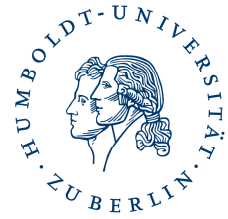


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Faculty of Life Sciences

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**Consumers of local food systems in Cape Town –
Perceptions and preferences,
using the example of Harvest of Hope**

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Abstract

Increasing population numbers in many countries has led to the fact that both food production and consumption have become important aspects for producers, as well as consumers. In many countries throughout the world, there is a growing trend of people opting for alternatively-produced foods, often produced in smaller farming systems or according to different production methods; these are often claimed to be more economically viable. In this regard, small-scale farmers are often embedded in alternative food networks that focus on local customers and market entries such as community-supported agriculture, farmers' markets or box scheme systems.

The latter is the case for the Cape Town (CT) based organisation Abalimi Bezekhaya (Abalimi) and its marketing project Harvest of Hope (HoH). Abalimi provides training, seedlings and support during the growing phase to encourage and support community members from the deprived township areas to engage in farming. The project aims to provide an income and improve the food security situation. Subsequently, HoH sells the vegetables to private and business customers in the city area of CT. However, little research on food consumer perceptions and motivations in South Africa (SA) exists. This study therefore aimed to close this research gap, evaluating the needs of HoH's current customers, as well as customers from two other local alternative food networks.

In order to gain a broad and complete picture of the consumers' needs, perspectives and attitudes, both quantitative and qualitative studies were conducted. Those were then triangulated according to the mixed method research design. Questionnaires, in-depth guideline interviews and extensive literature research gave an encompassing up-to-date knowledge of the consumers of those respective alternative food networks in CT. The study found that the consumers have been very delighted from the products' quality and the business concept in general. However, the organisation and, the search and acquisition of new customers is restricted by some operational and logistical issues. Also as found in many similar international studies, customers are hindered through aspects of inconvenience, lack in accessibility and higher prices for those alternative items. The outcome of this research proposed some options for action in order to gain new clients and satisfy the demands of the current ones. Yet, the lack of a clear strategy and positioning on the part of HoH stands out as a hindrance in implementing future plans.

Keywords:

Alternative food networks; local food consumers; vegetable box scheme; organic food production; food security; Cape Town; Abalimi Bezekhaya; Harvest of Hope.

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