

Perceptions of street trading on Rockey-Raleigh Street, Yeoville

Street trading is Johannesburg's step-child. Often ill-treated by urban policies, it is often considered a nuisance rather than as a service or a form of poverty alleviation. In Yeoville, street trading has been banned since the construction of the market, in 1999.

Nevertheless, street traders continue to sell on Rockey-Raleigh Street. Some Yeoville residents argue that street traders render a variety of services to the community, by making the street lively and providing convenient shopping opportunities for busy or low-income residents. On the other hand, some residents stress the lack of management of street trading which leads to challenges to cleanliness and safe, comfortable pedestrian movement.

This survey intends to unravel some of these multiple, antagonistic and complex perceptions of the roles of street trading in Yeoville such as: Do street traders render a specific service to residents of Yeoville? ; How do Yeoville residents and users perceive the impacts, of street trading - on street atmosphere; on the Yeoville economy; on street safety and on crime and grime?



“They throw banana peels in the street, customers trip and fall” (shop keeper)

“They make the street active, not boring. But they don't make it safe: sometimes they are pick-pocketing in the street. They also are making a lot of MESS, they throw their things in the street” (pedestrian)

They are friendly, reliable and cheap (pedestrian)

“Without them it would be tough for us, because we can't afford to go to the shops” (pedestrian)

“I came from Braamfontein, so when I arrived the street was scary but now I got comfortable because it is friendly. You need to think through what you have been told” (shop keeper)

“Without them? Well then we wouldn't have the street hairdressers. I really like the street hairdressers. Last week the shop couldn't do my hair. But the lady on the street did it” (pedestrian)

“The mood is dull, when I am not around” (street trader)

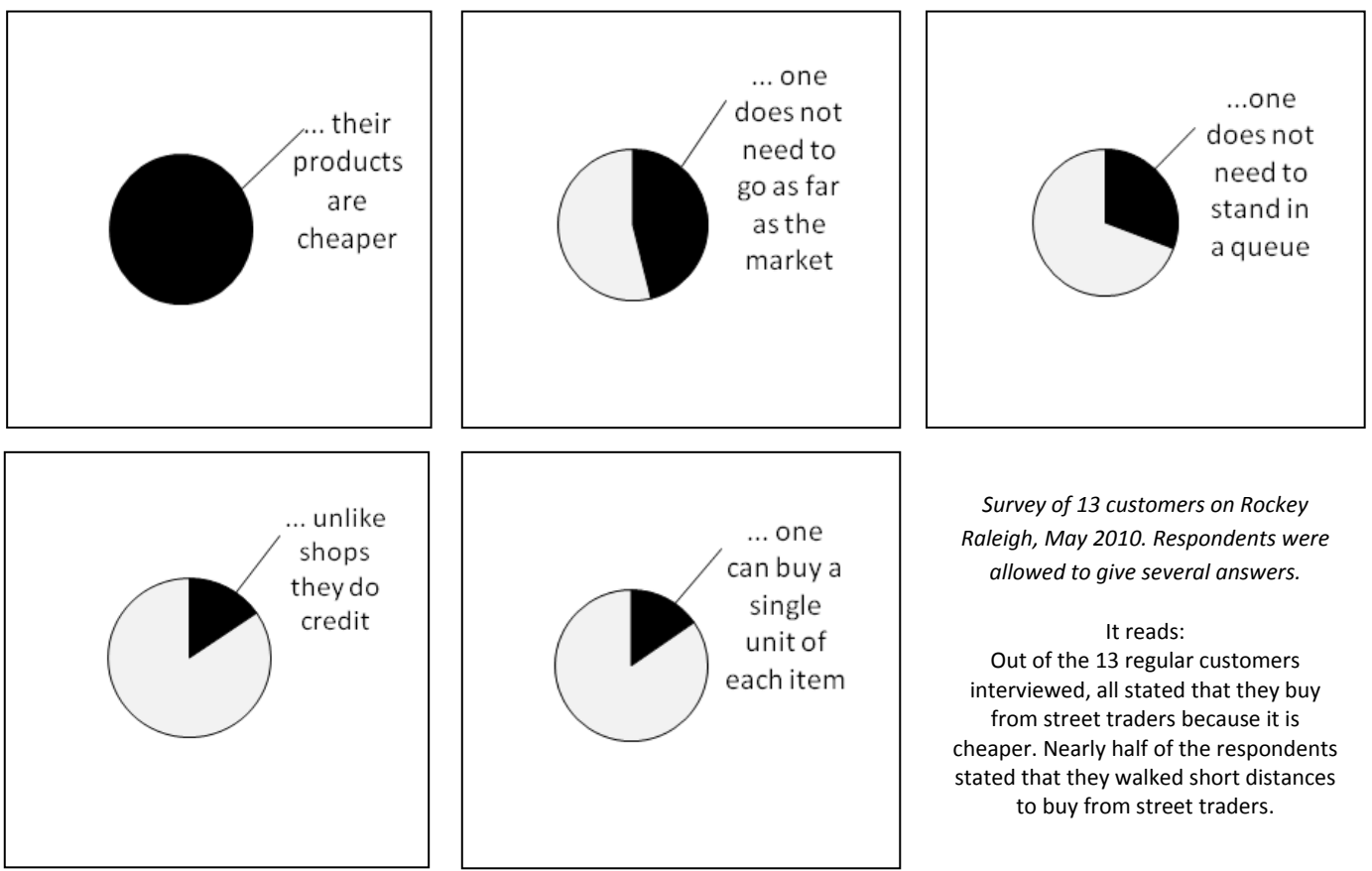
“They won't miss me when I am gone” (street trader)

“They cause HAVOC when traffic cops come” (shop keeper)

Methodology
 This survey was conducted as part of a course on Planning Histories, Philosophies and Methodologies, and as part of Yeoville Studio, focusing on Public Spaces in the Wits School of Architecture and Planning. Students interviewed 16 pedestrians, 12 shop keepers and 11 street traders (for street traders, only 6 interview records were useable), on Rockey-Raleigh street (between Fortesque and Cavendish street), at various times of the day and of the week. They also shot a video where they captured more comments from various stakeholders.
 For more information, go to:
web.wits.ac.za/Academic/EBE/ArchPlan/YEOVILLESTUDIO

Customers view street traders: providing a specific service to Yeoville residents?

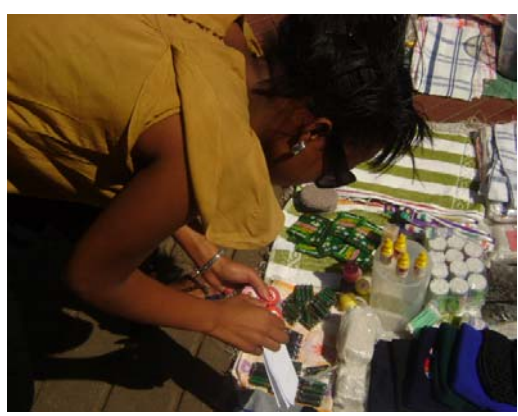
Out of 16 pedestrian interviewed on Rockey Raleigh, 13 were regular buyers from street traders. These are the reasons they mentioned for buying from street traders:



“The shops don’t give me credit – I can buy on credit from the street. We need them. If they aren’t there, we are struggling, and the shops are too expensive”

“They are convenient: they are right there”

“Instead of standing in a queue I’ll buy in the street. The queues in the shops are too long and I’m always in a hurry”



Most residents buy from street traders - even if all agree, with different degree of understanding or anger that they contribute to litter and street congestion. However they still buy from street traders because they are offering a unique service.

Financial reasons come first. Products are cheaper, or can easily be bought in smaller quantities; and street traders

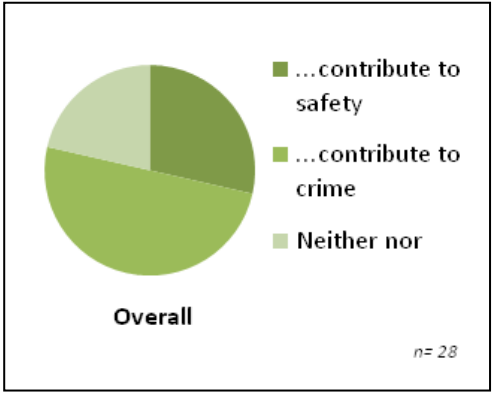
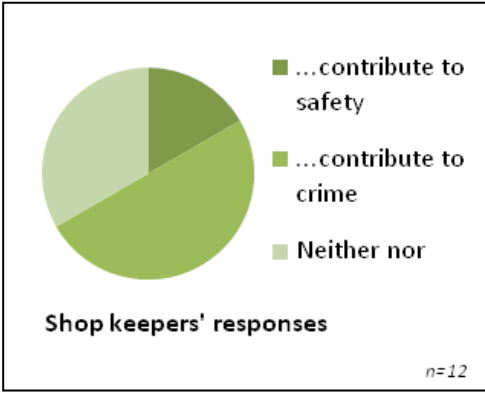
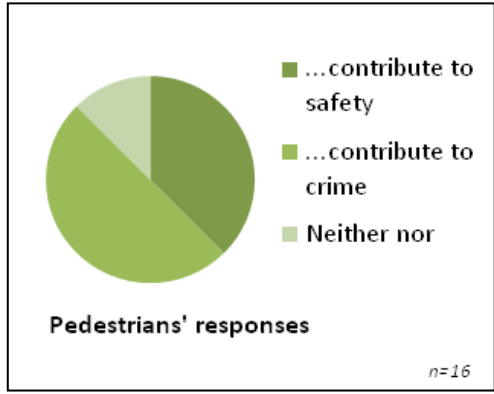
seem more flexible on payment. But there are other reasons for this preference, linked to convenience: **street traders are ‘right there’**. You can buy on the spot, immediately, without walking far or queuing. You can buy when you are in a hurry, or when you have not planned to buy – just **following the mood of the moment**.

Perceived impacts of street trading in Rockey Raleigh Street

Pedestrians, shop keepers and street traders were asked what they thought the impact of street traders on Yeoville was, in terms of: crime, business and in terms of street atmosphere.

Perceived impacts of street trading on street safety

They think street traders...

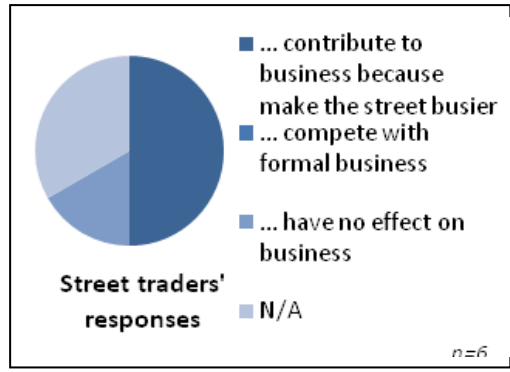
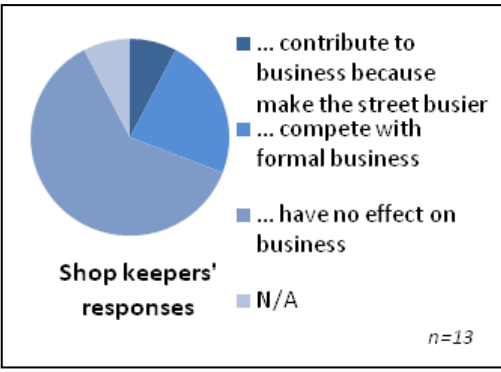
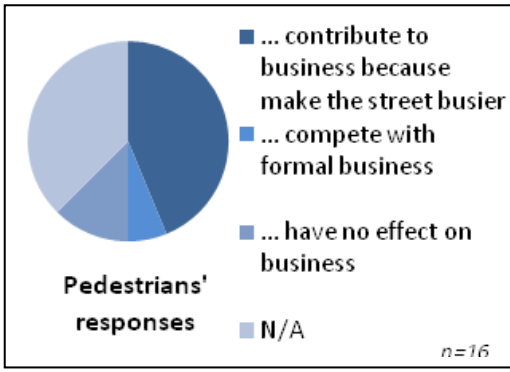


Survey of 16 pedestrians (users and non-users), and 12 shop keepers on Rockey Raleigh Street, May 2010.

It reads: Out of 16 pedestrians, about half thought that street traders contributed to crime (congestion making pick-pocketing easy; lack of control over goods sold); 1/3 thought on the contrary they contributed to street safety (through their permanent presence and control).

Perceived impacts of street trading on business

They think street traders...



Survey of 16 pedestrians (users and non-users), 13 shop keepers, and 6 street traders on Rockey Raleigh Street, May 2010.

It reads: Out of 16 pedestrians, only 1/10 thought they were competing with business. Nearly half thought they were good for business in Yeoville. Out of 13 shop keepers, nearly 2/3 thought they had no real impact on their business, but 1/4 thought they were competitors. Out of the few street traders interviewed, a majority thought that they had either a positive or no influence on business in Yeoville.

“Without street traders, my shop is quiet. But... they’re breaking the law. When metro cops arrive they run all over. Without them here, Yeoville is a ghost town. They are part of the vibe” (shop keeper)

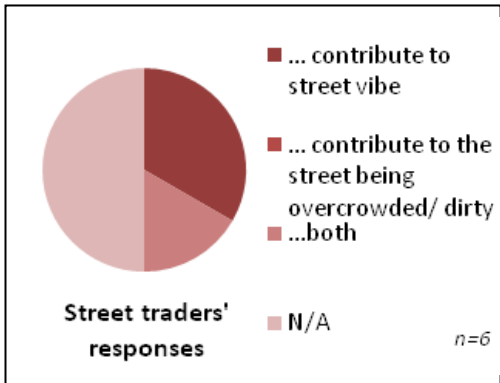
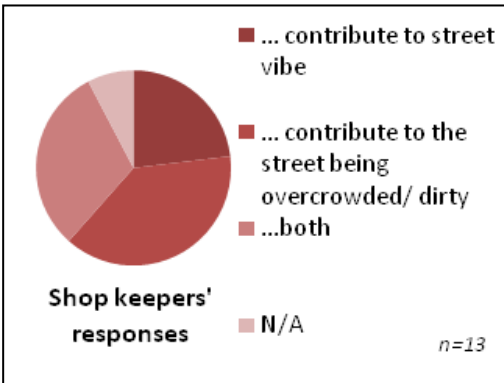
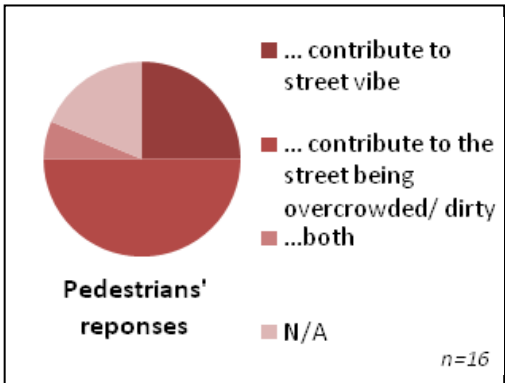
“They make a mess, litter and block people from moving freely” (pedestrian)

“I would not form a business relationship with them because they are illegal” (shop keeper)

Perceived impacts of street trading in Rockey Raleigh Street (2)

Perceived impacts of street trading on street atmosphere

They think street traders...



Survey of 16 pedestrians (users and non-users), 13 shop keepers and 6 street traders on Rockey Raleigh Street, May 2010.

It reads: Out of 16 pedestrians, 75% mentioned the problem of dirt and congestion linked to street trading; but 25% acknowledged that street trading contributed to the street unique vibe.

“Everyone knows they are in Yeoville when they see these people on the street. They make people make friends and spend more time on the street” (pedestrian)

“They don’t make the street nice. They tease you. They laugh at you and they tell you nonsense when you walk. (...) But I don’t like the market either. The market people don’t smile. They are not good to the people. It is worse if they see you are from South Africa” (pedestrian)

Perceptions of street trading are **contradictory**, not only between different stakeholders but within each individual. Beyond sympathy for people struggling to make a living, or antipathy towards those who congest pavements and litter the street, common points can be found.

Most negative perceptions can be linked to the lack of management of street trading (which is impossible in the context of banning). People complain about the street traders’ illegality and consequent harassment that leads to both chaos and corruption. People also complain about the lack of management of the litter they generate, the absence of control on space they occupy on the pavement, and about the goods they sell.

Most positive perceptions focus on the street traders’ **permanent presence in the street**: it not only provides a convenient service, but might also deter crime, contribute to Yeoville economy, and certainly create a unique street vibe.

In the context of illegality and police harassment, the positive contributions that street traders make tend to be overlooked, especially by street traders themselves. They are discouraged from investing in the quality or diversity of their products, as well as in the management of public space.

This suggests that street trading in Rockey - Raleigh street **could be an asset for Yeoville if properly regulated**, instead of being rendered illegal by ill-adapted and therefore inapplicable by-laws.

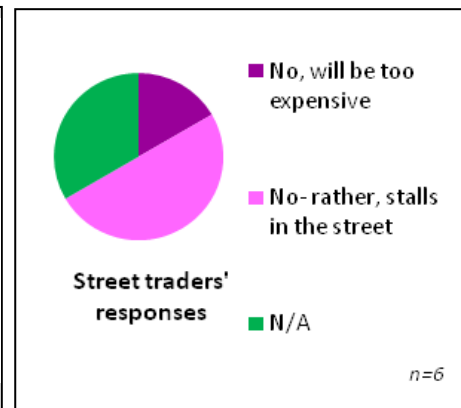
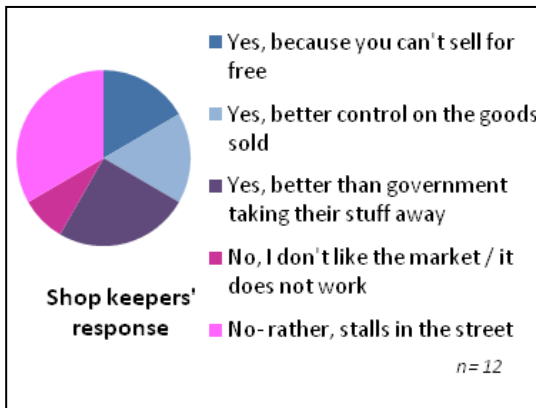
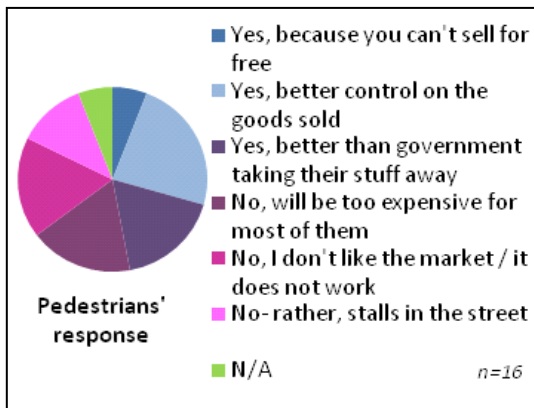


The market – not necessarily THE solution to better manage street trading

The City’s approach has been to build a market in order to take street traders off the street. Unlike other African cities, Johannesburg does not have a long tradition of street trading – it appeared in contravention to apartheid laws, and boomed in the 1990s, often driven by African migrants who had been exposed to other modes of trading and street life. Therefore, there has been limited exploration of middle ways between market trading and chaos.

The survey illustrates this lack of imagination of alternative visions, but also suggests the need for regulated street trading that would remain in the main street: more accessible than the market.

Is the market a solution to the challenges related to street trading?



Survey of 16 pedestrians (users and non-users), 12 shop keepers and 6 street traders on Rockey Raleigh Street, May 2010.

It reads: Out of 16 pedestrians, about 1/3 thought the market was a good solution for street traders. 2/3 either thought it was not (for various reasons), or considered that anything (even the market) would be better than illegality in the street.

“Without them I would have to go to a shop and stand in a queue. The market is far, I have to walk there and it is a long distance for me. Street traders are everywhere” (pedestrian)

Overall, half of pedestrians and shop keepers interviewed thought of the **market as a possible solution** to the challenges posed by the lack of management of street trading. However, for many it was **by default**: the market was seen in any case as better than constant police harassment, but a number of pedestrians expressed their dislike of the market, or the fact that it would not really replace the service currently provided by street traders.

For the few street traders interviewed, none saw the market as able to accommodate them, even if they were willing to pay for a trading space.

Stalls in Rockey-Raleigh street were considered a better solution, to manage and regulate street trading without destroying its locational advantage – accessible to all in Yeoville main street.

“We need to find a way to have them. Because we can't have Yeoville without them” (pedestrian)

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Special support
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Acknowledgement
 All participants in the survey