

# Communicating sustainability to children: an exploratory study on sharing sustainability through fashion retail third places

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**Title:** Communicating sustainability to children: an exploratory study on sharing sustainability through fashion retail third places

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# RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

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Fashion retail, Sustainability awareness, Third places, Education, Children

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# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

RQ1: How **aware** are children **about sustainability** and specifically **fashion** sustainability?

RQ2: How **suitable** are **retail third places** for educating children about sustainability?

RQ3: How can sustainability **awareness** be **improved** through third places in children's retail settings?

# Literature Review

- Sustainability awareness
- Children & Education
- Fashion Retail Third Places

# Sustainability awareness

- Fashion industry is clearly one of the industries that has been linked to the exploitation of both resources and people

- Academic literature on sustainability is extensive

*(Aguilera et al., 2007; Bansal and Roth, 2000; Carter and Rogers, 2008; Elgin, 1993; Gupta et al., 2019; Mutum et al., 2019; Prothero et al., 2010; Seuring and Muller, 2008; Walton et al., 1988)*

- An so they are studies that focus on understanding sustainable consumption and consumer's attitudes towards it

*(Aitken et al., 2017; Alfred and Adam, 1980; Bonini and Oppenheim, 2008; Cowe and Williams, 2000; Davies and Gutsche, 2016; Hosseiniunpour et al., 2016; Howard and Nelson, 2000; Kilbourne et al., 1997; Kim et al., 1998; Nicholls and Lee, 2006; Ritch, 2020; Ritch and Brownlie, 2016; Robins and Roberts, 1998; Taylor and Tilford, 2000; Tey et al., 2018)*

- Whilst, children as sustainable consumers are starting to gain scholarly attention, it is still a burgeoning area of research

*(Donovan, 2016; Heo and Muralidharan, 2019; O'Neil, 2017; Ritch, 2015, 2019; Su et al., 2019; Watkins et al., 2019).*



Of particular interest to this study, is the conundrum of how attitudes towards sustainable products are translated into actual consumption

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## the ethical purchasing gap

(Kim et al., 1998; Nicholls and Lee, 2006)

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which is pronounced in the context of fashion

(Bray et al., 2011; Joergens, 2006; Joy et al., 2012; Niinimäki 2010; Ritch, 2020).

01 Researchers agree that the **confusion** around what sustainable fashion means **favours** this **gap**

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(Henninger et al., 2016; Reimers et al., 2016).

02 Existing studies suggest that **information positively drives consumer behaviours**, and a **lack of knowledge** is a restraint

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(Connell, 2010; Hill and Lee, 2012; Hwang et al., 2015; Rothenberg and Matthews, 2017).

03 Therefore, an **increased knowledge of sustainable** issues can be fostered by greater **education levels**

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(Do Paço and Raposo, 2010).

# Children & Education

- Education as a powerful tool for achieving sustainable societal change
- Early childhood is the most suitable stage to learn about sustainability
- Early education in sustainability may have a long-lasting effect for life

## Importance of communicating sustainability to fashion children consumers in retail stores

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Scholars assert that the **existence of barriers** often make it difficult for retailers to **convey convincing communication** about **sustainability** to consumers

*Harris et al., 2016; Henninger, 2015; Mick et al., 2011; Wilber and Pasricha, 2017*

02

No matter how much effort is made upstream in the supply chain, if the **focus on price, product and store attributes is lost**, the final consumer will not be motivated to purchase sustainable fashion

*(Aitkin et al., 2017; Beard, 2008; Niinimäki, 2010; Ochoa, 2011)*

Suitability of retail third places  
as **conduits of sustainability  
communication** and  
consequently improve children's  
attitudes towards sustainability.

## The conception of third places

Was developed within a sociological context as spaces where *“individuals can freely gather, exchange ideas and socialise”*

*(Oldenburg, 1999, p.15)*

Third places were perceived as somewhere:

- that is not **home** --> *the first place*
- or **work** --> *the second place*

**Comfortable place to relax and meet people**

# Third place typology (Crick, 2011) beyond the traditional form to include

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*Commercial (consumption focused, encouraging customers to spend more time and money within a space*

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*Spectacular (experiential centred, fulfilling emotional consumer needs with a space*

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*Hybrid (convergence of traditional and commercial third places accelerated by technology*

01 Extant research has focused on exploring different forms of third places

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(Crick, 2011; Laing and Royle, 2013; Rosenbaum, 2009)

02 it has only recently been applied in a fashion context

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(Alexander, 2016, 2019; Manlow and Nobbs, 2013; Nobbs, 2014)

03 There is no known scholarly research on third places within children's retail environments

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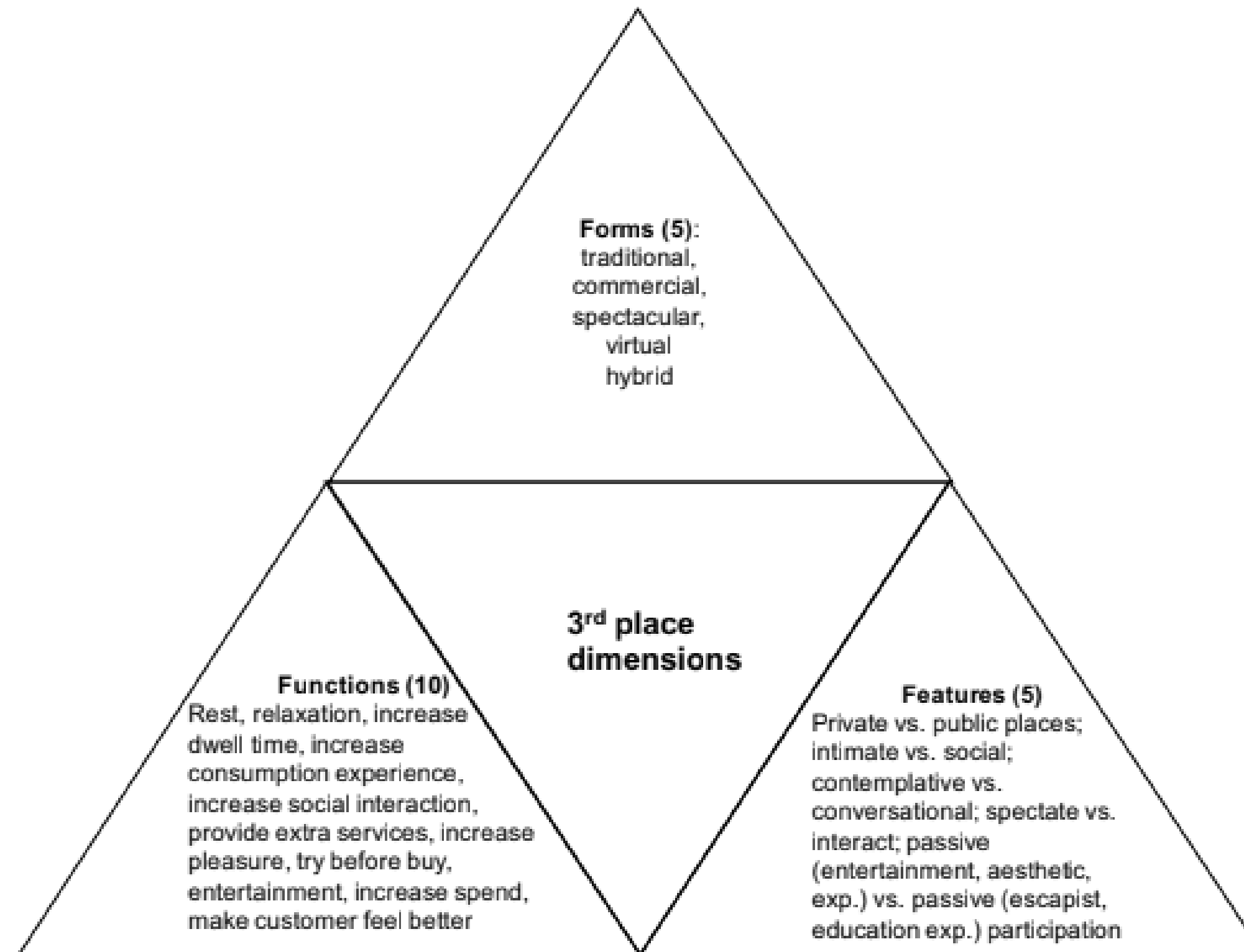


Figure: Third Place Dimensions (Alexander, 2016)

Ayadi and Cao (2016) found that store atmospherics

- they positively impact children's exploration of the store
- contribute to them staying longer and revisiting the store

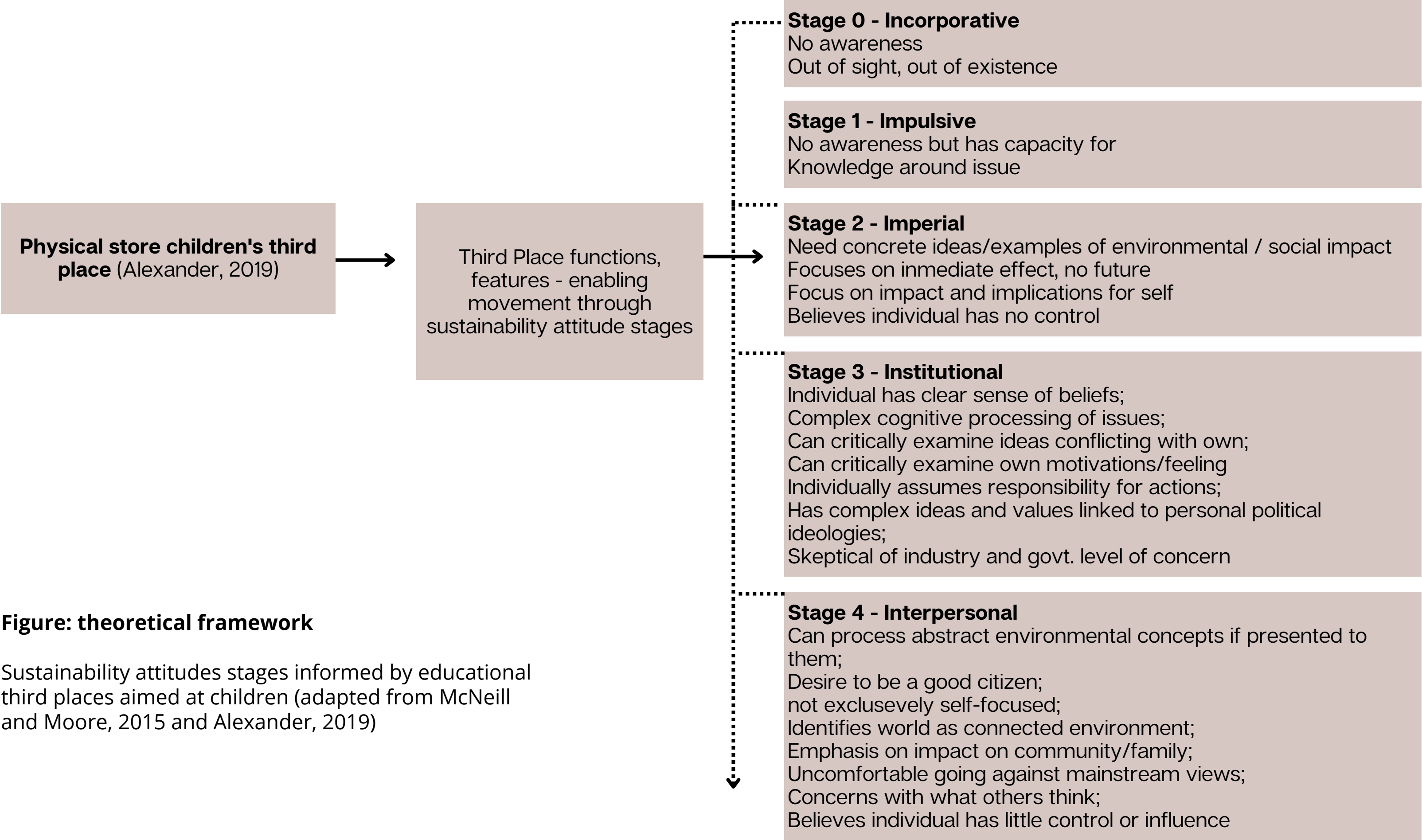
Children value stores that provide educational workshops, opportunities to play, learn and have fun

*Feenstra et al.'s (2015)*

Education is often most effective outside the confines of a traditional classroom, using innovative ways that 'speak from' a fresh vision of fashion, such as competitions and workshops

*(Fletcher, 2010, p. 158).*

This paper responds to the scholarly **call** for **further research** into **sustainability** and **children** through the conjoint lens of **sustainability awareness** and third places to foster **sustainable education**



**Figure: theoretical framework**

Sustainability attitudes stages informed by educational third places aimed at children (adapted from McNeill and Moore, 2015 and Alexander, 2019)

A **multi-methods** qualitative research design was applied, normally associated with interpretivist studies

Through **triangulation** (Webb et al., 1966), the combination of

- non-participant observations and;
- 4 focus groups (12 to 16 years old)

enabled more reliable results to be achieved, to enrich the explanation of the studied phenomenon and respond to the research questions that ensued from the literature (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010).

# Thank you!

I am open to your comments and suggestions!