

An Investigation into Factors Contributing to the Consumption of Street Foods and Franchise Foods in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province

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KEYWORDS Street Vending. Self-employment. Street Food Consumption. Franchise Food Consumption

ABSTRACT An exploratory study was conducted in Vhembe District of Limpopo Province in South Africa to determine factors that contribute to why people prefer street foods (STF) to franchise foods. The study sample was made up of 5 street vendors, and from each street vendor, 20 customers, who were willing to participate, were conveniently selected, giving a total of 100 consumers. Two questionnaires were designed to collect data, one for the five and another for the 100 consumers. The findings revealed that most customers consumed street foods because of low prices. Consumers preferred eating lunch from street because most of them go to town during lunch time. The study revealed that street vendors provided food that was filling and satisfying. The food sold by street vendors was found to be cheap compared to the food sold by franchise restaurants. Street vendors were preferred because they offered a variety of foods on their menus compared to the franchise restaurants. The study revealed that street food businesses contributed to the economic development and self-employment of many small traders.

INTRODUCTION

South Africa has little data on fast food and street food consumption, although there are thousands of people who consume street foods and fast foods (HSRC 2012). There seems to be concern regarding the nutrition content of street food since it is considered to be high in saturated fat, sugar but low in micronutrients and that this can lead to a high prevalence of obesity in South Africa (HSRC 2012). Nevertheless, some study findings indicate that street foods in cities are nutritious and that they are often similar to foods that people consume in their homes (Khongtong 2014).

Street and fast food vending is important for the local people because people who are involved in the business of street food vending are poor urban people who want to acquire subsistence income from low investment (Khongtong 2014).

There is a major concern about the safety of street foods and the chemical substances that are presented to consumers. These concerns include sanitation problems, traffic congestion in the streets where street vendors operate, illegal occupation of the space by the street vendors, as well as social problems (child labour, and unfair competition to formal trade) (Rahman et al. 2014). An increase in the number of people

in the cities and the changes in their lifestyle has seen growth in street food businesses (Khongtong 2014). An interesting finding on street foods was that few customers are concerned about safety associated with the food handling practices of the vendors; this might be reflection on prevailing local health standards (Tinker 2007).

METHODOLOGY

The study sample was made up of consumers of street foods and street vendors selling the food. These were conveniently selected from the vending street in the central business of Thohoyandou town in Vhembe District. The consumers of street food were from various areas within the Vhembe District (Elim, Makwarela, Malamulele, Maniini, Mavhiligwe, StrykStroom, Shirley, Valedeziah, Vhafuli and Waterval). Twenty consumers of street foods were conveniently chosen from each one of the five street vendors, resulting in a total sample of 100 respondents.

Data collection was conducted using face-to-face interviews with the consumers of street foods, as well as five street vendors. Two questionnaires were used to collect information from the consumers of street foods and the street vendors. The first questionnaire was used to collect information from the consumers and the

second questionnaire collected information from the street vendor. The study targeted everyone who was a consumer of food from street vendors, in particular those who were willing to take part in the study. A pre-test of the first questionnaire was done with three consumers of the street foods, while for the second one, two street food vendors participated.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1 shows that the majority (65%) of the respondents were unemployed people with a low education. All the respondents resided in Vhembe, and the majority (80%) of the respondents' were Venda-speaking people because Thohoyandou is a Venda-speaking area.

Table 1: Demographic information of consumers of street foods

<i>Demographic variable</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<i>Municipality</i>	
Thulamela	55
Mutale	10
<i>Education Level</i>	
(Std 6-10)	65
Degree/Diploma students, graduates.	35
<i>Marital Status</i>	
Single	40
Married	50
Divorced	10
<i>Employment Status</i>	
Self-employment (taxi drivers, street hawkers)	30
Unemployed	10
Formal employment (police officer, estate agents, taxi drivers)	45
Students	10

These findings reveal that people who are most likely to eat from street food vendors are those who are coming from the same community where street foods are sold or people from neighbouring communities. Eighty percent of the respondents preferred street foods because of the low cost of the food. This underscored the fact that street food buyers are people with low income who chose the food is filling, and familiar to them.

Table 1 also shows the educational level of the respondents. The majority (65%) of the respondents had an educational level of (STD 6-10), 20 percent of the respondents were gradu-

ates and degree students, while 15 percent were diploma holders and diploma students

The table also shows that 40 percent of the respondents' were single and only 10 per cent of the respondents were divorced. The highest proportions of the respondents were in formal employment (as police officers, estate agents) and self-employment (as taxi drivers, street hawkers). These findings reveal that the consumers of street foods had regular sources of income.

Factors Contributing to Choice of Street Foods

Table 2 shows the factors contributing to the consumption of street foods. The majority of the respondents (80%) chose to eat street foods because of the low cost of the meals compared to the cost of franchise food, while the rest chose to eat from the street food vendors because of various factors such as time, convenience, preference, taste and social factors.

Table 2: Factors that contributed to the consumption of street foods

<i>Factors consumption of street foods</i>	<i>Percent/ frequency</i>
Socialising	45
Cost	80
Lifestyle/ Convenience/Time	85
Preference/Taste	60
Religion	55

Table 3 shows the types of food that are sold on the streets. The majority of the respondents (65%) said that they usually buy a meal made up of maize porridge, chicken and beef. Other foods bought from the street food vendors include salads, chicken feet, offals, doughnuts, tea, *mageu* (*mageu* is a drink made from fermented cooked maize meal) and bread. Consumers preferred these foods because they are familiar and also because the foods are filling, cheap and tasty.

Table 3: Foods sold on the streets

<i>Types of food you buy</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Porridge, chicken and beef	65
Chicken, porridge and salads	45
Porridge and meat (chicken feet and offals)	25
Mageu/tea/bread	20
Doughnuts	10

Table 4 shows the most popular food groups eaten by consumers on the streets. All the respondents ate carbohydrates, while only 16 percent of the respondents ate meat and meat products. Only 30 percent of the respondents consumed vegetables from the street vendors. These findings show that most of the consumers prefer carbohydrates, meat and meat related products because maize porridge is the staple food of this area.

Table 4: Food frequency of food groups eaten by consumers on the streets

<i>Food frequency</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
Meat and meat substitutes	80%
Milk and milk prod	30%
Fruit	0%
Vegetables	60%
Crabs and starch	100%

Table 5 shows how the respondents would like the service to be improved. Most of the respondents (40%) would like to see shelters being built because most of the places where the vendors operated were run down. Twenty-five percent said cleanliness and variety in foods are important, while only 20 percent of the respondents said they needed more equipment and assistance. Fifteen percent of the respondents said the space where the street vendors operate should be improved by paving, while 5 percent of the people said prices should be reduced and delivery of food to the consumer be introduced. People who were buying street foods wanted to see street food vendors improving their businesses, in order to improve their services to consumers.

Table 5: How service can be improved

<i>What the owner can do to improve service</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
Provision of spacious and paved food serving shelters	70%
Sanitation (water)	25%
Offer variety of foods and deliver food	30%
Use and provide proper cutlery	20%

Table 6 shows the frequency with which the respondents ate street foods. Most respondents (60%) said they eat street foods 1 to 5 times a week, 15 percent said 6-10 times a week, while 10 percent of the respondents ate once or twice a month and only 15 percent of the respondents consumed from street vendors 4-12 times a

month. This is because most people who eat street food depended on street foods as a source of food when they are away from home.

Table 6: Frequency of street food consumption

<i>How often do you eat here</i>	<i>Frequency (%)</i>
(1-5 times a week)	60%
(6-10 times a week)	15%
(1-2 times a month)	10%
(4-12 times a month)	10%

All the respondents indicated that they did not eat their daily meals from street vendors. This was because most of the consumers bought street foods when they had money and were in town. They had specific times when they buy food from street vendors. Some preferred not to eat all their meals on the streets.

Most of the consumers (75%) said they ate similar food at home. This could be because most of the street food vendors used the same methods of cooking used by their customers in their homes and also because they cooked similar food to that eaten in the homes of their customers.

Money Spent on Street Foods

Most of the consumers (75%) of street foods spent R15.00-R45.00, while 25 percent spent R50.00 to R150.00. The price range of street foods was affordable and it gave consumers options on how to spend their money. In general, consumers felt that street foods were affordable and within their budget.

A larger proportion of the consumers (65%) of street foods preferred to buy lunch, 20 percent bought breakfast, while only 15 percent bought lunch and breakfast. The consumption of street food was often included in the budget of most consumers and, as such, it never affected their budget.

Street foods are popular in many countries because of the convenience they offer to the consumer. In Bangladesh, they are easily accessible to the consumers as they are situated in places which are convenient to the consumers who are mostly street vendors, and they are often situated close to schools, universities, office areas and footpaths (Rahmen et al. 2014). In this study, the findings revealed that the majority (100%) of the consumers of street foods were residing in the same area or close to the places where street foods are sold. The foods sold on

the streets were found to offer convenience, in addition to being tasty and cheap the foods were similar to home cooked foods.

The study revealed that 25 percent of the respondents were concerned about the cleanliness of the places where street food is sold, while 80 percent of the consumers felt that there were no proper shelters for serving the food. Although street foods play an important role in meeting the food demands of the rural and urban consumers, the food may be contaminated from unhygienic surroundings and poor food handling practices.

CONCLUSION

Street food trade is viable and important to the informal-sector industry. It is an activity that provides incomes for people who are unemployed. Street foods often reflect traditional local cultures and offer an endless variety of foods, which are prepared using methods that are culturally acceptable. Street vendors provide much diversity in the raw materials used to prepare foods, as well as in the preparation of a variety of street foods acceptable to the consumer.

The fact that street food vendors are often located outdoors or under a roof in crowded places which are easily accessible from the street results in low operating costs. In addition, street vendors' success depends mostly on location and word-of-mouth promotion. The buying of fresh food locally also helps to support small-scale farms and fresh produce gardens.

The lack of economic opportunities in most developing countries has forced many low income households to resort to self-employment using a variety of life skills to generate income. Sales of prepared and processed foods which traditionally provided the main source of income for most households continue to play an important economic role in communities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study was to understand and investigate factors that contribute to the consumption of street foods. There is a need to perform a similar study with a bigger sample of participants in order to verify whether the findings of this study can be generalised to this area.

The findings from the study indicated that there are things that can be done to improve the

sanitation and the nutrition contribution of these foods to the diet of consumers. There is a need for the government to improve conditions under which street food is sold. The government can be involved through provision of nutrition education, proper sanitation (water and toilets) and street food vending shelters for the street food vendors to operate in.

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