

Kasi Kos

Informal sector fast food

The informal out-of-home food economy is invisible to the formal world and its shoppers but it's all around us, like a mist drifting by our car windows, hanging around on street corners, covering the townships. The mist, though, carries a million delicious flavours, the spicy curry aroma of *sishebo* stews, frying of *vetkoek* and 'slap' chips, and grainy smells of steaming sorghum porridge, fresh baked *dombolo* pot breads, fried chicken legs and braai heads of cattle and sizzling *shisanyama* braais, and so many more that the nose is confused but your mouth waters anyway.

As multitudes walk the streets from 3am till late into the night, fires flicker under *mbawulas*, the white hot braziers glowing under braais and grilled maize. Cardboard knee high shelters protect little Cadac gas stoves from the wind as they heat huge pots of boiling oil, browning bubbling seething *vetkoek* under gazebos perched on old door makeshift tables. Gas stoves stew *sishebos* releasing their fragrant spicy aromas, and a low hiss comes from the steam bread pot, the smell of freshly baked dough rising in the steam.

What I call the *kasi kos*, the township fast food, or the street food industry, is huge with 50 000 informal food takeaways in South Africa selling



everything from the township burger called a *kota* to *vetkoek*, *shisanyamas*, StreetSide buy and braais, and *amaplate* – literally laden plates of stew, salad, cabbage or spinach *morogo* along with maize meal *pap* or *dombolo* pot bread.

StreetSide hawkers, gazebos in taxi ranks, caravans, hole-in-the-wall shacks and food trucks from the grand to the sad offer a range of food where the top outlets can turn over up to R50 000 a day, seven days a week to a mere R500 a day. This is not unique to South Africa and local street food relevant to local cultural dishes and tastes is huge throughout Africa and often preferred as it caters to local flavours and traditional tastes and is culturally relevant.

Food is one of the biggest parts of our African culture and celebrations. Special family days and events always feature traditional food, the food on the street is generally also appropriate to the local cultures. The *kasi kos* offering is generally better adapted to the needs, tastes or lifestyles of their customers. *Kota* shops and corner caravans compete actively with formal takeaways like KFC, Nando's, and McDonalds. A typical popular *kota* outlet in Soweto can sell 2 400 *kotas* a day, peeling 80 bags of potatoes for chips. Every second street has a *kota* outlet and the average *kota* sells at around R15 ... do the maths.

The little electric scooter whizzes silently through the streets of Pretoria, zipping and zigzagging through the crowds on the pavement. Thabo, the



plastic ideas
crates



**WE
NEVER LET
YOU DOWN**



Tel. +27 11 613 8587
Cell. +27 83 333 1224 (Gilda)
E-mail. crates@plasticideas.co.za
[www. PlasticCrates.co.za](http://www.PlasticCrates.co.za)

scooter rider carries a large warmer backpack, and sports a bright blue T-shirt and cap emblazoned with 'Spahlo Paleis, Flavours of Mzansi'. He pulls up to the Department of Education and is waved through the security turnstile by the guards good naturedly asking, "Where are our *spahlos*?" "Next time," shouts Thabo over his shoulder, taking the lift to the third floor where he finds his agent. He unpacks the large warmer backpack, 25 warm *spahlos* each with a sticker describing which type and price. These are *kotas*, named *spahlos* in the north of Gauteng.



The agent shouts out, "Spahlo Paleis," and civil servants leave their desks and rush over to get their lunch handing Thabo their money and digging into the delicious *spahlos*.

The Spahlo Paleis delivers hundreds of *spahlos* throughout Pretoria, to the prosecutors and lawyers at the Supreme Court, Edgar's stores, the department of Public Works and more. Four custom made and branded bicycles, a tuk-tuk three-wheel scooter and the electric scooter run back and forth from 9 am till late delivering orders to 'agents' at each office or store. These agents' WhatsApp orders to one of the seven Spahlo Paleis stores in Pretoria, getting their meal for free as payment.

Thelo Maja is the bubbly 34-year-old founder of this impressive business. Her seven Spahlo Paleis stores sell 6 000 plus *kotas* a day, six days a week.

Another two restaurants sell a range of *kasi kos* meals. Thelo's story is a *kasi* success story, born from a desire for *kasi* food.

Thelo ran a secretarial service on the first floor of an office block in central Pretoria. Every lunchtime Thelo wished she could find *kasi* food for lunch in town. Not finding it she thought back to her school days when she used to help her *gogo* sell *kasi* food in Mamelodi. "Why not do that now?" She rented the vacant restaurant downstairs and started selling good *kasi* food, *pap*, samp and beans, *sishebos*, *morogo*, *dombolo*, *mogodu*.

Soon her restaurant was buzzing with advocates, director-generals and directors of government departments and other local business people loving her *kasi* food. She opened a budget *kasi* food outlet next door with the same fare but at more



“ Thelo has found her niche away from *ekasi*, and away from the informal markets, it is among city people aching for the food of *ekasi* in the busy first world, food for Afropolitans. ”

affordable price points, this too took off. Then one day some students asked her why didn't she sell *spalho's*?

“I thought why not,” laughs Thelo, but I wanted to make the best *spahlos* in Pretoria, so I travelled around the Gauteng *kasi's* trying every *spahlo* or *kota* people recommended. She pats her waist, “that's why I have this today,” she giggles infectiously. “Then I experimented, and only when I had made the best *spahlos* in South Africa, then I opened Spahlo Paleis.” Spahlo Paleis is a swish modern restaurant, the *spahlos* made on an 'assembly line' reminiscent of Subways, ingredients added according to the order.

I got an email from a young Sowetan start-up. It goes ...

“My name is Kopano Mofokeng. I am the founder of a two-month old registered start-up called Kasi Convenience. We are a distributor with a focus on the township food sector. Our primary activities include sourcing of quality brands and products, warehousing them (in my grandmother's 6m² backroom in Soweto), preparing them for orders, and then delivering them (in my late grandfather's 1989 Nissan 1400 bakkie) to our customers, within one hour after receiving an order on WhatsApp. We mainly sell to businesses that sell *kotas*, plates, and one or two retailers.”



Today, four months later, with a little help and some connections, Kopano has grown his business dramatically. A large meat business took a risk on him and offered him a credit line giving him good prices, and sold him a refrigerated vehicle on terms.

Naturally
at your
side.

AHT
a member of **DAIKIN** group

EUROSHOP 2020 – AHT Makes its Easy!

PARIS

The plug-in freezer/refrigerator that redefines economy and lifts product presentation to an innovative level.

PARIS also maximises your sales space by means of shelf inserts, which will further increase your revenues. PARIS – an extremely efficient all-rounder that can lay claim to prestigious excellence.



ATHENS – Future proof investments in Refrigeration and Freezing

Our overall philosophy is based on four pillars.

- Sustainability
- Energy Efficiency
- Innovation
- Maximum customer benefits

“WE COOL AND YOU SELL” Plug it in, refrigerate or freeze, and sell more – that’s our motto at AHT, which has been inspiring customers and boosting their business since 1983.



MANHATTAN - Food Retail

AHT has been the experienced expertise, product and service partner for leading supermarket chains and discounters throughout the world for decades.

The sustainability of our activity is visible in our daily work, our products, and our persistent development efforts. Thinking in a forward-looking manner.



Contact Us:

Phone: 021 851 9616

Email: sales@ahtafrica.co.za
multilayertrading.com



In a globalized world of constant change, we as innovation leaders think it is important to act sustainably and in view to the future. It is our duty to set standards which the following generations can build upon – about environment aspects as well as the ability to finance our future.



The advantages are obvious: Product safety, lower running costs.

AHT showed a “HERO retro chest” at Euroshop that has been used successfully every day for over 20 years. AHT was already focused on energy efficiency at that time. Since then, the technology for the presentation and storage of refrigerated and frozen goods has been continuously improved through more efficient components and new control strategies. As a result, it is now possible to achieve a daily energy consumption of less than 4kWh even with units that have a net volume of 1000 litres and more.

AHT is making a clear statement in regard to the global climate discussion. The most efficient island freezers are those with the closed glass tops. We are seeing a massive drive towards the R290 self-contained units.

With this update that has been in use since 2019, we emphasize our expertise in energy efficiency. We have once again managed to reduce the energy consumption of the AHT chest freezer fleet by up to 20%. It makes us especially proud that we have achieved these savings and at the same time have also optimized product temperature safety in combination with our new defrosting concept. Thanks to this efficiency, with the update, we have managed to achieve the lowest energy consumption in the industry. By using eco-friendly propane, AHT refrigeration technology lets the environment breathe.



Energy efficiency & Cost savings are critical in every supermarket, but how does a store go about achieving concrete savings in the current climate?

Plug-in for cool sales success

AHT is the inventor of the plug-in installation: the revolutionary Plug & Chill concept makes AHT's refrigerated multideck cabinets and chest freezers the logical choice for supermarkets to buy.

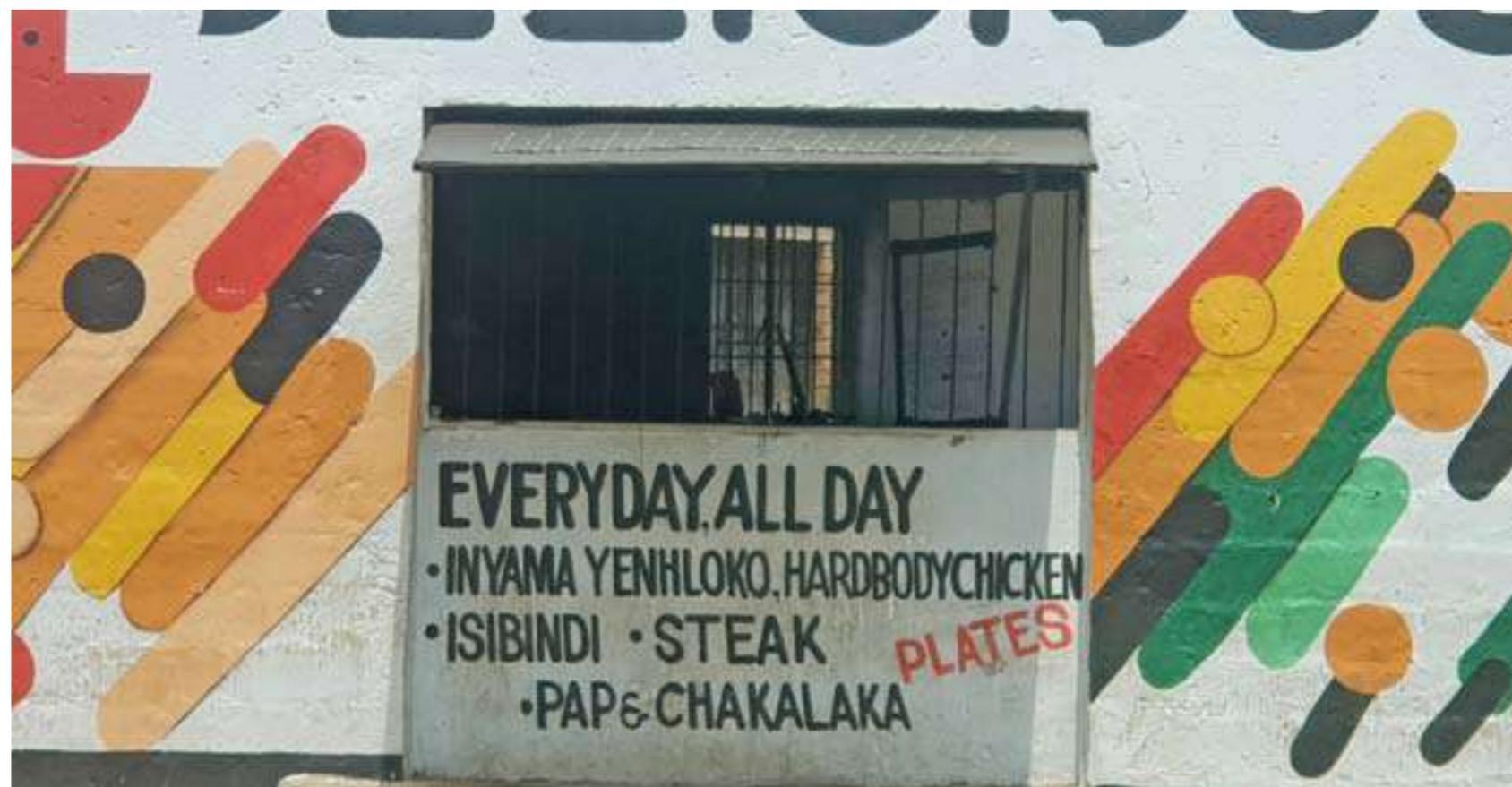
Sustainable cost reduction

Thanks to the complete integration of all the refrigeration components, no additional installation costs are incurred. This ensures that AHT appliances are convenient and reduces the cost of developing and/or refurbishing supermarkets.

1998 to 2020 AHT is continuously expanding our position as a world leader – these principles guide us in everything we think and do!

Kasi Convenience has gone from zero chicken sales in November 2019 to 2.5 tons a week in March 2020. And that's just to 60 outlets. There are broadly five sectors in the South African *kasi kos* sector;

- *Kotas* and burgers, the basic kota selling for R12, which is the quarter loaf of bread, with slap chips, atchar, slice of polony and sauces. Add-ons increase the price, as you add a fried egg, burger patty, Russian, Vienna, cheese slice and so on
- *Amaplati*, sold from restaurants, taverns, gazebos in ranks and caravans on streets or industrial sites. *Amaplati* offerings are a plate of food with a grilled or stewed meat, rice, *dombolo* or *pap*, a veggie and a salad or relish. A typical '*plati*' generally sells for R35–R50 a plate
- *Shisanyama*, often associated with a tavern or events venue, the *shisanyamas* are the braais of the *kasi*, with blade steak, boerewors, chops, chicken along with *dombolo*, *pap* or *putu*, *chakalaka* and generally eaten using your hands
- *Amagwinya / Vetkoek* with ingredients such as polony, fried fish, cheese slice, liver spread, atchar. Vetkoek sell between R1 and R2 each before the additions
- Grilled chicken, generally a whole, half or quarter flatty, most often called chicken dust. Sold for around R80 for a full chicken, chicken dust comes generally with slap chips.



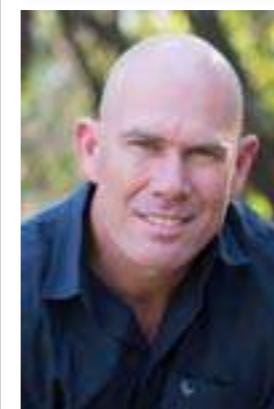
Over and above this informal fast food traders also offer fried fish, cows and sheep's heads, trotters, tripe, breakfast porridge and hard-body chicken all generally prepared in the traditional manner and local tribal recipe.

With over 50 000 fast food sellers and outlets, plus another 40 000 licenced taverns and shebeens that sell food along with alcohol this sector equals the numeric size of the *spaza* sector and possibly exceeds the *spaza* sector in total rand value. It is however often confused with and seen as the same as the *spaza* sector.

“ The growing vibrant *kasi kos* sector turns over in excess of R90 billion a year (food only not including alcohol sales) with 200 000+ people employed in this sector. ”

Interestingly this sector unlike the *spaza* sector is dominated by South African owners and staff, with almost 90% of prepared food traders being South African.

With little formal support or supply, this sector represents untapped opportunities to supply, partner, grow and develop the gastronomic KasiNomic entrepreneurs as a key part of our economy. **SR**



GG Alcock is the author of *Third World Child: White Born Zulu Bred*, *KasiNomics: African Informal Economies and the People Who Inhabit Them*, and *KasiNomic Revolution: The Rise of African Informal Economies* (this article includes excerpts from this book). He is the founder of Minanawe Marketing and is a specialist in informal & Kasi (township) economies, marketing and route to market strategies. Visit www.ggalcock.com