



Communication and Marketing Department
Isebe loThungelwano neNtengiso
Kommunikasie en Bemerkingsdepartement

Private Bag X3, Rondebosch 7701, South Africa
Welgelegen House, Chapel Road Extension, Rosebank, Cape Town
Tel: +27 (0) 21 650 5427/5428/5674 Fax: +27 (0) 21 650 5628

www.uct.ac.za

27 January 2016

Trust of minibus taxi operators is key to reforming public transport – UCT research

Research at the University of Cape Town has revealed encouraging signs of a positive and more productive relationship between local government and minibus taxi operators.

The PhD research, conducted by Herrie Schalekamp, has documented six years of engagement between the City of Cape Town and minibus taxi operators in the MyCiTi bus system's first project phase.

Schalekamp said interviews with operators in the minibus taxi business showed that they were keen to make their businesses more viable and promote a positive public image.

Services like South Africa's minibus taxis dominate public transport systems in many cities in Sub-Saharan Africa, yet there is little direct insight into what drives these operators, how they view and run their businesses, and why they often respond unenthusiastically to reform efforts. The MyCiTi reform project highlighted all these issues. Schalekamp responded by conducting in-depth interviews with a number of operators across Cape Town, and by engaging with officials and professionals who were instrumental in the reform programmes.

Schalekamp concludes that attempts by operators to restructure their businesses reveal that they are not necessarily passive participants waiting for government to stimulate change.

He said transport reform programmes responded to certain key aspirations of both large and small-scale minibus taxi businesses. Proposed revisions to both reform programmes could extend their impacts, but building trust with operators was an essential first step.

In the second MyCiTi project phase the municipality is investing in building the knowledge and capacity of minibus taxi operators prior to implementing large-scale changes to public transport operations. As part of this preparation process Schalekamp has been involved in developing and running a capacity building programme at UCT for operators from Mitchell's Plain and Khayelitsha.

Schalekamp, who is the research officer for the African Centre of Excellence in Transport, said there was a very poor understanding of how the minibus taxi industry worked – and he hoped to change this perception.

“Taxis are often seen as a problem that is best ignored or wished away. Yet taxis provide travel options to people in cities and rural areas, and provide direct and indirect employment to tens of thousands of people who have extremely limited work options. Improvement to the service that minibus taxis provide and the way they are run and organised could have significant knock-on effects,” said Schalekamp.

Schalekamp’s research is aligned with one of UCT’s goals to enhance the university’s contribution to South Africa’s development challenges.

Schalekamp holds the degrees of BAS and BArch, and MPhil in Transport Studies, from UCT. Since 2009 he has been the research officer for the African Centre of Excellence in Transport, a collaborative research venture between UCT and the Universities of Dar es Salaam and Nairobi. He was awarded his PhD degree on 19 December 2015. His doctoral thesis was supervised by Associate Professor Roger Behrens in the Department of Civil Engineering at UCT, and is entitled “Paratransit operators’ participation in public transport reform in Cape Town: A qualitative investigation of their business aspirations and attitudes to reform”.

ENDS

Issued by: UCT Communication and Marketing Department

Azwi Mufamadi

Media Liaison and Monitoring Officer
Communication and Marketing Department
University of Cape Town
Rondebosch
Tel: (021) 650 5427 Fax: (021) 650 3780
Cell: (078) 528 6065
Email: azwi.mufamadi@uct.ac.za
Website: www.uct.ac.za