

Shopping Centres and Shopping Patterns in Two African Townships of Greater Salisbury*

M. A. H. Smout

*Department of Geography, University of
Rhodesia, Salisbury.*

The two major African townships of Greater Salisbury, Harari and Highfields, formed the subject for a study of shopping centres and shopping patterns during July and August 1969. The study, complementary to other research being conducted by the author at the time,¹ had two main aims: firstly, to provide an explanatory description of retail facilities available in the townships, and secondly, to determine the extent to which their populations rely on the centre of Salisbury for retail purchases. Restrictions of time and cost made a survey of all ten African townships that serve greater Salisbury impossible, but the two chosen for study are the largest and form good representative examples.

At their outset, the African townships evolved essentially as residential areas for Africans employed within Salisbury and its suburbs. More recent development has aimed at making the townships into self-contained units, except in employment, with their own schools, social services, recreational facilities and commercial areas. Although some light industrial sites are provided in the townships, few are developed, so that the townships provide minimal employment and remain little more than dormitory towns. The vast majority of their working populations thus travel daily between the townships and the European areas of Salisbury, and so have opportunities to make purchases in both areas.

*Received for publication, December, 1971.

Harari (population 58 010; area 509 ha)² is owned and administered by the Salisbury Municipality, contains nearly seven thousand households and is situated two miles south of the city centre. It possesses one main commercial centre, Musika, and seven minor clusters of shops located in or adjacent to the residential neighbourhoods. Being close to the main commercial core of Salisbury, Harari contrasts with the other townships which are all further removed; the other township chosen for study, Highfields, is six miles from the city centre, and thus provides markedly different shopping patterns. Highfields is administered by the Rhodesian Government and is statistically similar to Harari (population 52 560; area 777 ha; 7 144 households).² It is situated to the south west of the city centre near Salisbury's main areas of industrial development. Highfields possesses one main commercial centre and two subsidiary centres in residential neighbourhoods.

The shopping centres in Harari and Highfields provide a similar range of facilities to those in centres of comparable size in the non-African residential areas, but differ markedly in aspect. Few buildings of more than one storey occur in the township shopping centres and whilst planning regulations stipulate minimum building values there is little control over the layout and appearance of premises. Shop buildings are often sub-divided so as to provide as many rent-

payers as possible, resulting in premises which are too small to permit efficient business operations. Building lines vary and consequently pedestrian accesses are unpaved and irregular in shape. Little attempt is made to keep shops or their surrounds looking tidy. The shopping centres are generally shoddy in appearance and reflect clearly the haphazard manner in which development has taken place. Of the eight shopping centres in Harari, Musika the most central and largest has a range of 21 retail and service functions with a total of 53 such units. The seven neighbourhood centres possess on average eight different functions and the average total number of functional units is eighteen. By contrast, the facilities in Highfields are more concentrated in one centre. The main Machipisa shopping centre provides a range of thirty different service and retail functions with a total of 207 units. Both of the neighbourhood centres are of relatively minor importance and together accommodate only 63 retail and service units.

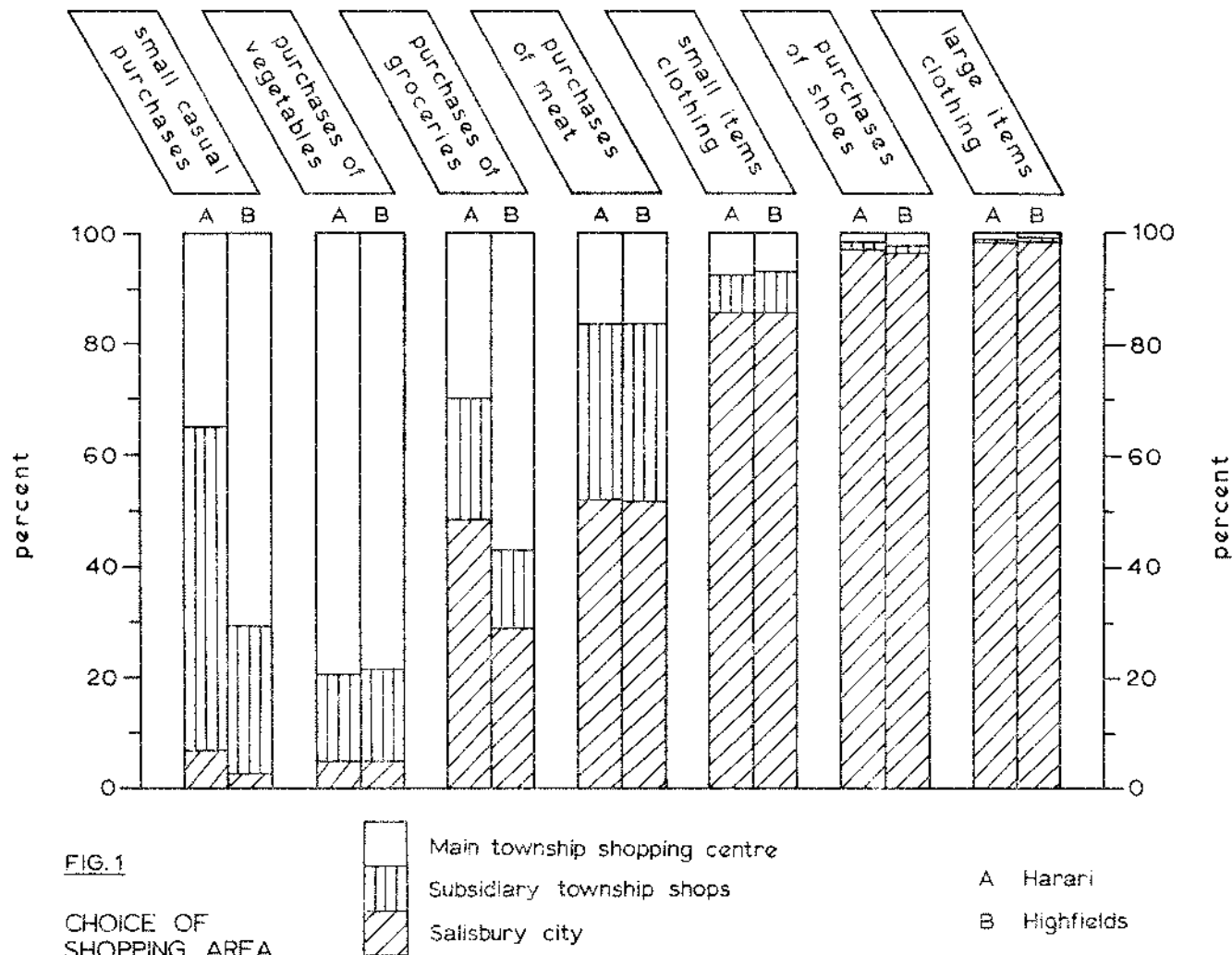
The most common retail premises in the township shopping centres are butchers, general food shops and general dealers. The small range of low-cost goods in these shops is a reflection of the limited purchasing power of the residents. Many of the general dealers' stores are multi-functional units although they operate under a single licence. These shops often house watch-repairers or clothes-menders seated behind small tables in the shop who offer their services on the 'while you wait' basis. A small portion of the shop may accommodate a hairdresser and often minor car repairs are attempted in a backyard. Other common retail premises are those selling clothes, bicycles, shoes and secondhand goods. Services provided normally include dry-cleaning depots, hairdressers, photographers and those offering repairs to shoes, radios and watches. The relatively high proportion of maintenance services indicates the low financial status of township residents who can seldom afford new material possessions of high value.

The survey of shopping patterns aimed at determining the degree of use of township shops for a range of purchases. It was assumed at the outset that the higher the price of an article and hence the lower the frequency of purchase, the greater the likelihood of purchases being made in the city centre. Further, as neighbourhood shopping centres exist in the townships, it was necessary to assess the proportion of the total trade generated by the townships, conducted in such

centres. It is commonly recognised that the type of information desired here is best obtained by personal interviews conducted on the 'door to door' basis. However, practical problems, notably, the small daytime population in the townships, a lack of trained interviewers and of permission for them to work in Harari, prevented this approach. It was also desirable for purposes of comparison that the two shopping studies be carried out in the same way and consequently a questionnaire survey conducted through the post was adopted. After consideration of the number of households in each township, the size of the sample desired and problems of time and cost it was decided to deliver 2 000 questionnaires in each township (see Appendix). Each envelope contained the question sheet itself, a covering letter explaining the purposes of the survey and requesting co-operation, and a stamped addressed envelope for the return of completed questionnaires. In order to reduce postage costs and obtain an even areal sampling spread the questionnaires were delivered by hand by the respective staffs of the two township authorities. Deliveries commenced on 16 July 1969, and the first replies were received on 18 July. By mid-August replies had dwindled to one or two a day and the survey was closed for analysis on 21 August.

The questionnaire was divided into two parts. Part 1 asked residents to indicate where they bought the most goods for a range of seven types of purchases. The three shopping areas listed were the main commercial core of Salisbury, Musika in Harari (or Machipisa in Highfields) and other shops in the townships. It was not possible to distinguish between the various neighbourhood shopping centres because there is no one nomenclature to identify each. Part 2, framed after preliminary discussions with township residents, posed a series of questions about the range of goods and shops available, prices of goods, where most money is spent and areas most preferred for shopping. Comments were invited on the shops and shop assistants together with suggestions for additions to the shopping centres. Questions were phrased so as to present as little difficulty as possible to those residents whose command of English was weak.*

* The use of an African language for the questionnaires was ruled out as there is no one common language in the townships and many residents cannot read or write their natural language.



An analysis of returned questionnaires provided the following figures:

	<i>Harari</i>	<i>Highfields</i>
Final return	426	626
Percentage return	21,3	31,3
Spoilt papers	23	26
Working total	403	600

A small minority of the sample population did not read or understand the questionnaires and these were recorded as spoilt papers and discarded. The satisfactorily completed questionnaires represent 5,7 and 8,4 per cent samples of the households of Harari and Highfields respectively. No reasonable explanation can be offered for the ten per cent higher return of questionnaires from Highfields.

The proportions of the township sample populations choosing each shopping area for the range of purchases included in Part I of the questionnaire are shown in Fig. 1.

In the case of small casual purchases 93,0 and 97,3 per cent of Harari and Highfields residents respectively shop in the townships. The small number who do make such purchases in the city centre probably pass conveniently close to suitable shops in Salisbury when returning from work. The lesser use of city centre shops by residents of Highfields is due to the fact that more are employed in the nearby industrial sites and so do not travel to work via the city centre. Of those who make their small casual purchases in Highfields 72,7 per cent patronize the main commercial centre of the township, whilst in Harari the proportion drops to 38,4 per cent. This difference relates to the greater provision of neighbourhood shops in Harari than in Highfields and is to be expected when such minor purchases as a loaf of bread or pint of milk are involved. No advantage is gained in travelling further than the nearest shop. Owing to the positions of the two neighbourhood centres in Highfields some half of the residents have no alternative to shopping in the main Machipisa centre. Not surprisingly a number of requests were voiced on returned questionnaires for the establishment of new shopping centres in the residential areas of Highfields furthest from the Machipisa centre.

Replies to the question on the purchase of vegetables show that 79,9 per cent of Harari residents chose Musika and a further 15,4 per cent the neighbourhood shops. Thus a total of 95,3 per cent of such purchases are made within the township. The corresponding figures for High-

fields are 78,5 and 16,8 per cent, which give an identical total. This high degree of dependence on the townships for purchases of vegetables results from three major factors. Firstly, African culture and tradition includes the consumption of a number of vegetables not normally available in the city centre. Secondly, a significant proportion of the vegetables on sale in Harari is grown by the residents either on their own plots in the township or in nearby rural areas. Thus the source of supply is either in the township or focused on it. Thirdly, as most vegetables are home grown near the market the quality is high and prices are considerably lower than those for similar items in the city centre.

Shopping for groceries shows a markedly different pattern with 48,1 per cent of Harari residents and 28,8 per cent of Highfields residents making their purchases in the city centre. The difference in these proportions reflects the distances of the two townships from the city centre and the relative costs of reaching the latter. Comments on returned questionnaires suggest that the greater range of groceries, lower prices and opportunities for comparative shopping provided by the large supermarkets in central Salisbury are major attractions. Of those who shop for groceries in the townships 58,5 per cent in Harari and 80,3 per cent in Highfields patronise their respective main centres. In each case the major centre possesses a far wider range of goods and shops than the smaller neighbourhood shopping centres. In Harari, meat purchases are divided almost equally between the township and the city centre whilst in Highfields 86,2 per cent of such purchases are made in the township. In general, the African customers prefer to patronize butchers' shops near to their homes as meat purchases are made frequently if not daily because of storage problems. Thus within Harari 66 per cent of purchases are made in the neighbourhood centres, all of which possess butchers' shops comparable to those at Musika. By contrast the minor centres in Highfields gain only 13,7 per cent of the total meat purchases although the proportion of such purchases made in the township is higher than that for Harari because of lesser contact with the city centre.

The last three questions on Part I of the questionnaire related to small items of clothing, shoes and major items of clothing; an hierarchy of purchases arranged in order of ascending prices. The proportions of such purchases made by Harari residents in the city centre were 85,6;

96,5; and 98,5 per cent respectively, while the corresponding figures for Highfields were 67,0; 94,3; and 96,6 per cent. In both townships such purchases are largely restricted to the main shopping centres because of a lack of suitable retail outlets in the neighbourhood centres. As the Machipisa centre in Highfields possesses a wider range of clothing shops than the Musika centre in Harari the former township gains a greater proportion of trade in minor clothing items. In general terms the proportions of each type of purchase made in the townships exhibits a similar pattern, with Highfields losing less trade to the city centre than Harari owing to the former's greater distance from the city.

Table I
Replies to Part 2 of the Questionnaire

QUESTION	Harari		Highfields	
	% Yes	% No	% YES	% NO
1. Is the range of goods in township shops sufficient?	30,0	70,0	35,8	64,2
2. Is the range of shops in township sufficient?	25,6	74,4	41,8	58,2
3. Have you suggestions for new shops in township?	85,4	14,6	84,7	15,3
4. Are prices in township shops higher than in City Centre.	81,7	18,3	74,0	26,0
5. Where do you prefer to shop? In township or City Centre?	83,1	City Centre	69,0	City Centre
6. Where do you spend the most money? In township or City Centre?	72,5	City Centre	56,2	City Centre
7. Have you comments to make on township shops or their shop assistants?	60,0	40,0	51,7	48,3

Part 2 of the questionnaire was intended to elucidate the overall pattern of shopping and determine whether there were any common desires for further facilities in the township shopping centres. In reply to the question asking whether the range of goods in the township shops is adequate some two-thirds of the answers were in the negative (see Table I). Comments on this aspect of shopping served further to confirm this situation. The African shopkeepers are seriously undercapitalised with the result that the range of goods carried is extremely limited and choice varies little from shop to shop. The range of shops in the townships was stated to be inadequate

by a majority of residents in both cases although the slightly better facilities in Highfields are reflected in the smaller proportion of Highfields residents criticising this aspect of shopping. When invited to make suggestions for future developments a number of facilities were mentioned frequently. There is a strong demand for a well stocked chemist's shop with a qualified pharmacist in attendance. At present a few shops exist that sell patent medicines but neither township has any provision for a doctor's prescription to be made up. The second most popular request is for a large modern supermarket operating on the self-service principle. Many replies suggest that there are too many small shops (general food shops total 44 in Harari and 40 in Highfields) with a restricted range of goods. Inherent in the desire for a supermarket are the benefits which accrue from a wide range of low price goods under one roof where customers may easily compare items before a choice is made.

Further requests include a good bookshop-stationer and an hotel. Both townships certainly lack the former and only the most rudimentary items of stationery can be purchased in a few of the general dealers' stores. Children in need of school-books must necessarily visit the city centre for their requirements. The desire for an hotel is easily understood for apart from the beer-gardens there is no facility for social meetings and entertainment in premises with a liquor licence. There is also a need for hotel accommodation and a restaurant providing simple meals at reasonable prices. There are nine 'eating-houses' in Harari and six in Highfields at the present, but these are mostly small and cramped, offer little variety of food and are generally unattractive in appearance. Other requests for specialist shops include an electrical and/or hardware shop, a bakery and confectioner and one selling car spares. The last request may be unrealistic, but the others are not. A request for increased banking services was frequently voiced. Both townships possess two small bank branches (not in the main shopping centre in Harari), but these are insufficient for a population of some 50 000 persons in each township.

A high proportion of the sample populations stated that they considered the prices of goods in the townships to be higher than prices in the city centre. In both instances a majority expressed a preference for shopping in the city, 83,1 and 69,0 per cent for Harari and Highfields respectively, while some twelve per cent in each case declared

that they spent most money in the city. Numerous examples were cited in the returned questionnaires of goods being more expensive in the township; in many cases some fifty per cent higher than in the city. It would appear that the African traders with small premises, little capital and low stocks attempt to increase their profits by raising prices. The concept of low profit margins, high turnover and increased overall profits is certainly not evident. As a result, the bulk of the population finds it worthwhile to shop in central Salisbury, notwithstanding costs of transport and time. A number of residents stated that prices in the townships for a particular article are not always fixed and that the more prosperous looking the customer, the higher the price; and children often appear to be victims of sudden price rises.

The preference expressed for shopping in the city is closely related to the generally lower prices in this area and also the greater range and better quality of goods available. This is particularly true of clothing. Both sample populations expressed severe criticism of the quality of goods available in the township shops. Whilst the cheapest shirt might be bought in the township, the quality is often very low and customers are obviously aware that the cheapest goods do not necessarily represent the best value for money. The wide range of specialist shops and attractively displayed goods in the city centre, along with the desire 'to see and be seen' further explain the preference for shopping in the city. Many of the requests for new shops were for those selling articles such as shoes and clothing which are already available in the townships; and this is therefore further evidence of the desire for specialist shops selling articles of high quality. Comments on shops and shop assistants were often highly critical. Shops are criticised for being too small and cramped with goods piled high on shelves suspended from walls and ceilings and poorly displayed. Shop assistants are noted for their lack of training and knowledge of goods on the premises. A number of questionnaires refer to unhygienic handling of foodstuffs by shop-assistants and suggest that the township authorities institute regular inspections of food shops.

The populations of Harari and Highfields depend to a very large extent on the shopping facilities provided by the city centre of Salisbury. Most of the purchases made in the townships are for small, low cost items and as the cost of goods

increases so a greater proportion of the population shops in the city centre (see Fig. 1). Of the Harari sample population 72.5 per cent states that it spends the most money in the city and half of the food purchases and the bulk of the clothing purchases are made outside the township. In consequence the African traders in Harari would appear to gain only a small proportion of the total trade emanating from the township. A situation which results from small, crowded, under-capitalised shops owned by inexperienced traders and staffed by untrained personnel. Highfields is in a similar situation although it loses less trade, partly because it is farther away from the city centre, and partly because it enjoys retail and service facilities somewhat superior to those in Harari. Approximately three-quarters of the food purchases of Highfields residents are made in the township, but more major purchases are made in the city centre where a majority of the sample population claims to spend the most money.

Whilst the object of this exercise was to survey the situation as it stands, suggestions for improving shopping facilities in the townships would seem logical in a conclusion. Any improvement in the commercial and shopping facilities in the townships would enable the African traders there to gain a greater proportion of the total trade generated within the townships, lower the transport costs of each family and ease the strain on an already crowded transport system. The low capital base from which most of the African traders start would appear to be the root of the problem. Many traders are obliged to sink most of their capital into the erection of trading premises, so that little remains to acquire adequate stocks and run an efficient business. Shops could be improved in size, appearance and functional efficiency if those running them were able to use their finances in operating a business rather than building premises. The provision by township authorities of modern spacious business premises which could be rented out to traders might greatly improve shopping facilities. Township authorities would then be able to exert a greater influence on the use of commercial stands, general appearance and efficiency, whilst the African traders could better utilise their capital in operating a more efficient business. Lower prices and more competition between shops would probably result in increased use of the township shops providing benefits for both the traders and residents of the township alike.

APPENDIX

Sample Questionnaire

Harari Shopping Survey

PART 1

Where do you buy the following types of goods?
Please place an 'X' in one column for each question to show where you buy the most goods.

Type of Purchase	Musika Shopping- Centre in Harari	Other Shops in Harari	The Main Shopping Area in Salisbury
1. Small purchases of MILK, BREAD or SUGAR			
2. Main purchases of VEGETABLES			
3. Main purchases of GROCERIES			
4. Main purchases of MEAT			
5. Small items of CLOTHING such as socks			
6. Purchases of SHOES			
7. BIG items of CLOTHING such as men's trousers or women's dresses			

PART 2

Please answer the following questions by *crossing out the wrong answer*:

1. Do the shops in your township have enough different kinds of goods? YES/NO
2. Are there enough kinds of shops? YES/NO
3. What other kinds of shops would you like to see in the township?
4. Are the prices in the township shops higher than in the centre of Salisbury? YES/NO
5. Where do you prefer to shop? HARARI/SALISBURY CITY? Say why
6. Where do you spend the most money? In HARARI/SALISBURY CITY SHOPS?
7. Is there anything you would like to say about the shops in Harari, or about the shop assistants? If so, please write your comments on the back of this sheet.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The survey was made possible by a grant from the Research Board of the University of Rhodesia. The assistance of officials in both Harari and Highfields Townships is also gratefully recorded.

REFERENCES

1. The present study forms part of a wider investigation into service centres in Greater Salisbury. See: SMOUT, M. A. H. 1970 A Functional Classification of Shopping Centres in Greater Salisbury. *Rhod. Sci. News*, 4, 126-9.
2. 1970 Suburban Shopping Patterns in Greater Salisbury. *Proc. geogr. Ass. Rhodesia*, 3, 41-9.
3. Population figures are given in RHODESIA 1969, 1969 Population Censuses: Geographical Distribution (PART I: Preliminary Results of the 1969 Census of Population). Salisbury, Central Statistical Office, p.4. Data on areas and households were supplied by the Township Authorities at the time of survey.

