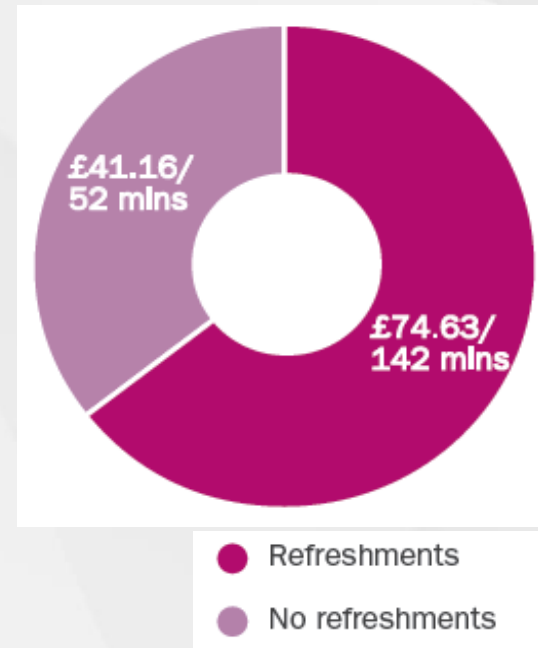  - **Markets** – attract / deter consumers

  **Smaller towns out performed larger towns for experiential touch points**

# The value of social and leisure experiences

**Average spend / time when shopping with others**

**Average spend / time spent by shoppers taking refreshments**

£40.69/ 85 mins
£60.35/ 108 mins

- With family/friends
- Alone

£41.16/ 52 mins
£74.63/ 142 mins

- Refreshments
- No refreshments

# Experiences impact town centre performance
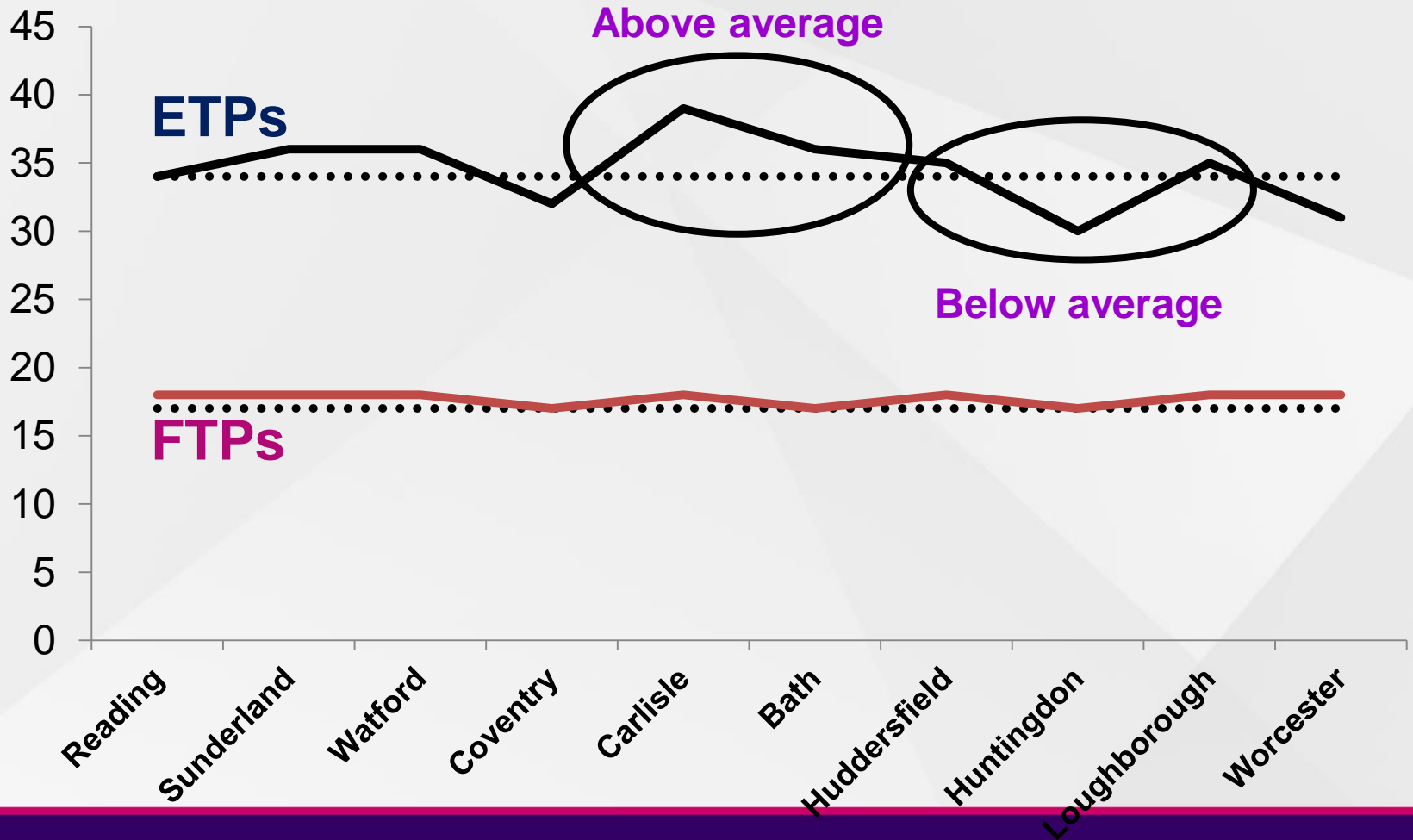
# Consumer Behaviour
*(desire to stay, loyalty, future intentions and WOM)*

# Town centre performance

Refreshments & Entertainment

Customer service

Social interaction

Savings & Bargains

**ETPs**

Markets

Special events

Atmosphere

Products

Layout

Parking

Stores

Access

**FTPs**
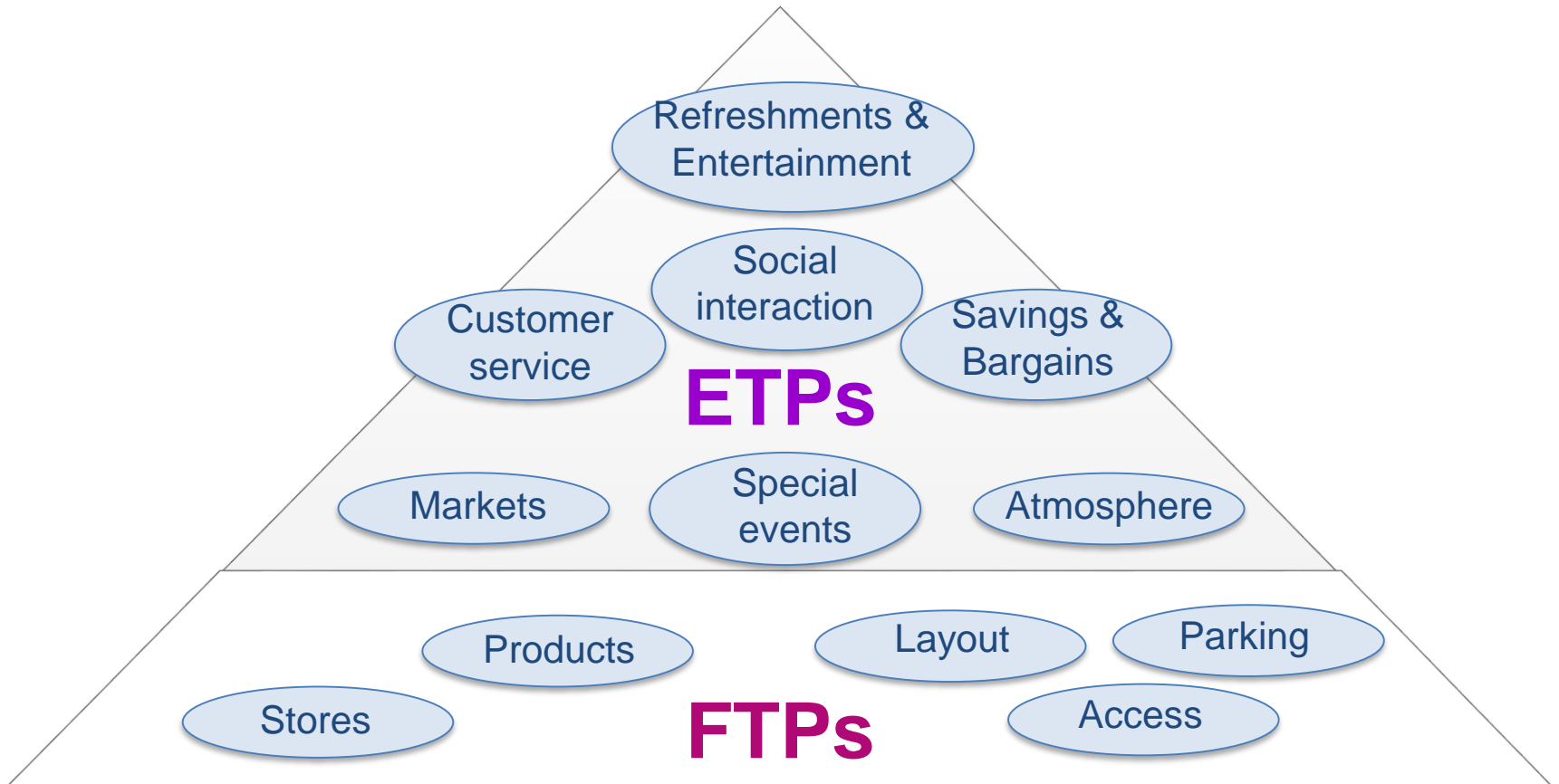
# How to influence & shape town centre behaviour?

- ✓ Understand the motivators and barriers for your towns to encourage a healthy town centre relationship
- ✓ Identify where your customers begin / end their journeys – where are the decision points?
- ✓ Identify the touch points responsible for driving satisfaction
- ✓ Decrease customer *pain points* e.g. functional hassle of access and parking, stock availability etc.
- ✓ Create & promote joined up experiences – convert a functional trip to an experiential visit (social media, marketing communications)
- ✓ Influence attraction, drive footfall and dwell time via digital tools

## Next steps…

- • Measuring the TCCX
- • Integrating digital in TCCX
- • Building a Place Analysis Tool

# Town centre analytics: Journey mapping

# Town Wifi – Capture, understand, engage with TC visitors

## We are building a Place Analysis Tool to measure: SITE

**S**kills

**I**nfrastructure

**T**own Attractiveness

**E**ngagement

**Founding Research Warwickshire and Leicestershire, has produced insights of each dimension – at county, town and street level.**

**Next steps:**

**More places Further Trials -** improving access to information for place managers.

**Scaling Up-** building the SITE Tool for greater reach to a wider number of participating towns and cities.

**Improving Effectiveness** – through testing of the importance of each of the dimensions and individual variables which form the SITE Analysis Engine.

**Automation –** to provide universal access to place managers through a web-based portal.

# Thank you!  For further information….

**Town Centre Customer Experience:**

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Download our Phase 1 Project Research
Report:
Town Centre Customer Experience

**The Place Analysis Tool, SITE:**

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