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The life and remarkable achievements of Anita Roddick, a dreamer, a doer and a female entrepreneur

Hiroko Tomida

Introduction

The name of the British company The Body Shop is well-known internationally and there are over 1,500 of its shops worldwide. However, outside Britain, its founder Anita Roddick remained for some time a relatively obscure figure, especially in Japan. As a consequence, her life and achievements are not widely known as they deserve to be, even to her customers beyond Britain. In terms of sources, there is a considerable amount of material about her in English. For example, she wrote six autobiographical books about her business.\(^1\) Biographies are easily obtainable and her radio and television interviews are also accessible.\(^2\) Many short articles were written about her, most of which appeared in newspapers and magazines. However, only a limited number of books and articles evaluate her entrepreneurial skills and her achievements from an international perspective. The main objectives of this article therefore are to make an assessment of Anita Roddick’s life and achievements.


and to evaluate the major characteristics of her international company.

This article will be divided into three sections. In the first part, Anita's upbringing, her family and educational background, and her career working as an administrator, a teacher, and the owner/proprietor of a bed and breakfast and a restaurant will be discussed.

In the second part I will focus on The Body Shop, which Anita established in 1976 and built up from one small shop in Brighton into a global business with 1,500 stores throughout the world. First, I will provide background information about the state of the cosmetics industry in the early 1970s, and investigate the reasons why she decided to start a small cosmetics business. Then the main features of both her products and the company's core ethical principles will be examined. Some comparisons will be made between The Body Shop and other cosmetic companies to point out similarities and differences. What impact did The Body Shop have on the field of cosmetics?

The article will next pursue the development of the company, discussing how her business expanded to such a great extent over its first twenty years. What was the key to the great success of her venture? How did she become such a highly successful businesswoman? Where did her innovative ideas come from? What influence did it exert on women and their participation in public affairs and the promotion of women's status? To what extent did her enterprise differ from businesses run by men? These questions will be answered in this article.

In the third part, other aspects of Anita Roddick will be examined. As Rob Alcraft rightly stated, she was more than a businesswoman. Indeed she was also well-known as a human rights activist, a campaigner and supporter for many social, political and environmental causes, and a charity worker as well as a philanthropist. She urged that business can have a kinder face, and stuck to her own principle of rejecting the idea of animal testing. She argued that it is wrong that thousands of animals should suffer in cosmetics experiments. Then she campaigned to save the whale and rainforests. Moreover she became the patroness of many charities, raising

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3 Alcraft, Anita Roddick, p. 4.
5 Alcraft, Anita Roddick, p. 5.
6 Ibid., p. 5.
7 Brown, Anita Roddick and The Body Shop, pp. 31-34.
money for them and donating substantial sums to them. This article will try to uncover the reasons why she decided to be involved in social activism in the first place, and also discuss her achievements in this field.

Finally, in March 2006 The Body Shop was sold to beauty giant L’Oréal, the world’s largest cosmetics company, which triggered public criticism and discussions. In the following year Anita Roddick died of an acute brain haemorrhage at the age of 64. What legacy did she leave not only in the business world but also in society?

Anita Roddick’s biography

Her early life

The British female entrepreneur Anita Roddick (née Perella) had a humble family background. On 23rd October 1942 she was born into an Italian-Jewish immigrant family, the third child of Gilda and Donny Perella, in Littlehampton, a small seaside town in West Sussex. Her mother Gilda had moved from a small village in Italy to England to become a nanny at the age of 15. Her father Donny had also emigrated to England at a very young age. Their marriage had been arranged by their parents living in Italy, who had very old-fashioned ideas about relationships and marriage. Anita’s parents had three daughters and one son, but as their marriage did not work out, they divorced when Anita was eight years old. Soon Gilda remarried Donny’s cousin Henry, who came to England after having spent many years in America. Littlehampton was full of holiday-makers in the summer and Henry and Gilda ran the Clifton Café, an American-style café near the sea front. It served hamburgers, Coca-Cola and other American fare, which were unfamiliar in Britain at that time.

Gilda’s second marriage was happy and her family very close. However, tragedy struck when Henry died from tuberculosis only 18 months after their wedding. Now a single mother with four young children to bring up, Gilda had to run the café, which had long hours, opening for breakfast at 5 a.m., all on her own. Anita was only 10 years old then. As soon as Gilda’s children were old enough to help, they

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14 Ibid., p. 9.
took orders, cleared tables, and washed dishes. Having experienced this, Anita learnt from a young age the meaning of hard work, the importance of earning her own living, and the hardship of being a single mother.

When not working, Anita attended St. Catherine’s Convent where she was taught by many Catholic nuns. There, Anita was so inspired by one nun, that she gave her new school uniform to a girl from a very poor family.\(^\text{15}\) Anita speculated some years later that it was this act of giving at school that later led her to be involved in social activism.

Moreover at around the same age, she read a book about the Holocaust, which also made her realize that there was so much injustice in the world, and transformed her way of thinking.\(^\text{16}\) Having come from an Italian–Jewish background, this discovery made her determined to do something positive to prevent unfairness in society by taking positive steps to help vulnerable people and to improve the situation of people in poverty.

After leaving St. Catherine’s Convent, she attended the Maude Allen Secondary Modern School for Girls where she enjoyed studying drama and reading poems. From her secondary school days in the 1960s she started to get involved with social movements such as Shelter and Freedom from Hunger. She marched with the CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament), a British organisation whose aim is to persuade countries to get rid of their nuclear weapons.\(^\text{17}\)

With her mother recommending her to find a stable job, she decided to study at the Newton Park College of Education in Bath, hoping to pursue a teaching career.\(^\text{18}\) There she studied art and design, and the skills she acquired later became extremely useful when she opened The Body Shop. It was also during her college days that she discovered the joy of travelling. At the Newton College she won a scholarship to study on a kibbutz in Israel for three months.\(^\text{19}\) The result of her research there had to be submitted as a thesis, one of the requirements of her degree.

Because of her Jewish heritage, she was extremely keen to learn about Israel and Judaism. She tried very hard to get to know local people, working in the fields and going out on fishing boats. This trip had a great impact on her life and changed her lifestyle. The experience also made her more independent and confident, becoming

\(^{15}\) Roddick, *Body and Soul*, p. 37.
\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 39.
\(^{18}\) Roddick, *Body and Soul*, p. 43.
\(^{19}\) Ibid., p. 48.
convincing that she was perfectly capable of travelling alone anywhere in the world. Starting with her trip to Israel, she began to love adventures and travelling, which turned out to be an advantage when she later ran a global business.

After she completed her degree, she applied for teaching jobs, and was given a position at a nearby junior school. However, she resigned the job before even starting it. A few weeks before she was due to begin her teaching career, she accepted an invitation from a friend living in Paris to spend a weekend there. She liked the city so much that she decided to stay. As she was the sort of person who was constantly looking for excitement, a new challenge and impetus, a teaching job did not appeal to her, even though it would have given her a steady income. In order to support herself in Paris, she found a menial job working for the *International Herald Tribune*, but she made effective use of her spare time, meeting a number of interesting people ranging from artists to musicians.

Nearly a year later she returned to Littlehampton to start part-time teaching at her old school, the Maude Allen Secondary Modern School for Girls. However, her teaching career lasted only one year. During a holiday visit to Geneva, Anita Roddick landed herself an administrative post working for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) at the United Nations. Although she lacked the precise qualifications for the job, her enthusiasm, persuasive manner and effective way of communicating helped her to secure the position. Her job at the ILO gave her the ideal opportunity to familiarise herself with the hardships and problems of the third world and to become more aware of women’s causes. However, it did not take long for her to get bored with the prestigious ILO post and she was ready to move on. Nevertheless, the valuable experience she had gained inspired her to support producers in developing countries when she, later on, founded The Body Shop.

At this point she wanted to explore the world, and boarded a boat heading towards Tahiti, which at that time was one of the most exotic places in the world to western people. There she was introduced to cocoa butter which Tahiti women rubbed on their bodies to keep their skin smooth. It was a traditional skin care remedy that had been handed down for many generations. Anita, being an adventurous woman with a curious mind, could not resist trying cocoa butter on her skin. Her knowledge about natural skin products, used by local women in different countries which she

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23 Ibid., p. 53.
visited, later became extremely useful when she wanted to produce her own skin care products for The Body Shop. As Sherry Beck Paprocki states, Anita’s early travels around the world led her to create some surprise formulas for lotions later sold by The Body Shop.\(^{24}\) Indeed many of her early products were made with cocoa butter, which Anita had initially discovered in Tahiti.

After Tahiti she visited several cities in Australia, where she found herself a job selling wooden siding (boards used on the outside of houses) in order to finance her further travels.\(^{25}\) This lowly work provided her with a chance to develop the skill to sell goods to people effectively. She also recalled that she discovered the pleasure of serving customers. Her exposure to the sales and marketing at that time later became important when she set up her first cosmetic shop.

After she left Australia, she went via Madagascar to South Africa where apartheid was still maintained by the white government. In this system black people and white people were segregated and only white people had full political rights. People were arrested if they broke these segregation laws. Anita, an egalitarian, who held the belief that everyone is equal and should have the same rights, disapproved of the ways in which people in South Africa were kept apart because the colour of their skin.

Anita wanted to challenge the political system, and deliberately violated a segregation law by going to a jazz club on a night when only black people were admitted to enter the club.\(^{26}\) She was picked up almost immediately by the police and given twenty-four hours to leave the country. This incident ended her so-called ‘Hippie Trail’ life, which was a movement of young people who wanted to explore the world in the 1960s and early 1970s. She decided to return to her hometown of Littlehampton.

On her first night back at home, her mother introduced her to Gordon Roddick, a tall and handsome Scotsman who had travelled to various countries and worked in tin mines in Australia and on large farms in Latin America and Africa.\(^{27}\) They had much in common, having both been adventurous worldwide travellers. They also discovered that they had lived on the same street in Sydney, Australia and knew many of the same people there. They were instantly attracted to each other, became inseparable and soon began to live together.


\(^{25}\) Ibid., p. 26.

\(^{26}\) Roddick, *Body and Soul*, p. 53.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., pp. 53–55.
Gordon, who wanted to be a writer, worked on a local farm, while Anita returned to her teaching for a while until she became pregnant. They started to talk about opening their own business, but they did not know what kind would be suitable for them. Their first business venture was to run a bed and breakfast. They bought a run-down Victorian hotel with eight bedrooms in the middle of Littlehampton and turned it into an attractive lodging.28

As Littlehampton, a seaside town, is crowded with many tourists in the summer, their business did well during the summer season. However, they hardly made any money after the season ended, so they faced the prospect of going bankrupt. In desperation they came up with the idea of renting many of its rooms to tenants for long-term stay. They succeeded in finding elderly residents on this basis. After the hotel began to make a small profit, they started their second business venture, which was running a restaurant called Paddington.29 Anita initially thought that she and her husband could impose their good intentions on their customers by featuring healthy dishes such as quiches and soups. Anita, who had much experience in assisting her mother’s café, was confident that her restaurant was going to be a success. Nowadays there are many vegetarian and vegan restaurants throughout Britain serving quiches, soups and salads, which are widely popular, but back in the 1970s, the local residents and tourists in Littlehampton did not want ‘healthy’ food. Later Anita recalled the time and stated in her autobiography that ‘It was a disaster...No one seemed to share our enthusiasm for the menu.’30

For weeks Anita and Gordon stared at empty tables, and finally realized that in an egg-and-chips town such as Littlehampton, their initial healthy menu would hardly attract many customers. Instead, they turned the restaurant into a burger-and-fry place with loud rock-and-roll music, and changed the menu to steak, burgers and chips.31 Paddington quickly filled up with customers and became one of the most popular meeting places in Littlehampton.

This incident taught them two valuable business lessons, which they later made the best use of when Anita founded The Body Shop. The first was that any business must provide a service that customers want. The second was that, it is the businessman/businesswoman who is at fault if the enterprise is unsuccessful, in which case, he/she should have the ability to move swiftly to a new improved idea.

29 Roddick, Body and Soul, p. 62.
30 Ibid., p. 63.
31 Brown, Anita Roddick and The Body Shop, p. 15.
Anita and Gordon became extremely busy serving and cooking in their restaurant, and the husband-and-wife team proved very productive because of the differences in their personalities. Anita, a lively, friendly and attractive personality with excellent communication skills, was extremely good at customer services. On the other hand, Gordon was more reserved, reliable, level-headed and well-organised. He gained the trust of the staff, which helped the restaurant to run smoothly, and he became a successful manager.

In spite of their success, they quickly learned that owning a restaurant was a difficult business. They were exhausted and had little time for themselves and their two small daughters. In her book Body and Soul Anita described their routine life at that time.

We were rarely home before one o'clock in the morning and were often so tired we could hardly drag ourselves up the stairs to bed. Sometimes we would wake up the next day with our muscles aching so much that we could hardly get up.32

For the sake of earning money, they persevered for three years running the popular restaurant, but they finally reached the point when they desperately needed a better quality of life with their children. Gordon suggested that they should sell their restaurant business and make a fresh start. He also wanted to fulfil a long-cherished dream of riding a horse across Latin America for two years.33

Anita accepted his suggestion and did not even resent his idea of leaving her and their small children to pursue his horseback adventure alone. However, somehow she had to come up with a solution which would enable her to pay the mortgage and earn a living for her and the two young children while he was away. As she was reluctant to return to teaching, she decided to run a small cosmetics shop. It is important to know what gave her this idea.

During a holiday in America, Anita and Gordon visited San Francisco and Berkeley in 1971, and came across two small and broad-ranging shops called The Body Shop, that promoted bio-degradable shampoos and lotions made with natural ingredients such as cocoa butter and avocado.34 Anita had never seen such shops before. She was fascinated and thought about founding a similar shop in England. A reporter working for a London newspaper claimed that Anita had copied the shops’ concept and used the same name.

32 Roddick, Body and Soul, pp. 63-64.
33 Ibid., p. 67.
34 Ibid., pp. 58-59.
The foundation of The Body Shop

After she reached the decision to establish a cosmetics shop, she needed to raise £4,000 to start her venture. She went to see a local bank manager, and explained her new idea of making and selling skin creams and shampoos. He immediately refused to lend her money.\(^{35}\) Nowadays many single women can take out a housing mortgage readily, but back in the 1970s it was hard for a woman in Britain to get a bank loan despite the fact that the Equal Employment Opportunities Act was enacted in 1975. For her next visit to the bank, she dressed smartly and carried a business plan with pages of figures and projections. In these preparations, she was helped by her husband and his friends who had more know-how about how to take out a bank loan and running a business. Most importantly, she took her husband with her to the bank. This time the bank manager gave a loan of £4,000 to her husband.\(^{36}\) The incident demonstrates one important reason why there were few businesswomen in the 1970s.

Anita opened the first Body Shop in Brighton on 27\(^{th}\) March 1976.\(^ {37}\) Her choice of location was ideal since Brighton on the south coast of England was a fashionable, original and thriving town full of residents, some of them London commuters because of the fast train link to London. Brighton hosted the nearby Sussex University, and was an enlightened middle-class town, liberal to left-leaning in politics. Indeed, it now has a Green Party MP, which is very rare in England. Brighton had good connections with continental Europe and was sexually liberal-minded. The place attracted many tourists as a seaside resort town as well. Anita needed to make £300 a week from her new business, to pay her own wage and mortgage.\(^ {38}\) Her expectations were low when she first started; she never intended to develop the shop into a flourishing wider business.

Indeed The Body Shop had a very humble beginning, selling just 15 products.\(^ {39}\) Although the packaging used by other cosmetics companies was fancy and attractive, which contributed to selling more products, by contrast the first bottles Anita used were cheap specimen bottles meant for hospitals.\(^ {40}\) The Body Shop’s packaging was extremely simple, and its products had handwritten labels. The Body Shop logo was

\(^{35}\) Ibid., pp. 71-72.

\(^{36}\) Brown, Anita Roddick and The Body Shop, pp. 17-18.

\(^{37}\) Roddick, Body and Soul, pp. 74-77.

\(^{38}\) Paprocki, Women of Achievement: Anita Roddick, Entrepreneur, p. 38.

\(^{39}\) Alcraft, Anita Roddick, p. 16.

\(^{40}\) Roddick, Business as Unusual, p. 38.
designed by an art student for only £25.  

Contrary to her negative expectations, her shop attracted many customers even on the opening day. She recalled that she made £130 at the end of the day and needed Gordon’s assistance to serve customers.  

Within the next month Gordon left for his horseback ride through Latin America, so Anita was on her own looking after two small children and running a shop. As she needed an extra hand, she employed a 16-year-old girl as her assistant. Her shop continued to do well, and she easily made her target of £300 a week. She explained that her good luck was assisted by the hot weather in 1976, the summer turning out to be the hottest for years. As a result, Brighton was full of people on holiday, and many of them purchased skin creams and shampoo from her shop. As the long hot summer blistered on, The Body Shop did better and better.

Apart from the hot weather there were many other reasons for the success of her shop. One of these was that her products were very different from those produced by other cosmetics companies. She concocted cosmetics from natural ingredients such as aloe vera, cocoa butter, elderflower, tea tree and cucumber. Although such ingredients are fairly well-known now, they were uncommon at that time. She used Bedouin recipes, and collected recipes in countries such as Tahiti, to make moisturisers. Her products were all homemade, so there were seeds in the elderflower cream and bits of cucumber in the cleansing cream. They did not contain any preservatives or added chemicals, so they were suitable for people with sensitive skin. They also smelt nice, which made her customers feel pampered. While other companies’ products were often tested on animals, she was against such testing. This conveyed the message that The Body Shop cared about animals and people. Her customers felt good about themselves if they shopped with her. Other cosmetics companies claimed their products would make their customers look less wrinkled, and appear younger, but Anita avoided this kind of dubious assertion.

Although Anita had never been to a business school and had hardly read books on business, she had a positive business attitude and approach, and was willing to use many kinds of tactics. For example, while she started with only 15 products, she packaged them in five sizes, which made her shop look as if it was selling more than

41 Alcraft, Anita Roddick, p. 17.
42 Ibid., p. 17.
43 Roddick, Body and Soul, p. 84.
45 Elaine Sunderland, ‘Emancipation goes to work in the boardroom, challenging for the prizes in the former male club’, The Times (12 November 1987), p. 35.
Moreover she tried to evaluate her products from a customer’s viewpoint rather than that of a producer. Her way of choosing the size of container for her products was an excellent example. In the mid-1970s, other cosmetics companies normally used a big container, sold in only one size. As they contained preservatives, they lasted a long time. On the other hand, Anita's products were free from preservatives, so it was sensible to have much smaller containers and items to be consumed over a short period of time. Her customers were able to buy as little or as much as they wanted.

Her products also had affordable prices, and she offered refilling services, which are coming back into fashion today. When a customer’s cosmetics bottle became empty, it could be brought back to The Body Shop, to be filled up. The customer did not have to pay for the cost of the container, which was both economical and ecologically friendly.

At her shop, sample bottles were available, so customers could try cream and lotion on their skin or smell them. Anita made all the products herself, so she could explain ingredients directly to customers, answer their queries and give advice about their purchasing.

Anita Roddick’s first shop began trading in only basic products, such as shampoo, conditioner, shower gel, soaps, hand cream, scrubs, face cleansers and face moisturisers. However, Anita's enthusiasm, innovative ideas and unconventional tactics in running a business with customers’ needs in mind all helped her to succeed.

The development of The Body Shop

As Anita’s new venture had extremely positive feedback from her clients, she was eager to expand her business. It might have been more sensible for her to run the first store for a few years, and then open the second one. However, Anita, who was impatient and impetuous, wanted to see how far she could go as soon as possible. She recollected the time of her decision as follows:

Entrepreneurs are doers as well as dreamers – they want to find the best way of pushing an idea along and use money to oil the wheels.

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46 Ibid., p. 35.
48 'Dame Anita Roddick Interview 2006 (Founder of The Body Shop)', YouTube, uploaded by Yasminne Cheng, 19 January 2015.
She had faith in her idea, so she put it into action immediately. As she needed another £4,000, she returned to the bank to ask the manager for a further loan. However, he turned down her request, advising her to wait for another year. Her friend Aidre, who worked for her shop and wanted to open the second shop with her, came up with a solution. Aidre persuaded her boyfriend, a local garage owner with some spare cash, to invest his money into Anita’s enterprise. He agreed to give Anita £4,000 for half of her business. This deal was the best investment that he ever made.\(^\text{49}\) Only six months after the opening of her first shop, Anita opened the second one in Chichester in September 1976, and Aidre took charge of it.

When Anita’s husband Gordon returned from his travels in 1977, he took an active part with her, doing the accounts, paying the wages and delivering supplies to the two shops. Clearly his involvement gave fresh impetus to her business. Although Gordon was eager to further expand the shops, he was opposed to the idea of borrowing more money from the bank or finding a financial sponsor. One day, he came up with the ideal solution: he could create a franchise system.\(^\text{50}\) Some people, who had seen the favourable outcome of her two stores, had started to make enquiries about the possibility of their opening a branch of The Body Shop since they were keen to participate in her venture. Under a franchise system, these people would be given formal permission to open a branch of The Body Shop and sell its products. They would own or rent the retail premises themselves and furnish them. The only thing that the Roddicks needed to do was to provide products, so in 1978 they decided to sell franchises, by which The Body Shop continued to grow. Both the Roddicks and the owners of their franchised stores benefitted from the franchise system and increased their profits. The main reason for their increased profit was that the prices of The Body Shop’s products were reduced because the Roddicks began to make products in large amounts and supply them to many franchised shops.\(^\text{51}\)

The Roddicks offered their experience and expertise in helping to start up the branches which were independently owned. They advised the franchised owners how to run their businesses, provided them with staff training, and gave direction in the principles and images of The Body Shop. The Body Shop’s philosophy was that anybody working for it should know more about the products than any of the customers. The owners of the branches and their staff were well-trained, and fully

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understood and shared the Roddicks’ basic principles, wanting to make the world ‘a better, cleaner, and safer place’. They also felt that they were part of an extended family business run by the Roddicks. These considerations made it possible for The Body Shop to maintain the same image for all branches, and also helped it to conduct successful campaigns. For example, The Body Shop’s recycling campaign was launched in 1992, and every shop put up posters to encourage customers to recycle or refill their bottles.

However, the franchise system didn’t always work well. The Roddicks had many costly disputes with franchisees that sometimes ended in court. These focused on predictable franchise matters of control over shops and products, financial independence, and the maintenance of brand image. There were also issues of supply-side security and of the allocation of profit.

As the Roddicks’ first two shops turned out to be very profitable, they were determined to expand their business themselves. By then they had gained the bank’s confidence, which enabled them to borrow enough money to open their third shop. This was followed by the opening of even more outlets, which they owned. Significantly, the Roddicks used their own shops to try out new merchandise and to see how well each item sold. If a new product was selling well, they would distribute it to their franchises.

The Body Shop was extremely successful in expanding the business, initially in Britain. Then in 1978, it went international with the opening of the first franchise outside Britain, which was in a kiosk in Brussels. In the following year the first Swedish branch in Stockholm and the first one in Greece were opened. In 1982, The Body Shop outlets opened in Iceland, Denmark, Finland, Holland and Ireland, and in 1988 the first American store appeared in New York. By 1995 it had 1,300 outlets in 46 countries, trading in 23 languages, selling more than 400 products. Ultimately, every country with The Body Shop branches was commercially organised by one head franchise holder, and the products were modified for the different national markets. By 2004, The Body Shop had 1,980 stores, serving more than 77 million

53 Ibid., p. 20; Philip Bassell, ‘CBI wants work practice to be “family-friendly”’, The Times (13 April 1994).
54 Roddick, Body and Soul, p. 11.
56 Brown, Anita Roddick and The Body Shop, pp. 22–24.
customers globally. By then it had fully established its reputation, being voted the second most-trusted brand in the U.K., and was ranked as the 28th top brand in the world. In April 1984 The Body Shop shares went onto the market in the U.K. Stock Exchange and reached an immediate value of £8 million.\(^{57}\) Anita and Gordon were each worth £1.5 million at this point, and hence became millionaires. The value of the stock of The Body Shop peaked in 1992. From that high level it has tended to fall thereafter as more rivals entered the market with comparable products, jumping onto the commercial bandwagon that had been inaugurated by the Roddicks.

The Body Shop grew over the next 20 years and the company’s products became much more wide-ranging, including newer items for the body, face and hair care as well as fragrances for both men and women.\(^{58}\) Anita also put social and environmental causes at the heart of her business long before other companies really cared. For example, she supported renewable energy and promoted the use of wind and water instead of nuclear power and gas. In 1993 her company took a stake in a wind farm project in Wales.\(^{59}\) The Body Shop headquarters in Littlehampton installed solar panels on a roof that could light and create energy from the sun to produce hot water and electricity. Her success as an entrepreneur gave her great prominence, enabling her to lend her voice to ethical and environmental causes.

Furthermore, Anita pioneered the concept of fair trade in the U.K. and travelled around the world, searching for new ingredients and products.\(^{60}\) She explained her company’s policy towards fair trade stating that her business would support producers in developing countries, respecting them and their cultures, and paying fair prices to make sure that they would not be exploited. She succeeded in gaining their trust and set up direct relations with local traders in such countries. The Body Shop still has solid links with many producer groups worldwide. As David Wheeler rightly said, care for people, care for the environment and concern for animal rights were Anita Roddick’s essential priorities in the business strategy of The Body Shop.\(^{61}\)


\(^{58}\) See the Body Shop’s official website which is https://www.thebodyshop.com/en-us/.


\(^{60}\) Roddick, Take It Personally: How to Make Conscious Choices to Change the World, pp. 98–102; Alcraft, Anita Roddick, pp. 34–35.

Involvement in social campaigns and charities

As previously mentioned, Anita Roddick campaigned against animal testing for cosmetics.\(^{62}\) She supported Greenpeace’s Save the Whale mission.\(^{63}\) She also joined Amazonian Indians in campaigning against a hydro-electric dam, and backed the Ogoni people’s battle for reparations for damage to their local environment in Nigeria caused by oil multinationals.\(^{64}\)

After she visited Romanian orphanages, in 1990 she founded Children on the Edge, a charity for children in Eastern Europe and Asia affected by conflicts, disabilities and HIV/AIDS.\(^{65}\) In the same year she and her husband helped the publication of *The Big Issue* magazine sold by the homeless.\(^{66}\) John Bird, its founder, who was extremely grateful to them for their financial help, made the following statement:

There is absolutely no way *The Big Issue* would have happened if Anita and her husband Gordon hadn’t started a business that created a social engine that drove people like us to get creative.\(^{67}\)

Another of her effective social projects happened in Littlehampton Community School. It succeeded in becoming a business and enterprise specialist school thanks to a substantial donation made by Anita Roddick, who grew up in the area.\(^{68}\) As a result, the new building built with her money was named The Roddick Enterprise Centre. The Littlehampton College also hosts ‘Roddick Days’, organising events such as an action day to allow the students an opportunity to give something back to their local community.

Anita wrote and published several books related to her business and ethics. She appeared on TV and radio programmes and also gave many lectures, talking about her very successful career and beliefs as the top executive of The Body Shop, which made an impact on young people who were planning to set up their own

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\(^{67}\) ‘Tributes pour in for Dame Anita’, *BBC News* (11 September 2007).

\(^{68}\) ‘Support for “Roddick Academy” at Littlehampton grows’, *Littlehampton Gazette* (4 October 2007).
Awards and honours which she received

Because of her contributions as a woman in promoting global business and her campaigns to make the world a better place, she has received many awards and honours. For her business achievements she was elected Veuve Clicquot Business Woman of the Year in 1984.\(^{70}\) She also won the Botwinick Prize in Business Ethics in 1994. As she had business operations across America, her entrepreneurial talent and skills have been highly regarded there. As a result, she won American prizes and awards, including the University of Michigan’s Annual Business Leadership Award in 1994, the Women’s Business Development Centre’s First Annual Woman Power Award in 1995, the Women’s Centre’s Leadership Award in 1996, and the Gleitsman Foundation’s Award of Achievement in 1996. These are some of the most prestigious awards in the business world and are only given to an extremely successful businesswoman.

She was also awarded an OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) in 1988 and a DBE (Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire) in 2003 for her services to the business world and communities in Britain.\(^{71}\) Moreover she received an honorary doctorate from the University of Sussex in 1988, and an honorary doctor of laws from the University of Bath in 1999.\(^{72}\) As her environmental campaigns have been highly evaluated worldwide, she also received many environmental awards in several countries. She won a Banksia Foundation’s Australia Environmental Award in 1993, a Mexican Environmental Achiever Award in 1993, a British Environmental and Media Award in 1993, a British Environmental and Media Award in 1999 and Rainforest Action Network’s Spirit of the Rainforest Award in 2006. She was also an honouree of the United Nation’s Environment Programme entitled Eyes on the Environment.

For her involvement with the peace and human rights movements, she was elected a Chief Wiper-Away of Ogoni Tears by the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni

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\(^{69}\) ‘Dame Anita Roddick: Kindness as a Key to Humanity’s Future’, YouTube, uploaded by University of California Television, 25 April 2008; ‘Dame Anita Roddick at FCCT Facilitated by the International Peace Foundation’, YouTube, uploaded by International Peace Foundation, 23 December 2013; ‘Anita Roddick, parts 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 (Inspiring Entrepreneurs-Commerce with a Conscience)’, YouTube, uploaded by BIPC (Business & IP Centre, London) TV, 11 July 2009.


\(^{72}\) ‘Honorary Graduates 1989 to present’, bath.ac.uk. University of Bath.

The sale of The Body Shop to L’Oréal and Anita Roddick’s death

On 17th March 2006 The Body Shop was sold to L’Oréal, an international cosmetics firm, for £652 million. L’Oréal had been condemned for using animals to test their products and was also part-owned by Nestlé who had been criticised for its treatment of third-world countries. This deal provoked criticism from the general public, especially customers of The Body Shop, who feared that the new owner L’Oréal would change the way The Body Shop was run. Anita Roddick assured the public that, ‘The Body Shop’s own principles were protected under the terms of the takeover, and insisted that she could be “the Trojan horse” who would be able to influence the new parent into adopting some of her ethical ideas’. In spite of her words, many customers of The Body Shop were not convinced. Clearly L’Oréal’s takeover undermined The Body Shop’s ethical image.

It is important to know what made Anita sell her most profitable and fully established global business, which she had devoted herself to expanding over thirty years. No one knows for sure why she made this decision, but it may have been related to her declining health. In 2004 she was diagnosed with liver cirrhosis caused by long-standing hepatitis C, with which she became infected in 1971 when she had a blood transfusion after the birth of her second child.

As she was a positive person making every effort to keep herself active and continuing to improve society, she began to promote the work of The Hepatitis C Trust, helping to increase awareness of the disease to the general public. Less than two weeks before her death, she appeared on Channel 5’s television programme Doctor, Doctor in Britain as a special guest, and discussed hepatitis C with the presenter Mark Porter, a GP (general practitioner) in a most persuasive way. In one of her last interviews, she made light of the idea of retiring and stated ‘I don’t even

73 Brown, Anita Roddick and The Body Shop, pp. 58-60.
75 Claudia Cahalane, ‘I believe they are honourable and the work they do is honourable’, The Guardian (3 November 2006).
understand the word, retirement. Campaigning is in my DNA.’  

Four days before her death she wrote the last entry on her personal website in support of Amnesty International, a London-based non-governmental organisation focused on human rights, whose objective is ‘to conduct research and generate action to prevent and end abuses of human rights, and to demand justice for those whose rights have been violated.’ People who listened to the interview or read her last entry, never predicted her premature death. On 10th September 2007 she suddenly died of a brain haemorrhage at the age of 64.  

On her death Gordon Brown, the Prime Minister at that time, paid tribute to her, calling her ‘one of the country’s true pioneers and an inspiration to women throughout the country striving to set up and grow their own companies’. He continued:

She campaigned for green issues for many years before it became fashionable to do so, and inspired millions to the cause by bringing sustainable products to a mass market...She will be remembered not only as a great campaigner but also as a great entrepreneur.  

Richard Branson, a renowned British entrepreneur, who was her long-time friend, made the following comments:

Anita showed the world that success in business can go hand in hand with making the world a better place. She was an incredible human being and will be greatly missed!  

Indeed she left her estate to charities rather than her family and friends. When details of her will were published, it was disclosed that she had donated all of her £51 million fortune upon her death.

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77 Rifkind, ‘In the last few months of her life Anita Roddick’, p. 11.  
81 Ibid.  

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Conclusion

Anita Roddick began her first humble business in 1976 when there were few female entrepreneurs in Britain. At that time the business world was almost entirely dominated by men. This was partly because they had more opportunities to study at business school and to have better knowledge of running such enterprises. It was also because they had extensive networks of many kinds. Further, banks were reluctant to lend money to women. These factors made men much better placed to set up businesses than women.

In spite of very constrained business opportunities for women in the 1970s, Anita turned her small venture into a highly profitable global enterprise. She had many remarkable achievements as a businesswoman and the founder and head of The Body Shop, as an active campaigner for many causes, for example against animal testing, in favour of human rights and the environment, and as a philanthropist and a charity patroness.

The keys to her success were her energy, her mother’s teaching of diligence and self-help, and perhaps above all, her egalitarian spirit. Her strong marital ties with her husband Gordon, who shared the same business ethics and values, played a strong part. They both had close working collaboration with other employees of The Body Shop. She was a challenger, who wanted her company to serve the public good. Moreover she succeeded in showing that business and ethics could go hand-in-hand.

The most distinguished role that Anita Roddick rendered as a female entrepreneur was as an initiator. In 1976 she started to use natural ingredients such as aloe and coconut butter, which were unknown to customers at that time, to make her brand-new products. She also provided her customers with accurate information about the ingredients of each product, which was uncommon then. Her products contained no artificial preservatives and chemicals and were never tested on animals, while other cosmetics companies’ products were often tested on animals, contained many chemicals, and relied on presentational gimmicks such as ‘factor X’. Although other companies’ goods were sold in one size, hers came in different sizes to meet each customer’s requirements.

Anita challenged the ways in which her competitors, big cosmetics houses such as Estéee Lauder and Revlon, promoted their merchandise. In order to get public

attention for their products, they used expensive fancy bottles, and spent up to £5 million on launching single items. Their costly advertisements, especially on TV, made their goods high-priced and exaggerated their qualities, giving potential customers a false impression that the use of them would turn any woman into a gorgeous-looking model or an actress.

By contrast, The Body Shop’s products were affordable since Anita didn’t spend money on advertising and found alternative methods to promote her products. For example, free bottles of her product peppermint foot lotion were handed out to the London Marathon runners as they went past in the early 1980s. Many newspapers reported this, which gave her free publicity.\(^{85}\) Consequently, the foot lotion became one of The Body Shop’s best-sellers.

Anita built several core ethical principles into The Body Shop. She was opposed to animal testing, campaigned for that cause, and also fought for saving the whales. She spent money on posters for these causes, and put them up in all the stores of The Body Shop to advance the movements.\(^{86}\) The posters caught the eyes of her customers, who were often unaware of the campaigns, and many of them began to support her actions. Her new tactic of elevating campaigns through posters in her stores also had unexpected positive outcomes. Many journalists started to turn their attention to such causes, which enabled Anita to get free publicity for The Body Shop to increase the sale of her products. In addition, The Body Shop conducted large petition drives, and thanks to increasing media attention, in 1996 it collected four million signatures for the Against Animal Testing Campaign, which resulted in a total ban on such animal testing in the U.K. in 2003.\(^{87}\)

Nowadays the media and the general public frequently discuss topics such as recycling, global warming and measures to protect the environment. However, in the 1970s, these issues were hardly considered. Again, Anita was ahead of her times, and started to turn her attention to investigate ways to improve the environment by cutting waste and reducing energy consumption. In 1992 she commenced recycling campaigns at The Body Shop, which had never been done by other cosmetics companies before.\(^{88}\) Every shop put up posters to recommend the customers to

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\(^{85}\) Roddick, *Body & Soul*, pp. 91–92.


\(^{87}\) Ibid., p. 75; ‘Roddick to lobby over animal experiments’, *The Times* (28 February 1990), p. 24; Michael Hornby ‘Firms to stop testing cosmetics on animals’, *The Times* (7 November 1997), p. 10; ‘EU to ban animal-tested cosmetics’, CNN.com./WORLD, 15 January 2003.

recycle or refill their bottles.

Perhaps her greatest failing, in retrospect, was the sale of her company to L’Oréal one year before her death. She had urged that L’Oréal abide by her principles and policies with regard to the social and environmental issues that The Body Shop had pioneered, but many of her established customers did not trust L’Oréal to do that. Their loyalty in these circumstances tended to fade. Within a decade, L’Oréal sold The Body Shop to a Brazilian company called Natura, a company that believed in the same principles that Anita Roddick and her husband had espoused.\(^{89}\) So it could be argued that this was a commercial outcome that she would have agreed with.

Some of the limitations of The Body Shop were aired by Jon Entine in an article for *The Globe and Mail*:

> The financial problems that began for Body Shop in the 1990s were compounded by its cosmetic line. When it came to phasing out synthetic colourings and artificial fragrances, the onetime innovator now appeared no better than premium competitors such as Aveda, Lush and Origins. That Body Shop had lost its edge became clear when even women’s magazines, which had long lavished unqualified praise on the company, began taking potshots. In a 1995 article, *Women’s Wear Daily* quoted a consultant who sniffed that Body Shop products are “low-end...at a premium price.”\(^ {90}\)

There was some truth in such comment. Even so, Anita felt that women had distinct advantages over men in taking more care to ascertain what customers wanted, and to listen to their needs. This affected her selection of products. She was finely attuned to the needs and aspirations of women, and alive to environmental and gender concerns that appealed to many of them. She did not feel that attendance at the male-dominated business schools was especially advantageous, and she had no regrets at not attending one herself.\(^ {91}\)

When she started, there were relatively few salient female entrepreneurs. Yet now, this has clearly changed radically, with a plethora of conspicuous examples obvious to everybody. Jacqueline Gold, CEO of Ann Summers, Dessislava Bell, the founder of Zaggora Hotpants, and Maria Hatzistefanis, the founder of the skincare group Rodial, are among the top fifty British female entrepreneurs. The Cherie Blair Foundation for Women, founded in 2003 by Cherie, the wife of former prime minister Tony Blair, founded in 2003 by Cherie, the wife of former prime minister Tony Blair,

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has been providing training and mentoring for women who want to start and develop successful businesses. The foundation also ‘opens doors to finance, markets and networks’, and presses for changes that break down the barriers that female entrepreneurs face. Moreover it helps more women discover the power of being an entrepreneur.

Anita Roddick’s example has played a leading role in helping to bring feminism into the commercial sector, giving feminism a much more entrepreneurial nature, defining business ethics for women, demonstrating significant ways in which women can succeed in capitalism and providing a global example of a successful British entrepreneurial woman that has inspired many others in countries worldwide. These contributions have been her greatest and most lasting achievement and legacy. Although her name has not been well known in Japan, unfortunately, Anita Roddick is certainly an extremely important figure worthy of study for Japanese women who are determined to go into business. They need to learn valuable lessons from her achievements and to follow in her footsteps, challenging a male-dominated business world and ushering in a new era, which will enable more women to fulfil their business potential. Anita Roddick’s vision and originality can be an inspiration for us all.

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