Pedro Porfirio Guimarães

The prospective impact of new shopping centres on the retail structure of Braga

Bulletin of Geography. Socio-Economic Series nr 25, 167-180

2014

Bulletin of Geography. Socio–economic Series No. 25 (2014): 167–180

ISSN 1732–4254 quarterly

BULLETIN OF GEOGRAPHY. SOCIO–ECONOMIC SERIES
journal homepages:
http://www.bulletinofgeography.umk.pl/
http://wydawnictwoumk.pl/czasopisma/index.php/BGSS/index
http://www.degruyter.com/view/j/bog

The prospective impact of new shopping centres on the retail structure of Braga

Pedro Porfirio Guimarães[CDFMR]

Centre for Geographical Studies – Lisbon University, Edifício da Faculdade de Letras, Alameda da Universidade, 1600-214 Lisbon, Portugal; phone: + 351 217 940 218, 217 965 469, fax: +351 217 938 690; e-mail: pedroguimaraes@campus.ul.pt

How to cite:
Porfirio Guimarães, P., 2014: The prospective impact of new shopping centres on the retail structure of Braga. In: Szymańska, D. and Środa-Murawska, S., editors, *Bulletin of Geography. Socio-economic Series,* No. 25, Toruń: Nicolaus Copernicus University Press, pp. 167–180. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/BGSS.2014.037

Abstract. Following the application for two new shopping centres in the city of Braga, a medium-size city located in the North region of Portugal, the purpose of this paper is to look for evidence of the possible impacts of those commercial structures on the retail sector of Braga. An overview of the literature allows us to conclude the strong relation between retail and cities and their town centres. Recently, the process of suburbanization and the transformation in the retail sector put into question the role of those areas by transferring the consumption from town centres and traditional retail formats to new structures located on the periphery. 400 questionnaires were given to consumers to analyse the consumption habits and the way they might change with the possible arrival of two new shopping centres. We have come to the conclusion that these commercial structures are very much present in the consumption habits and in the commercial environment of consumers. They associate characteristics like quality, animation, security, cleanness, time saving, product diversity, comfort, conviviality and parking facilities with that retail format. With the implantation of new shopping centres it is expected that the existent retail sector will undergo a decrease in its importance as a shopping destination. The data from the questionnaires allow us to conclude that it is not only the already existent shopping centres that will suffer but also the other retail formats. Nevertheless, a significant number of respondents do not think of transferring the shopping they already do to the new retail structures.

Article details:
Received: 06 November 2013
Revised: 04 March 2014
Accepted: 26 May 2014

Key words:
Portugal,
shopping centres,
town centres,
retail structure,
consumption habits.

Contents:

1. Introduction

Cities have evolved over time for different reasons. In the last decades, transformations in cities and in the retail sector have been provoking deep changes in the hierarchical structure of cities. Among other causes of change, the dissemination of new retail formats in peripheral locations has diminished the vitality and viability of town centres. These areas, especially historic centres, concentrated a diverse set of functions, endowing this location with a centrality not seen in other areas. In this way, traditionally, cities and their main centre were characterized by their centrality. Related to this and tied to the fate of cities, retail has always maintained a privileged place in the town centre (Beaujeu-Garnier, 1980: 209).

However, the claim that cities have one centrality, their historic centre, with relevant social, cultural and economic functions, is no longer applicable in the majority of cases. Cities have witnessed a profound change in their shape and boundaries with strong implications on their monocentric structure. In the last decades of the last century we saw profound changes that led to increased fragmentation of the spatial organization (Barata-Salgueiro, 2001).

Barata-Salgueiro (2001) refers to the phenomenon of spatial fragmentation, of the construction of polycentric metropolises, exemplifying how the polarities created by the opening of a new shopping centre "Amoreiras", in 1985, on the boundaries of Lisbon had a direct relation to the loss of attractiveness of the historic town centre of that city.

Generally, it can be said that the problems of inner cities have a structural nature. They are the result of the decentralization of different sets of functions like housing, retail, services and entertainment (Balsas, 1999). According to Chico (2008), other elements of urban character have contributed to the degradation of the quality of the historic town centre. The author highlights the massive use of the private car, facilitating access to housing on the outskirts of cities; the loss of multi-functionality, which intensified the desertification of these areas after a certain hour of the day; degradation of the buildings; and high rents. Despite being more than a shopping area, if a town centre loses is attractiveness as a centre of retail, it can hardly survive as a centre in the wider sense. Retail is clearly its essential component (Balsas, 1999: 51).

Barata-Salgueiro (1992: 298), in the same sense claims that cities are fundamentally tertiary centres. This author argues that the relation between retail and urban or rural spaces derives from the properties of modelling space for these activities which have been systematized in Christaller's famous Central Place Theory. The concepts of centrality and concentration are especially important due to their relevance, i.e., they were once the main advantage of town centres and are now currently being worked out in detail and effectively by new shopping centres. These can, through the good accessibility they possess, constitute themselves as new centralities. In the same sense Pereira (1999: 97) argues that the structure of urban-scale retail organization loses its monocentric character and, alongside the traditional town centre, arise recent peripheral concentrations.

Although this is a relatively recent phenomenon in Portugal, Beaujeu-Garnier (1980: 213), some decades ago stated that the retail sector of the town centre was confronted, more or less violently, with modern peripheral deployments. The crisis of town centres is already recognized. The need for recovery is also consensual in the political agenda. The implantation of diverse measures can be seen in several national contexts. The pedestrianization of high streets, the application of management principles in town centres and the adoption of restrictive measures (regarding the opening of new retail structures in peripheral areas) are among some of the most common.

In the present context, shopping centres occupy a central role in the commercial environment of our cities. Having undergone great development in recent decades, it is possible to verify that the expansion of shopping centres has been accompanied by a steady improvement in the variety of shapes, models and deployment locations.

According to Beaujeu-Garnier (1980), the first planned shopping centre with a peripheral location appeared in 1923, near Kansas City: The Country Club Plaza. In the Portuguese context, shopping centres slowly appeared in the 1970s. The dissemination on a large scale happened during the 1990s and subsequently throughout the new century.

Based on Jayne (2006), Cachinho (2006:43) assumes that success of modern shopping centres derives from the fact that they epitomize suburban values and can be easily replicated and built anywhere in the city to meet the needs and desires of middle class consumers. Thus it creates an important relationship between cities, their commercial spaces and their population, leading Cachinho (2006: 48) to admit that the current city is above all a centre of consumption and entertainment, organized around the commercial areas.

Generally we may say that the emergence of new shopping centres on the outskirts of cities had much influence on the decline of urban centres and on the retail outlets located there (Balsas, 2001:7). We can assume that some of these impacts were due to non-recognition of the retail sector as relevant, both to the local economy and to the vitality of the areas where it is located. Williams (1997:205) said this sector was seen as having a small relevance in the economic sector. This lack of recognition may, initially, have facilitated the spread of shopping centres in peripheral areas. It was with the subsequent appearance of the first impacts that the retail sector increased its importance.

There is some literature about the impacts of the new shopping centres on the existing retail structure, some of these regarding the British context. A study by Howard and Davies (1993) demonstrated that the opening of the Metro shopping centre in the northeast of England, during the 80s, caused significant impacts, not only in the traditional city centre but also in other smaller shopping centres. According to Whysall (1995: 6) the implementation of a superstore near the town centre of Nottingham, in the 1990s, withdrew consumers from the pre-existent retail structure of the town centre. In Southampton, the opening of a shopping centre at the beginning of the new millennium did not provoke the negative effects that were somehow expected. Possibly, because it was implemented in the town centre, it might even have increased the footfall in the area (Lowe, 2005:663).

Guy (2007:133) also admits the negative impacts of peripheral shopping centres in the functional structure of city centres. According to this author the entry of some stores to the new shopping centre will lead to an increase in the number of vacant shop units in the town centre, worsening the environment of this area.

In the Portuguese national context, we can highlight the studies conducted by Cachinho (2005) and Barata-Salgueiro (2007), for assessing the impacts of new shopping centres in the cities of Leiria and Évora and the study by Lopes (2004), which assesses the impacts of the implementation of a new commercial structure to the town centre of Almada. The first study focused on evaluating the feasibility of implementing new shopping centres of significant size in the city of Leiria (Cachinho, 2005: 5), through the analysis of three commercial projects, coming to the conclusion that the impacts of large shopping centres are very diverse and affects different business. However, these impacts could be mitigated if shopping centres were located in the city center. (Cachinho, 2005:402). The second study concluded that the implementation of a regional shopping centre would be beneficial to the city of Évora. As there was no large shopping centre in that city, the opening of one would cause a decrease in the flow of consumers that moved to large shopping centres located in other cities (Barata-Salgueiro, 2007:20). In the case of the study initiated by Lopes, his research focused on understanding the impacts caused by the opening of a new shopping centre, in this case the Almada Forum. This research, unlike the first, was held after the opening of the shopping centre. "With regard to the impact of the opening of Almada Forum on the retail sector of the town centre, it can be said that this was not globally as negative as some retailers predicted and was felt differently by different typologies of retail" (Lopes, 2004:124).

Like, for instance, superstores in the UK and hypermarkets in France and Belgium it was not shopping centres that first provoked impacts on the retail structure of Portuguese town centres. Focusing in Braga, a study sponsored by Braga Chamber of Commerce concluded that the deployment of the first hypermarkets in that city caused some negative impacts on the retail sector of the town centre and on sales and profit margins, with over 80% of respondents having said they found a decrease in the number of customers. These impacts were not, however, homogeneous by different types of typologies, being stronger on grocery stores and on those that sold appliances. Some of the aspects mentioned as causes of this situation relate to some of the advantages of shopping centres, i.e., "prices, variety of products, promotions, parking facilities ..." (Farhangmehr, 1996: 42). The same study raises some doubts as to other aspects that might have provoked impacts. In fact, although the emergence of hypermarkets has, by itself, led to changes in the volume of sales, the opening hours to the public emerged as an important aspect. Respondents admitted that the opening of stores on Saturday afternoon, at lunchtime and between 19h and 20h30 during weekdays is what most suits their time available for shopping. However, it was determined that the outlets located in town centres were closed at this time. In another area of the city, two thirds of retailers, when this study was conducted, admitted that the existence of training was very important. However only 2.6% of retailers provided training for their employees. In the cases where training was given, most of the time it was given by the owner / manager without resorting to external and specialized companies.

According to Observatório do comércio (2002:88), this process began after the Second World War with suburbanization and rapid expansion of new retail formats – hypermarkets, shopping centres, discount stores and convenience stores – on the outskirts of the main city centre. Eventually this contributed to the abandoning of inner cities, both by the population and by economic investors (Observatório do comércio, 2002:88). Due to the dimensions of the new retail agglomeration, they eventually constitute themselves as alternative commercial poles to the pre-existent town centre (Fernandes, Cachinho and Ribeiro, 2002).

The legislative framework in Portugal, although restrictive, does not prevent the opening of new shopping centres. The opening of new commercial structures is seen as positive, mainly because of increasing the commercial offer of the city and increasing the number of jobs. In another context, even considering that the impacts will be negative for the functional structure of the city, the municipal officials prefer to approve the implementation of new shopping centres, because in case of refusal, they may come to be located in another adjacent municipality, keeping the negative impacts.

2. Material and research methods

Braga is a historic medium-sized city located in the North region of Portugal. It is usually known as the "capital of retail" due to a wide pedestrian area in the town centre, which led to an approach from the Chamber of Commerce with a marketing campaign recognizing the area as an "open air shopping centre".

It is a growing city, in terms of population (Table 1), mostly due to its dynamic university, which attracts a huge number of young students to the city every year. A large number of these eventually stay in the city after graduation, explaining the high rates of population increase that we see through the data from the national census of 1991, 2001 and 2011.

Table 1. Population of Braga municipality, in 1991, 2001 and 2011

Area	Year			Variation (%)		
	1991	2001	2011	1991 - 2001	2001-2011	1991 - 2011
Portugal	9,867,147	10,356,117	10,561,614	5	2	7
Braga	141,256	164,192	181,474	16.2	10.5	28.5

Source: Statistics Portugal (www.ine.pt, accessed on July, 2013)

There are two significant shopping centres, one of which, Braga Parque, the most important of the two, with almost 50,000m[2] of gross leasable area (GLA), is located just on the outskirts of the town centre but clearly in the city area.

Recently two different promoters showed interest in building two shopping centres. Both of the projects indicated that the location would be outside what we might consider the urban area, although it would still be located in the municipality, close to one another, in a new area of expansion of the city.

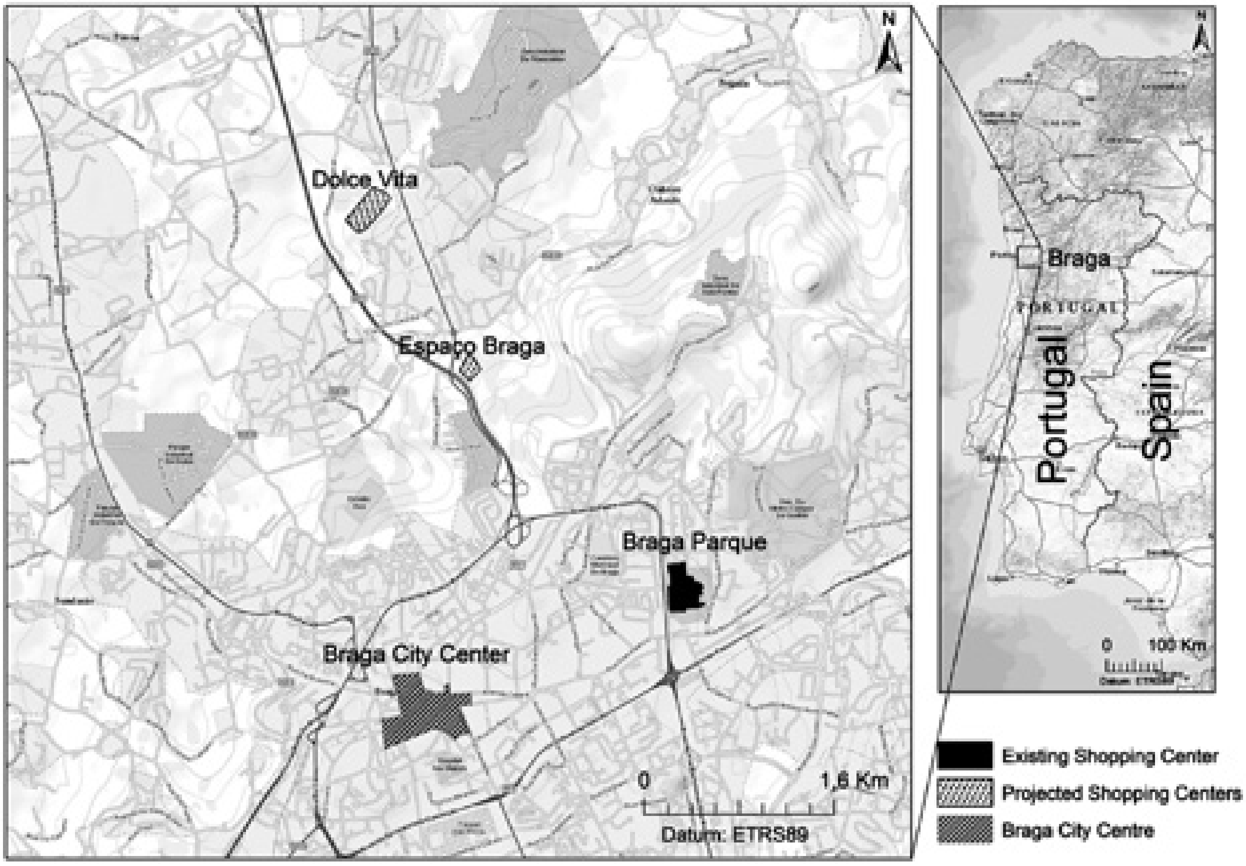

Fig. 1. Retail concentrations in Braga

Source: Cartography developed by the author (2014)

The city centre shown on the map is the main centre of Braga, which is still characterized by an evident concentration of the retail sector and some public services in this area.

Taking these projects into consideration, a series of questionnaires was undertaken by the author, in order to establish what the possible impacts of the shopping centres on the pre-existent retail structure of the city could be.

The material presented in this paper began to be collected during 2009. A series of 400 questionnaires filled in by consumers was collected. The survey was conducted personally by the author in several streets in the town centre, at different hours of the day, in order to diversify the respondents' profile.

3. Retail formats and consumer perception

In the following pages will be presented some of the data collected through the questionnaires mentioned above. They were divided according to several topics.

In Figure 2 we present the results of the association between a given characteristic with a retail format. The choice of answer was predetermined between: (i) outlets located in the town centre; (ii) shopping centres; (iii) supermarkets; (iv) retail parks; (v) proximity retail. With the pre-determination of the possible answers we intend sometimes to mix retail formats and retail locations because the evolution of the retail sector is providing a set of different combinations. In an extreme situation a shopping centre, according to its location, can be situated in a peripheral location or in a town centre location. In both cases shopping centres can perform as a proximity retail structure, serving the part of the population that is no longer concentrated in the compact city but dispersed across the policentric city. However, the respondents were given the free choice of response because we consider that it is also relevant to analyse the subjectivity of their response.

3.1. Characteristics of different retail formats

Regarding "Quality", 39% of respondents associate this feature with shopping centres. This is probably a consequence of how these structures operate. Endowed with a management unit, this aspect allows them to work the common space, somehow making the consumer believe they are in an improved public space. The establishments of the town centre also received a significant percentage of answers (31%). The other formats achieved less significant values. Despite this, supermarkets still received 18% of the total of answers.

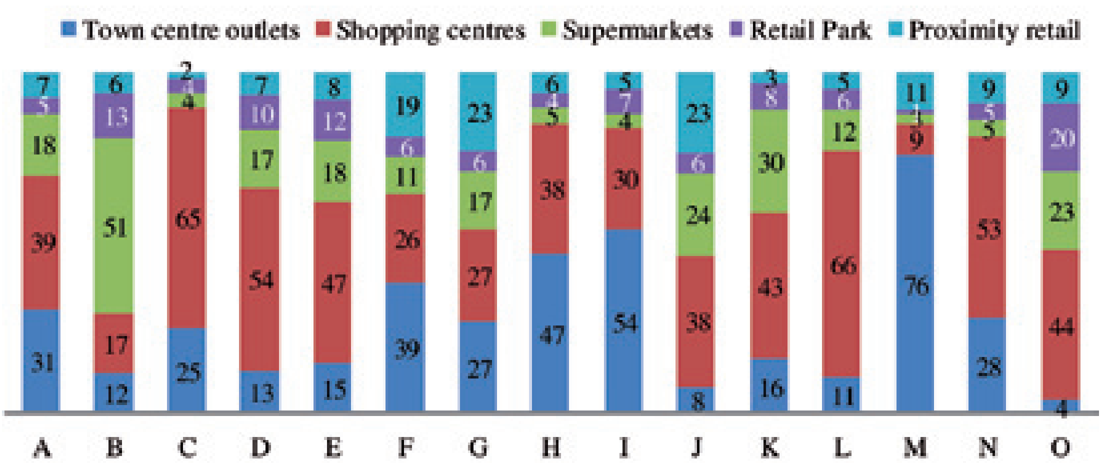

Fig. 2. Relation between different features and retail formats, as a percentage

Explanation: A – quality; B – price; C – animation; D – security; E – cleanness; F – personalized service; G – trust; H – environment / beauty of the place; I – leisure; J – time saving; K – product diversity; L – comfort; M – history; N – conviviality with friends / relatives; O – parking facilities

Source: Surveys conducted by the author on consumers in the city of Braga (2009)

With regard to "price", the situation changes, with supermarkets obtaining 51% of the preferences. This choice is probably due to the fact that in this format we included discount stores, whose "white label" product prices are cheaper than the branded products. Retail Parks have 13% of the choices, below shopping centres, with 17%, but above the outlets of the city centre, with 12%, and proximity retail with 6%.

The characteristic "animation" is the second one in which responses are more unanimous. The majority of consumers have the opinion that animation is felt more significantly in shopping centres. Again, as noted above and as will be inherent in other characteristics such as safety, comfort and cleanliness, the management unit enables joint efforts, facilitating the development of animation activities which would not be possible to undertake individually by retailers. This feature is less associated with the town centre. The lack of periodic animation that attracts new customers or, at least, helps maintain the existing ones, has been identified as one of the main shortcomings of town centres. The balance contrasting with the shopping centres is explained by the absence of a management unit.

Although Braga is recognized as a safe city, contrarily to what happens in other Portuguese cities, the respondents still associate "security" with shopping centres. What might help explain this result is the perception of safety that exists in those spaces due to the constant presence of private security.

Cleanness has clearly a more homogeneous distribution. Although shopping centres still receive 47% of responses, other types increased if compared with values obtained for the previous feature.

As for the "personalized service", its association with the town centre establishments is proven (39%). Thus, respondents considered that existing establishments in this area have a more personalized service than the ones which are located in the other retail formats. The proximity retail also achieves a high value with 19% of respondents considering that in these stores the service is more personalized, achieving almost the same value as shopping centres (26%).

The characteristic "trust" is one in which answers are distributed more evenly, with shopping centres and outlets of the town centre both obtaining 27%. The lowest value was achieved by Retail Parks, with only 6%. The value reached by the latter is explained by lack of knowledge of the population regarding this retail format, with a late arrival in Braga's commercial environment (2007). The 23% of responses that associate trust with proximity retail is explained by the nature of these establishments, in which both the retailer and the consumer know each other.

Regarding the "environment/beauty of the place", the town centre and the retail sector that exists in this area acquired prominence in the respondents' preferences with 47%. Shopping centres also achieve a high percentage of opinions, with 38%, leaving the remaining retail formats with residual values. The association of this variable with the city centre is somehow due to the historic identity that exists in this location, with the presence of monuments and historical sites. On the other hand, the association made with shopping centres is due to the fact that in many cases these spaces create artificial environments, trying to recreate the public space, through various hallways, "imitating" the city centre appearance.

Regarding the variable "leisure", the city centre is clearly the prime location. This distinctive look is due to the importance that this area still has among the local population. Unlike other cities, the city of Braga managed to hold this function in its historic centre. It managed to keep its commercial offer and increased its pedestrian area, maintaining its attractiveness in comparison to other areas. Only shopping centres achieved a significant percentage, with 30% of respondents preferring these spaces. The remaining concepts and locations fail to have a significant percentage of the total set of respondents. The link between trade and leisure, as analysed by Howard (2007), is significant. This author admits that shopping itself is a leisure activity. In this sense the relevance attributed to the city centre seems to indicate its relevance as a business destination.

Shopping centres are at the top regarding the preference of respondents when asked what is the most time saving retail format and location, with 38% of the responses obtained. This value is related, in part, with parking facilities and product diversity. Thus, the easiness of parking in these commercial spaces, endowed with a high number of parking spaces, free (in some cases) for their users and the diverse set of existing outlets grouped in an area, more or less extensive, allows the acquisition of a large range of different products in a short period of time.

Similar to the previous feature, a significant percentage of respondents (43%) is of the opinion that, with regard to the "product diversity", the shopping centres have greater relevance. The existing commercial mix is the result of the professional management of these commercial structures. The concern of their administrations in getting together in the same space diversified establishments is recognized by consumers, who can thus better organize their shopping. It is also worth noting the number of respondents who prefer supermarkets (30%), revealing the effort, undertaken in recent years, of those establishments to diversify the products they sell, managing to sell a larger list of products, which usually rely on food, clothing, household appliances, "DIY", toys, and stationery, among others. The town centre outlets only received 16% of preferences, which denounces the excessive specialization, mainly in personal items, especially clothing.

As for the "comfort", it was recognized by the respondents as the feature with the highest weight in shopping centres, compared to other commercial types. In fact, 66% of respondents reveal these spaces possess this quality. The construction of an artificial "public space" within a closed space, allows the construction of experiences, benefiting from the comfort of movement in an enclosed, air-conditioned area, with places to rest equipped with sofas, among other commodities. This set of features is mostly found in these commercial spaces. In the other formats and locations, by contrast, although they may possess one or another commodity, their assembly does not occur.

The factor "history" is one that brings greater consensus, with 76% of respondents opting for the establishments of the town centre. These areas possess a quality that arises from the agglomeration of monuments, historical references, architectural features and the whole history of the city that is difficult, if not impossible, to reproduce in other places of the city. The city centre of Braga does not escape from this trend, due to its historic relevance. Consumers recognize these characteristics, justifying the achieved value. Proximity retail, portraying a more recent history, emerges with 11% of opinions of respondents. Shopping centres, recent spaces, given the history of the city, still reach 9% of the total. Nonetheless, this value may be due to the attempt of the management unit of these structures to recreate the feeling of the historic city, within their physical space. One example can be the occasional photographic exhibitions appealing to this sentiment. Retail Parks, because of their very concept, by their nature and recent date of opening, obtained an insignificant value.

It was also possible with the questionnaire to find out that 53% of consumers choose to attend a shopping centre when they intend to spend time with friends or relatives. Following the recognition of shopping centres as places that are comfortable to attend, the option to socialize is a natural association.

In respect to "parking facilities", there is a more distinct division than for the above feature. Thus, shopping centres, due to the high number of parking spaces available, while maintaining the higher number of positive associations (44%), are followed more closely by supermarkets and retail parks. The 23% achieved by supermarkets is due to the fact that some of them have their own car park reserved for customers. Others are located in residential areas, where parking exists. In other cases, there are private parking facilities with which some supermarkets have agreements, allowing the customer to shop and receive a discount on the price to pay. The high value achieved by Retail Parks for this feature is justified by the parking spaces they possess. The value achieved by outlets of the town centre is a reflection of the low number of parking spaces in this area. Although, sometimes, there are some parking facilities, the price charged is too high and pushes consumers to other retail formats.

4. Consumption habits

Use of shopping centres, according to regularity

As we can see in Table 2, more than two thirds of respondents admit attending one or more shopping centres, at least once a week, and 30% of them attend these spaces several times per week.

Table 2. Frequency of use of shopping centres

Period	Total	
	%	Nº
Everyday	15.25	61
Several times per week	30	120
Once a week	27.75	111
Once every 15 days	11.25	45
Once a month	3.25	13
Occasionally	11.25	45
Never	1	4
Don't know / No answer	0.25	1
Total	100	400

Source: Surveys conducted by the author on consumers in the city of Braga (2009)

Another important fact to note is the number of respondents that state they do not attend shopping centres. Only 1% of respondents do not have the habit of visiting them. This value highlights the importance that these spaces have in today's commercial environment. If we consider that these spaces are somehow recent in Braga, we come to the conclusion that the use of these commercial spaces has replaced the use of another space of different retail format.

Use of shopping centres, according to days of use

The use of shopping centres which, as we have seen, is quite regular, is also distributed similarly throughout the week (Table 3). Although weekends are the prime preference, when a part of the population is in the weekly pause, the trip during weekdays both day and night is quite usual. Thus, from the point of view of existing commercial establishments within it, this attendance allows retailers to sell their products more evenly, diminishing the weaker periods during the week.

Table 3. Period of use of shopping centres

Period	Total	
	%	Total
During daytime on weekdays	40.3	161
Overnight on weekdays	34.8	139
Weekends	43.5	174
Don't know / No answer	2	8

Source: Surveys conducted by the author on consumers in the city of Braga (2009)

Use of shopping centres, according to municipality

Of all consumers surveyed, 94.5% admitted attending shopping centres in Braga and 24.5% attend centres in other cities (Table 4). Although, of course, there are consumers who attend both shopping centres in Braga and outside of the city, the existence of 24.5% of consumers who shop outside the city implies the attractiveness of other cities, with which the existing supply in Braga cannot compete. This percentage of consumers is not explained by their municipality of residence because, the majority of respondents that do not live in Braga have their housing in municipalities where there are no shopping centres, mostly small municipalities located north of Braga.

Of all respondents that shop in shopping centres located outside Braga (24.5%), 71.4% prefer to shop in those formats located in Porto, the second largest city and capital of a metropolitan area, located around 50km from Braga. Several shopping centres were referred to such as Dolce Vita Porto, Norte Shopping, Shopping Mar, Via Catarina, El Corte Inglês, and Arrábida Shopping. Other cities were mentioned, although in a much smaller degree, like Guimarães: despite there being only 9 respondents from Guimarães municipality, there are 15 who admit attending the Guimarães Shopping. This situation happens with the city of Viana do Castelo. With only 2 respondents of this county there are 16 attending the shopping centre Estação Viana. These examples show the escape of consumers to other municipalities. If in the case of Porto, it possesses a strong commercial provision, in the other two cases, Guimarães and Viana do Castelo, the commercial offer is significantly lower than in the city of Braga.

Table 4. Locations of shopping centres frequented outside Braga

City	Total of answers	% of total of answers
Porto	65	71.4
Viana do Castelo	16	17.6
Guimarães	15	16.5
Matosinhos	3	3.3
Barcelos	2	2.2
Famalicão	2	2.2
Gaia	1	1.1
Aveiro	1	1.1
Lisboa	1	1.1
Coimbra	1	1.1
Vila Real	1	1.1
Montijo	1	1.1

Source: Surveys conducted by the author on consumers in the city of Braga (2009)

Travel motivation

The motivation to travel to shopping centres was the target of a question to which 70.3% of respondents said that the reason for travelling to these commercial spaces is in order to shop (Fig. 3). Of the total respondents, 35.5% admitted that the main motivation is leisure. This percentage enhances the importance of this feature in the attraction of consumers. The transformation of private space and its "artificial" transition into public space, albeit without some of the problems encountered in public space, is a key element that characterizes commercial spaces. Enhancing their position as anchors, the values achieved by the cinema and hypermarket are very relevant, with 27% and 28.8% of preferences, respectively.

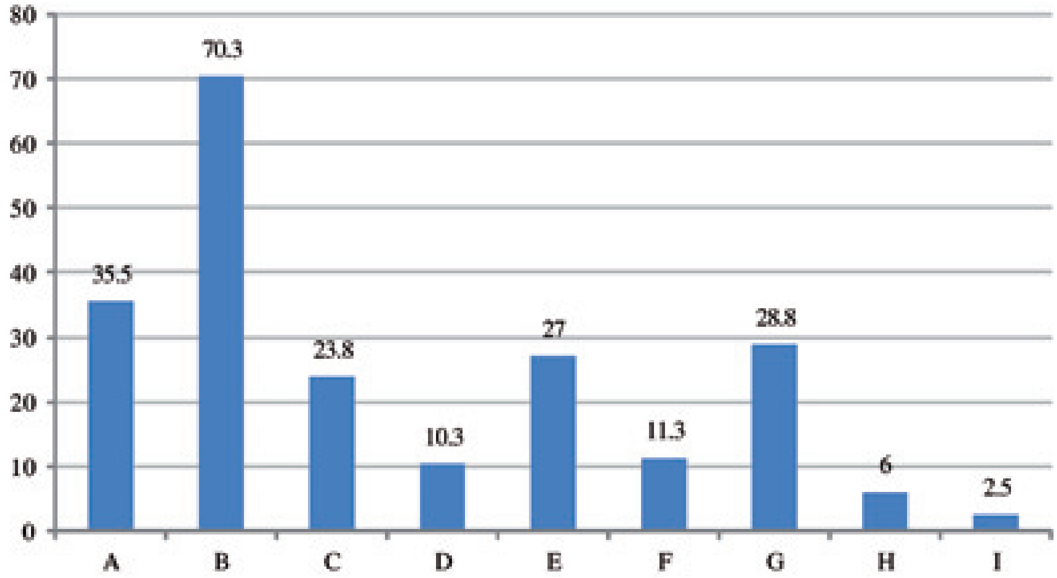

Fig. 3. Motivation for travelling to shopping centres, as a % of respondents

Explanation: A – leisure; B – shopping; C – meeting with friends; D – restaurant; E – cinema; F – coffee house; G – hypermarket; H – other; I – no answer

Source: Surveys conducted by the author on consumers in the city of Braga (2009)

Habits of use

The relationship between shopping centres and the leisure feature has become visible in previous questions. Therefore it was asked with whom they usually went to those spaces (Fig. 4). More than one third of consumers travelled with family or friends to those commercial spaces. Because those are places in which a considerable number of people go for leisure (although they might shop once inside), the percentage of respondents that go alone is only 30.8%.

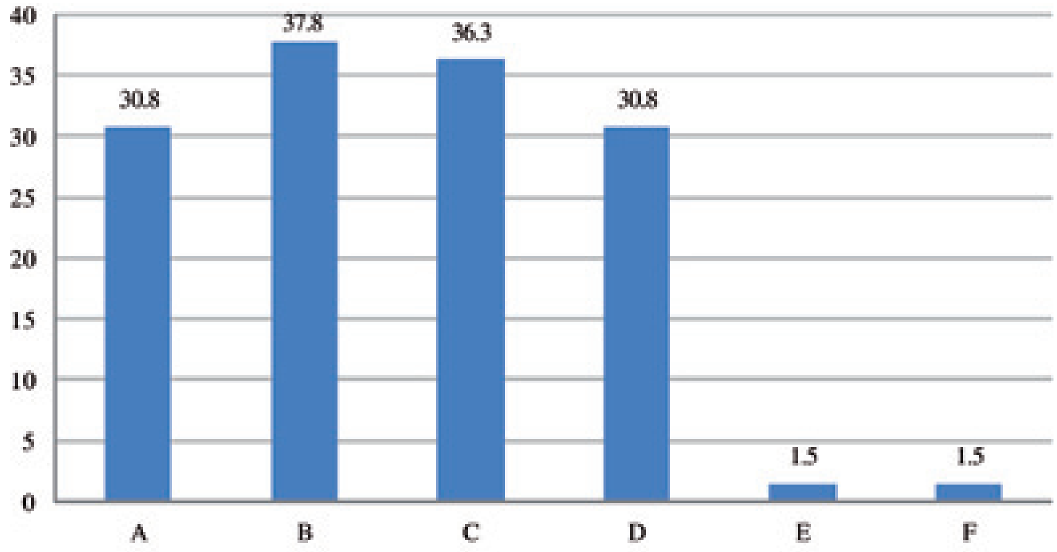

Fig. 4. Person who usually accompanies you on the trip to shopping centres, as a % of respondents

Explanation: A – alone; B – relatives; C – friends; D – boy/girlfriend; E – others; F – no answer

Source: Surveys conducted by the author on consumers in the city of Braga (2009)

5. Prospective analysis of the change in consumption habits

Use of new shopping centres

Regarding use of new shopping centres, once they are open, 44% of respondents admit attending these spaces and 45% say they will go. Only 11% of respondents do not consider this possibility, saying that they will not attend the new spaces (Fig. 5). The fact that new shopping centres were only in the application phase and advertising campaigns alluding to them were not yet visible, it is expected that the number of consumers who might attend these new centres will be even higher than the number presented in this investigation.

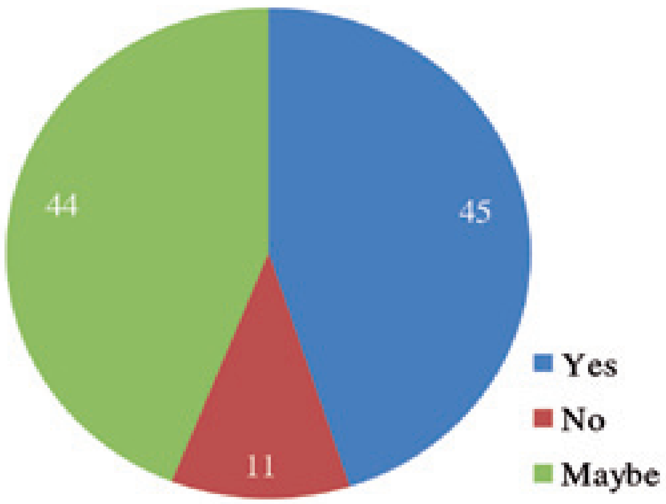

Fig. 5. Intention of future use of new shopping centres, as a % of respondents

Source: Surveys conducted by the author on consumers in the city of Braga (2009)

Reasons for use new shopping centres

Of the 400 respondents, 59% admit coming to shop in new retail spaces. In the same segment, 39% admit frequenting them just for leisure. Anchor stores are of most importance in this analysis. Still not knowing what stores might appear as an anchor, the existence of a cinema and hypermarket ensure by themselves an important attractiveness for these spaces.

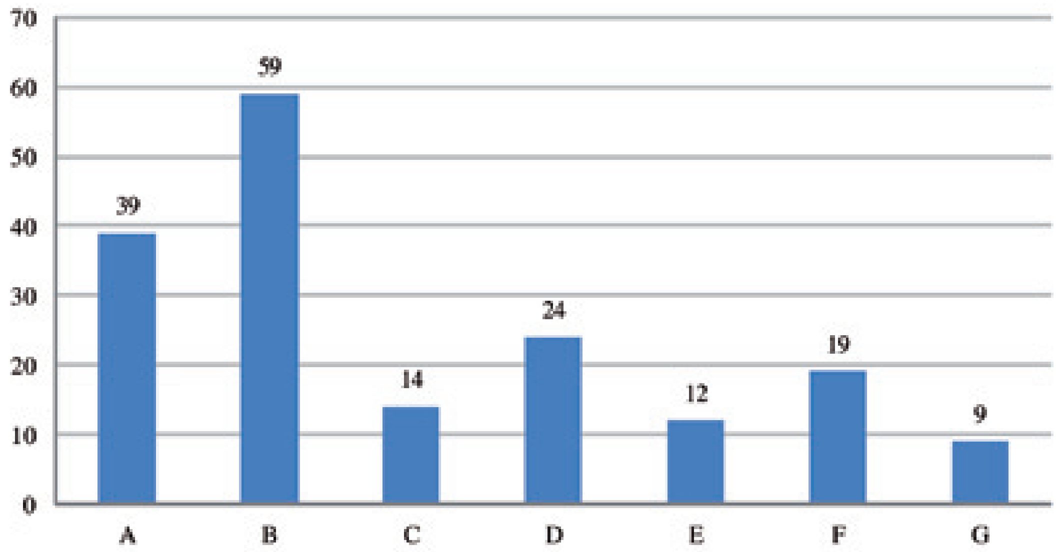

Fig. 6. Motivation for future use of new shopping centres, as a % of respondents

Explanation: A – leisure; B – shopping; C – restaurant; D – cinema; E – coffee house; F – hypermarket; G - other

Source: Surveys conducted by the author on consumers in the city of Braga (2009)

Transfer of shopping

It was concluded that, of the 400 respondents, 43 assume they will transfer the purchases they currently do at existing stores in the centre of the city of Braga (Fig. 7).

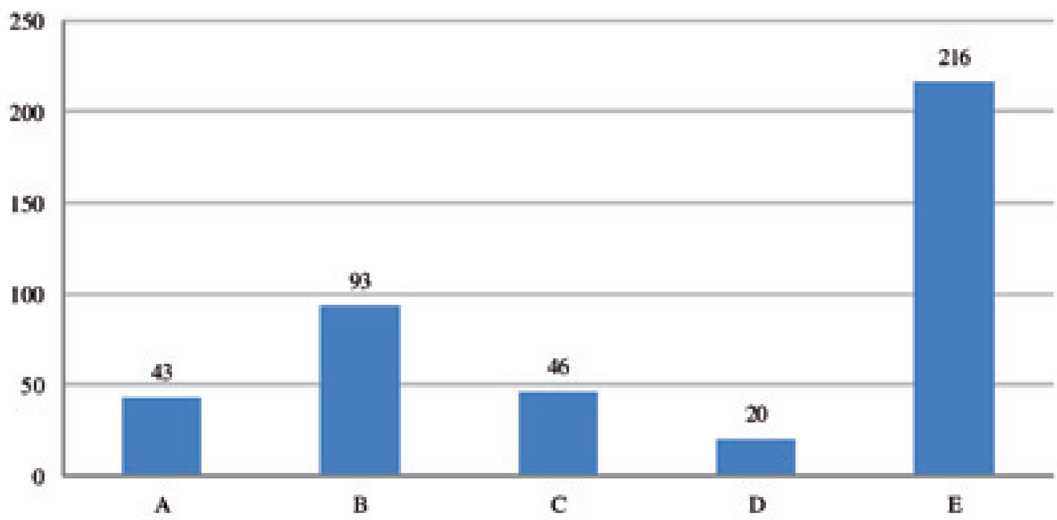

Fig. 7. Origin of shopping transfer (intention), in number of responses

Explanation: A – outlets of the town centre; B – other shopping centres that exists in Braga; C – shopping centres in other cities; D – proximity retail; E – I don't think in transfer the shops that I presently do

Source: Surveys conducted by the author to consumers in the city of Braga (2009)

A stronger relationship is verified with the transfer of purchases made in other shopping centres in the city of Braga to new ones, with over 23% of consumers admitting this fact. The transfer of purchases made in shopping centres in other cities is also very relevant with 46 respondents adopting this possibility, which represents over 11% of respondents. Purchases made in proximity retail will be the format with the lowest decrease with only 20 respondents admitting this possibility. Of the total respondents, 54% did not think of transferring their purchases. While it may seem like a high number, when considering the total universe of consumers, the possible change in consumption habits of 46% of current consumers may have repercussions and produce changes in the current trading system in force in the city of Braga.

6. Conclusions

The evolution of the retail sector alongside some changes in cities, especially the process of suburbanization, put some pressure on town centres, primarily on the main historic town centre. The strong relation between cities and retail means that the transformation in one will have consequences on the other. Alongside suburbanization, the appearance and dissemination of shopping centres in peripheral areas will enhance the impacts on town centres. The relevance of that retail format was confirmed in the questionnaires, with aspects like quality, animation, security, shopping time saving, product diversity, comfort and parking facilities enhancing the role of shopping centres in the commercial environment of Braga. Therefore the implantation of new shopping centres in Braga will change the consumption habits. 46% of respondents admitted the probable transfer of part of their shopping from the existent retail to the new commercial structures. The expected impacts will be felt not only in the retail sector in the town centre but also in other retail formats like already existent shopping centres. This transformation may cause profound impacts in the vitality and viability of the retail sector and the areas where it is located. In terms of planning, the opening of the new shopping centres will, probably, trigger the adoption of reactive measures, in order to minimize these impacts.

In addition to the impacts on the retail sector, the opening of large commercial structures outside the city centre can help accentuate the urban sprawl in peripheral areas. In this case, on the one hand, it can help increase the pressure for construction in non-urbanized areas, weakening natural resources. On the other hand, it may reduce the willingness for urban regeneration, especially in the old historic centre of the city.

Notes

(1) It was possible to give a multiple response. Of the total of respondents that shop outside Braga (98) only 91 specified the city in which they shop. The consumers who admitted attending shopping centres in Porto, probably visit shopping centres that are located not in the city of Porto but in its region. The reason for this is that it is usual to designate as "Porto", areas that in fact belong to other municipalities, that is, this designation may cover an area larger than the administrative boundaries of Porto municipality.

Acknowledgement

An acknowledgement is made to the Portuguese funding agency: FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, for funding the PhD on which the research is based.

References

Balsas, C., 1999: Urbanismo comercial em Portugal e a revitalização do centro das cidades (Commercial Urbanism in Portugal and the revitalization of city centres – in Portuguese), Lisboa: GEPE.

Balsas, C., 2001: Urbanismo comercial em Portugal, a necessidade de uma nova gestão urbana (Commercial Urbanism in Portugal, the need for a new urban management – in Portuguese), Lisboa: URBE.

Barata-Salgueiro, T., 1992: A cidade em Portugal (The city in Portugal – in Portuguese), Porto: Afrontamento.

Barata-Salgueiro, T., 2001: Lisboa, Centralidades e Periferia (Lisbon, Centralities and Periphery – in Portuguese), Oeiras: Celta Editora.

Barata-Salgueiro, T., 2007: Avaliação dos impactos dos centros comerciais na cidade de Évora (Assessment of the impacts of shopping centres in the city of Évora – in Portuguese), Lisboa: GECIC.

Beaujeu-Garnier, J., 1980: Geografia Urbana (Urban Geography – in Portuguese), Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.

Cachinho, H., 2005: Avaliação dos impactos dos centros comerciais na cidade de Leiria (Assessment of the impacts of commercial centres in the city of Leiria – in Portuguese), Lisboa: GECIC.

Cachinho, H., 2006: Consumactor: Da condição do individuo na cidade pós-moderna, Finisterra (Consumactor – The condition of the individual in the postmodern city – in Portuguese), Volume XLI, Issue 81, Lisboa, pp. 33-56.

Chico, F., 2008: Boas práticas em gestão de centros urbanos (Good practices in town centre management – in Portuguese), Lisboa: CCP.

Farhangmehr, M., 1996: O comércio de Braga face à proximidade geográfica das cidades do Porto e Vigo (The retail sector of Braga regarding the proximity of the cities of Porto and Vigo – in Portuguese), Braga: Associação Comercial de Braga.

Fernandes, J. A.; Cachinho, H. and Ribeiro, C., 2002: Comércio tradicional em contexto urbano – dinâmicas de modernização e políticas públicas (Traditional retail in the urban context – dynamics of modernization and public policy – in Portuguese), Porto: GEDES.

Guy, C., 2007: Planning for retail development, a critical view of the British experience, Oxon: Routledge.

Howard, E., 2007: New shopping centres: is leisure the answer? In: *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Volume 35, Issue 8, pp. 661-672.

Howard, E. and Davies, R., 1993: The impact of regional out-of-town retail centres: the case of the Metro Centre. In: *Progress in Planning*, Volume 40, pp. 89-165.

Jayne, M., 2006: Cities and consumption, Abington: Routledge.

Lopes, D., 2004: O impacto dos centros comerciais no comércio do centro da cidade: o exemplo de Almada (The impact of shopping centres on the city centre: the example of Almada – in Portuguese), Dissertação de mestrado em Gestão do Território, Lisboa: Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, Universidade Nova de Lisboa

Lowe, M., 2005: Revitalizing inner city retail?: The impact of the West Quay development on Southampton. In: *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, Volume 33, Issue 9, pp.658 – 668.

Observatório do comércio, 2002: Novo comércio, Novos consumos (New Retail, New consumptions – in Portuguese), Lisboa: Observatório do comércio.

Pereira, M., 1999: Novas dinâmicas de organização comercial (New dynamics of retail organization – in Portuguese). In: *Comércio e concorrência*, Volume 3, pp. 97-107.

Statistics Portugal: DoA: accessed online on July 2013 in www.ine.pt

Whysall, P., 1995: Regenerating inner city shopping centres – The British experience. In: *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Volume 2, Issue 1, pp. 3-13.

Williams, C., 1997: Rethinking the Role of the Retail Sector in Economic Development. In: *The Service Industries Journal*, Volume 17, Issue 2, pp. 205-220.