

# Store Disappearance and Inner-City Visitor Frequencies

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Cite as:

Maier Erik (2025), Store Disappearance and Inner-City Visitor Frequencies.  
*Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 54th, (124570)

Paper from the 54th Annual EMAC Conference, Madrid, Spain, May 25-30, 2025



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## Abstract

An increasing number of stores are disappearing from inner cities. Cities and retail managers are afraid that each store closure will accelerate the decline of brick-and-mortar in a retail area, quickening the “death of the high street”. This research studies whether the closure of stores of a major retail chain (department stores with large sales areas) affects inner-city visitor frequencies (as a precondition for visits and sales) in the retail area where the store was located. Using a difference-in-difference design (cities with closure vs. those without), we find that store disappearance has a negative, but non-lasting effect on visitor frequencies: on average, visitor frequencies decline by about 18% past the closure (on average –12% in the first year), but rebound almost to pre-closure levels after roughly one. This effect is moderated by the demographic characteristics of the city, with cities with a poorer or older population suffering a more lasting decline in visitor numbers.

**Keywords:** *store closure, death of the high street, retail apocalypse*

**Track:** *Retailing & Omni-Channel Management*