

Article

Eating Hamburgers Slowly and Sustainably: The Fast Food Market in North-West Italy

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Abstract: The Italian food movement shows some peculiarities of meeting consumer demand in the foodservice subsector where innovation is considered strategic to meet targets and reach goals. A particular kind of innovation is the return to tradition by enhancement of the territory, e.g., reinstating local recipes and local gastronomy or high-quality local raw materials. Some entrepreneurs are redefining the fast-food service, providing foodstuffs through a short supply chain. The aim of this paper is to identify the different hamburger foodservices operating in North-West Italy and address their diverse peculiarities. A sample of 11 hamburger restaurants was identified, a mystery shopping analysis was implemented to collect information on the foodservice phenomenon, and a Business Model Canvas was carried out to compare different foodservices. The results consider two different hamburger foodservices, i.e., International Hamburger Foodservice (IHF) and Local Hamburger Foodservice (LHF), the former concentrating mainly on customer service, human resource management, and operations management, and the latter focussing on high product quality in terms of materials and psychology, plus selection of local raw materials and ingredients, supporting the local economy and businesses. Moreover, the findings provide some information on the interaction between selected Hamburger Foodservices and related supply chains, highlighting the consumer transition toward meals of high quality standards in terms of raw materials and ingredients.

Keywords: hamburger; foodservice; short supply chain; territory; local; fast-food; innovation

1. Introduction

Globalization means linking the different markets at the global level through technological innovation, bringing about new consistent and convergent models of consumption and production. It also promotes economic integration between countries, facilitating international trade, empowering international institutions, e.g., the World Trade Organization, and expanding trade in the agricultural and agro-industrial sectors. Indeed, for a long time, food products have been associated with the place of production because the concept of origin is strongly linked to the geographical origin based on a particular territory. In this respect, the historical and traditional ties between places and food must be taken into consideration as access to the natural resources of the territory. This phenomenon has determined the lifestyles of the different communities. However, the twentieth century saw a transformation of the food system favored by distribution systems and marketing tools more efficient than the previous that, in fact, weakened traditional territorial structures.

Petrini [1] summarized the meaning of the term globalization with an anecdote concerning the abandonment of typical local crops to focus on the production of traditional plants of other countries. In 1996, farmers in the Asti province produced tulip bulbs for the Netherlands, whilst Dutch agricultural

entrepreneurs exported to Italy the obtained peppers, like other vegetables, from hydroponic crops, i.e., nutritious solutions without using agricultural land. Petrinì's comments pointed to the irrationality of this way of producing food and its distorting effects of increased downgrading and decay of territorial specificities through international trade of standardized products deprived of social and environmental content. Moreover, hydroponic cultivation destroyed the link between food produce and agricultural land.

Recently, the European food sector has changed compared to the 1990s. A policy was introduced 20 years ago, aimed at safeguarding food traditions, the territory, and food origin through the adoption of certification labelling schemes [2–10]. Also, private companies have revised the meaning of globalization. Changes in the consumer society have led many food companies to approach their global vision in local terms. Some multinationals have redefined their strategies and operational processes, defining them in terms of local specificities and expectations. As an example, fast-food service is focussed on local raw materials or qualitative peculiarities [11–16].

In recent years, a well-known international foodservice enterprise has signed trade agreements with local PDO (Protected Designation of Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) protection consortia for the supply of characterizing ingredients, including meat originating from native breeds, such as *Bovino Piemontese* and *Chianina*. These raw materials are used to produce special hamburgers, proving the need to link a gastronomic offer to the place of consumption [17,18].

Place and/or locality are adjustment tools for international food operators adopting the changes in consumer behaviour and attitude regarding assessment of foodstuffs and new models of consumption [19–26]. However, also the place is a fundamental element to create an Alternative Food Network (AFN), a useful tool for safeguarding the environment and biodiversity, improving the quality of foodstuffs and outcomes of local operators, protecting consumers, and enhancing confidence in the food sector [27–36].

These changes in the food sector are also contributors to innovation, which means the ability to convert a good idea into a material or an intangible good with social and/or economic implications and adequate knowledge to target a wide distribution and widespread success [37]. Generally, innovation can impact production processes, e.g., specific operations or new plants and devices, products, e.g., novel foods, or services, e.g., home delivery [38]. Innovation could also impact technology, e.g., an increased shelf life of food through a modified atmosphere, or sociology, e.g., back to tradition [4].

In the food sector, innovation is a strategic key to meeting targets and reaching goals [39–41]. It may be incremental or radical, whereby incremental would imply wider coverage, whereas consumers tend to maintain their habits regarding food [42–48]. A part of food innovation is tradition, a strategic key to changing what the food sector offers [49–51] to increase the value of specific foods and foodstuffs [52–57].

In the foodservice subsector, innovation is a precious tool to fight imitation [58], facilitate service [59], hasten the adoption of novel foods, increase the acceptance of technology [60], and implement access of organic food to large-scale foodservices [61]. Moreover, innovation helps foodservice establishments stay ahead of the competition, resulting in the establishment of a long-term competitive advantage [62]. At the same time, tradition should equally mean enhancement of local recipes and gastronomy in different geographical areas [63] or high-quality local raw materials for the preparation of recipes in restaurants and hotels [64,65].

The concept of tradition as innovation was introduced in Italy by the Slow Food movement. The gastronomy sector applies new solutions to food preparation and foodservice development. The metamorphosis started with the Slow Food Manifesto against Fast Food globalization [66,67] and led to the Slow Food classification of food quality, i.e., “Good, Clean, and Fair” [1,68]. In turn, this new approach to food production and service lead to the reconsideration of food and foodstuff sector processes provided by shorter food supply chains as a new alternative to traditional methods [69,70]. The resulting “slow fast-food” philosophy is a foodservice based on the link between tradition and innovation in high-quality food, whereby raw materials and ingredients, food processing, foodservice

management, and consumables are carefully selected to meet sustainable criteria: the value added to processed food products supports the work of local breeders and the income of their families.

Here, the supply chain could have a main role, with food and drink enterprises meeting qualitative requirements and rules to satisfy market demand. The characteristics essential to compete in the food sector include compulsory quality, e.g., food safety, voluntary quality, e.g., certification and labelling, sustainability, e.g., a triple bottom line, and perceived quality, e.g., consumer perception [71,72]. Moreover, the food market shows some peculiarities as regards satisfaction of consumer demand in the foodservice subsector. Indeed, foodservice companies are innovating [62], but are they moving fast enough to stay relevant in the face of evolving consumers' tastes and preferences?

Some entrepreneurs have recently been redefining the meaning of fast-food service (see "hamburger foodservice"), providing foodstuffs through a short supply chain. These changes in product/service terms can play a key role in market transformation processes, contributing to the creation of value for companies that propose an innovative foodservice, and for the territory, if the innovative aspect of foodservice is completely linked to the resources and heritage of the territory. In this context, it is appropriate to ask what these innovative aspects are and how they are interpreted in order to identify the main peculiarities of the different foodservices.

On the basis of the aforementioned consideration, the aim of this paper was to identify the various hamburger foodservices operating in the North-West of Italy and define their diverse peculiarities, especially any real differences between them as regards consumer demand for local food products. Therefore, the following research questions are presented:

RQ1: What are the business models of different hamburger foodservices operating in the North-West of Italy?

RQ2: What are the main differences amongst hamburger foodservices, considering the customer service and the interpretation of food quality?

This study is organized as follows. The "Materials and Methods" section shows the selected methodological approach, i.e., the mystery shopping analysis and Business Model Canvas. The first method was selected to analyze freely the different restaurants belonging to local and international hamburger foodservices and compare benchmark competitors to each other; moreover, the researchers sampled meals and products and collected objective and comparable characteristics. The second system was selected to assess the main characteristics that were collected with the mystery shopping analysis and compare the different restaurant chains. The "Results" section describes the main results that were obtained and highlights the main differences and the focal peculiarities of the local and international hamburger foodservices. The "Discussion" paragraph reports the interpretation of the data in the light of the results and a literature review. The final section of the paper, named "Conclusion, Implications, and Limitations", provides the main conclusions, some suggestions to stakeholders, and directions to improve the research.

2. Materials and Methods

The hamburger foodservice was investigated in the metropolitan area of Turin, a well-known location that has been the subject of several international studies of the food sector reviewing different topics, venues, and enterprises, such as the *Salone del Gusto* and *Terra Madre*, major Slow Food initiatives, Eataly, a world leader in quality foodstuff retailing, and *Porta Palazzo*, the largest outdoor market in town [73–81].

To gather information on hamburger foodservices in the metropolitan area, a mystery shopping analysis was implemented covering different types of facilities and monitoring benchmark competitors, whereby researchers sampled products and evaluated them objectively [82–86]. A total of two International hamburger foodservices (IHF), i.e., McDonald's and Burger King, and two local hamburger foodservices (LHF), i.e., M** Bun and L'Hamburgeria di Eataly, were involved. On the one side, McDonald's and Burger King were selected on the basis of their international foodservice profile and their wide presence in the study area. Indeed, they have several restaurants in the Greater

Torino area and provide a standardized international hamburger foodservice. On the other side, M** Bun and L'Hamburgeria di Eataly were selected on the basis of two criteria, i.e., they are the first Local Hamburger Foodservices opened in the Greater Torino area and they are the only two operators that have more than one restaurant in the study area. Moreover, IHFs and LHF were required to have at least one restaurant in the city centre and at least one other in the Torino suburbs area. This criterion was selected to evidence feasible differences intra-hamburger foodservice between the city centre and the suburbs.

On the basis of the aforementioned information, the sample was composed of two restaurants per Hamburger Foodservice (only one for L'Hamburgeria di Eataly) in the city centre, and one restaurant per Hamburger Foodservice in the Torino suburbs area. Therefore, a total of 11 restaurants was selected (see Figure 1). Each restaurant was tested four times, carrying out 44 visits, i.e., 24 at IHFs and 20 at LHF.

The mystery shopping analysis was performed to collect information on different hamburger foodservices from the consumer point of view. In this case, mystery shopping was chosen to measure the different meanings of quality of the service delivery to the customer using, on the one hand, well-trained mystery guests, and, on the other, a checklist dedicated to evaluating different characteristics of the provided service, e.g., the provenance of raw materials, waiting time, and price [87]. Moreover, a sample meal, including a hamburger, fries, and a drink, was selected to compare different businesses.

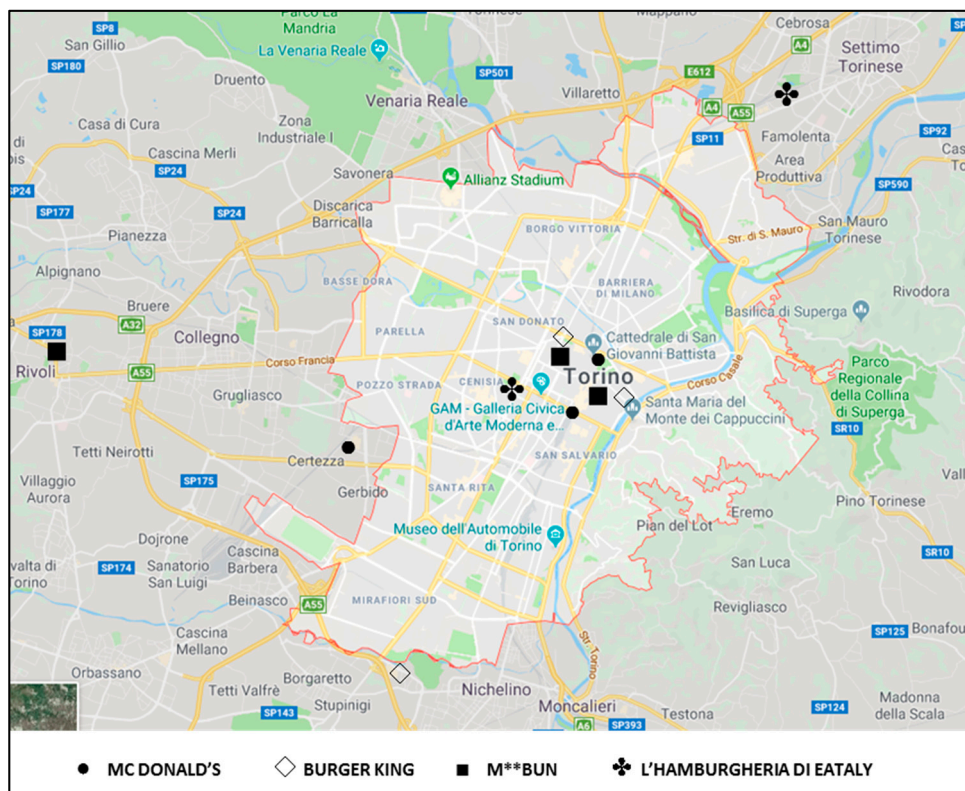


Figure 1. The selected restaurants in the Greater Torino area. Source: Authors' elaboration.

Moreover, the Business Model Canvas (BMC) method was used to analyze and compare data, which permitted an assessment of entrepreneurial initiatives [88–92] or planning and organizing institutions [93–95]. BMC has also been applied to the food sector for evaluating improvements in sustainable development in fisheries [96], implementing complementary services in the food supply chain [97], and identifying and comparing different foodservices [98].

BMC was also crucial in highlighting the potential for enterprises to create value [99] and accurately assessing the contribution to value added by hamburger foodservice operators in the metropolitan

area. Consisting of different blocks, including value propositions, key resources, key activities, key partners, customer segments, customer relationships, channels, the cost structure, and revenue streams, BMC fully covers the business offer. We disregarded cost structure and revenue streams because the data collected only apply to the price of the food offer, excluding the cost structure (see Figure 2).



Figure 2. The Business Model Canvas (BMC). Source: [99].

3. Results

3.1. International Hamburger Foodservice (IHF)

Our analysis was based on data obtained by four mystery shoppers visiting three restaurants of two different international fast food brands, i.e., McDonalds and Burger King, according to BMC, as outlined hereunder.

3.1.1. McDonald's

1. *Value Proposition.* Offering conventional and inexpensive food products, namely fast food, such as hamburgers, French fries, and soft and cold drinks, possibly including local raw materials and ingredients, e.g., *Bovino Piemontese* meat, *Chianina* meat, *Tropea Cipolla Rossa Calabria* PGI onions, *Provolone Valpadana* PDO cheese, suitable for consumption in any situation, including dinner, lunch, brunch, and big events. In some instances, new recipes are provided by food and beverage experts with TV experience, e.g., Joe Bastianich, star of the TV show *Masterchef*.

2. *Key Resources.* Professional, open-view kitchen, and standard equipment and layout. The menu is shown on desks and orders are placed directly by the customer through a totem touchscreen. Cleaning timetables are provided in the various dining areas. Waste management does not include recycling, and all waste is placed in generic waste containers. All staff wear professional, branded uniforms. An inexpensive menu at €4.90 is available but not advertised. Table service provided.

3. *Key Activities.* Provision of fast and inexpensive food in the urban and suburban areas. Other important features include the provision of lunch for families and young children, game areas, and parties on demand. Sometimes, special offers include local high-quality foods and beverages, and a sector expert may be present to promote new meals.

4. *Key Partners.* Raw materials and ingredients are supplied by the large food operators in order to strike cost-effective deals to keep prices down. For some products, Italian provenance of ingredients is highlighted to enhance prestige.

5. *Customer Segments.* Comprise “walking people”, groups, and tourists and, in general, those who simply want to have something to eat and a drink quickly at a low cost (€4.90 to €8.90), with a waiting time for table service of 2–6 min. These customers demand easy access to inexpensive and readily available food and drink. Families and young children are crucial for this business.

6. *Customer Relationships*. The aim is to establish a confidential relationship with customers, a sort of “big brother” substitute to impress on customers the idea that they “will never walk alone”. In turn, customers contribute to the food service process through touch-screen ordering.

7. *Channels*. Various communication channels are used to inform customers, e.g., TV, radio, internet, social media, and posters. This is a worldwide confidence relationship with the customer, who can find a branded restaurant anywhere in the world with (almost) the same gastronomic offer.

3.1.2. Burger King

1. *Value Proposition*. Offering conventional and inexpensive food products, i.e., different types of hamburgers, French fries, soft and cold drinks, as a service much in demand for dinner, lunch, and brunch.

2. *Key Resources*. Professional, open-view kitchen, and standard equipment and layout rooms. The menu is shown on desks, the inexpensive options (€3.99) appearing on the exterior of the facility. Waste management does not include recycling, all waste being placed in generic containers. All staff wear professional, branded uniforms. Cleaning timetables are provided in the various dining areas.

3. *Key Activities*. Providing fast and inexpensive food in the urban and suburban area, as well as lunch for groups and families with young children, game areas, and parties on demand. The food and beverage offer is upgraded from time to time with high-quality ingredients and new recipes.

4. *Key Partners*. Raw materials and ingredients are supplied by the large food operators in order to strike cost-effective deals to keep prices down.

5. *Customer Segments*. Activity is aimed at *hungry consumers* who simply want something to eat and a drink quickly and inexpensively with a waiting time (no table service) not in excess of 8 min at €3.99 to €10.00. Customer demand is for easily available inexpensive food and drinks ready for consumption. Families with young children are crucial for this business.

6. *Customer Relationships*. The idea is to establish a confidential relationship with the customer, with a variety of ingredients to suit consumer taste.

7. *Channels*. Various communication channels are used to inform customers, including TV, radio, internet, social media, and posters. This is a worldwide confidence relationship with the customer, who can find a branded restaurant anywhere in the world with (almost) the same gastronomic offer.

3.2. Local Hamburger Foodservice (LHF)

Local fast-food restaurant chains are a new way to fight food globalization in the business world. Established in the metropolitan area in 2009, they currently consist of about 20 local hamburger restaurants. The LHF case study was based on information obtained through mystery client analysis of five restaurants belonging to two different local fast-food chains, namely M** Bun (three outlets), and L'Hamburgeria di Eataly (two outlets), which were visited by four mystery shoppers, and presented according to BMC, as outlined hereunder.

3.2.1. M** Bun

1. *Value Proposition*. Offering local ingredients for products and menus, with a focus on raw material selection, origin, and/or provenance of meats and vegetables, used processing methods, and a short supply chain. The emphasis here is on higher quality compared to that of the competition. So, the prerequisites are tradition, territory, raw materials, supply chain, production method, and sustainability.

2. *Key Resources*. Professional, open-space kitchen, standard equipment, and HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point) registration, such as a cleaning timetable in different dining areas. The business strategy is adamant about waste and adequate time dedicated to collection. Waste management includes recycling with separate sorting and use of specific containers for glass, paper, and organics. All staff wear professional, branded uniforms. The menu offer includes classic hamburgers

(100% Piedmont veal), rural fries, and soft drinks at €11.50, increasing to €14 with local beer or local wine instead of soft drinks.

3. *Key Activities*. Adapting to consumer dynamics and diversifying the gastronomic offer depending on what is made available by the international chains, e.g., changing some ingredients in order to meet customer demand for local and regional products. Waiting time is 15–25 min, depending on the provided service type. The longer time is due to cooking the meat on the spot. No envisaged table service.

4. *Key Partners*. The main challenge is to offer the best intrinsic quality at the right price, and also to support local businesses. Suppliers of raw materials are another crucial aspect, as meat and other ingredients are sourced from local producers. These aspects are key to meeting the criteria of the value proposition.

5. *Customer Segments*. Offering high-quality food and beverages sourced through a short supply chain of raw materials to customers in search of new food experiences, calling for a redefinition of the tradition of food in terms of historical and traditional recipes, e.g., fresh cottage cheese with garlic, oil, and parsley, locally known as *tomino al verde*, or *Fassona* meat, a particular Piedmont veal, or red sauce aka *Rubra*. Targeted customers are those keen on high-quality foods and beverages, who have a passion for traditional and new recipes based on local raw materials, and are willing to pay extra for high-quality ingredients. Also, consumers prepared to wait a little longer for their food (15–25 min). The longer time is due to cooking the meat there and then.

6. *Customer Relationships*. The aim is to establish a special relationship with customers through an innovative service, i.e., food and beverages as ecological flatware, innovative recipes, gastronomic offers, local and regional raw materials, and a storytelling service that emphasizes certain topics, such as the selection of raw materials or the tradition of recipes. Moreover, the food is named using local Piedmontese terms to underline the strong relationship between territory and offer.

7. *Channels*. Different communication channels are used to inform customers, such as radio, the Internet, and social media.

3.2.2. L'Hamburgheria di Eataly

1. *Value Proposition*. Offering products and menus using local ingredients, focusing on careful selection of raw materials, origin and/or sourcing of meats, vegetables, and ingredients, processing, and a short supply chain. Also, providing higher quality than that of the competition, based on tradition, territory, raw materials, the supply chain, and processing methods.

2. *Key Resources*. Professional, open-view kitchen, standard equipment, and HACCP registration (a cleaning timetable in the various dining areas). The business strategy is adamant about waste and adequate time is dedicated to collection. Waste management includes recycling with separate sorting and use of specific containers for glass, paper, and organics. All staff wear professional, branded uniforms. Menus span from basic *Giotto* at €13.30 to *Maxi-Giotto* at €18.00, comprising hamburger (100% Piedmont veal La Granda), fries or salad, a soft drink, or local draft beer or local wine.

3. *Key Activities*. Focussing on consumer dynamics and diversifying the gastronomic offer depending on what is made available by the international chains, e.g., changing some ingredients in order to meet customer demand for local, regional, and national products. Waiting time is 15–20 min, depending on the provided service type. The longer time is due to cooking the meat on the spot. Table service is not envisaged.

4. *Key Partners*. The main challenge is to offer the best intrinsic quality at the right price, and also to support local businesses. The meat is supplied by the La Granda consortium; other raw materials by local and national purveyors. These aspects are key to meeting the criteria of the value proposition.

5. *Customer Segments*. Supplying high-quality food and beverages, sourced from short supply chain purveyors of raw materials, to customers in search of new food experiences, calling for the redefinition of the tradition of local and national raw materials and ingredients. Targeted customers are those keen on high-quality foods and beverages, with a passion for new recipes, and willing to pay extra for high-quality ingredients. Also, consumers prepared to wait a little longer for their food (10–25 min).

6. *Customer Relationships*. The aim is to establish a special relationship with customers through an innovative service, i.e., food and beverages as ecological flatware, innovative recipes, gastronomic offers, local and national raw materials, and a storytelling service that emphasizes certain topics, such as the selection of raw materials or the tradition of recipes.

7. *Channels*. Different communication channels are used to inform customers, e.g., radio, the Internet, and social media.

The information gathered through mystery shopping was used to identify IHF and LHF for a comparative analysis using BMC (see Table 1).

Table 1 shows how the analysis carried out by applying the seven BMC parameters substantially highlights the same distinctive elements for both cases (IHF and LHF).

Table 1. Comparison of the four investigated hamburger foodservices.

	International Hamburger Foodservice (IHF)		Local Hamburger Foodservice (LHF)	
	McDonald's	Burger King	M** Bun	L'Hamburgheria di Eataly
Value propositions	Conventional and inexpensive food products, sometimes with local raw materials and ingredients.	Conventional and inexpensive food products.	Local ingredients, tradition, territory, supply chain, production method, and sustainability.	Local ingredients, tradition, territory, supply chain, production method, and sustainability.
Key resources	Self-ordering by the customer through a touchscreen, high technology innovation.	Some self-ordering by the customer through a touchscreen (only one restaurant).	Waste management, strong link to territory (local raw materials).	Waste management, link to territory (national and local raw materials).
Key activities	High-quality offering. Periodic menu alternatives linked to territory.	High-quality offering.	Diversified gastronomic offering, high quality, niche products, and traditional recipes	Diversified gastronomic offering, high-quality and niche products.
Key partners	National and international suppliers.	National and international suppliers.	Local suppliers.	Local and national suppliers.
Customer segments	Teenagers, families, and tourists demanding inexpensive fast food, table service, a waiting time of 2 to 6 min, and a menu price range of €4.90 to €8.90.	Teenagers, families, and tourists demanding inexpensive fast food, no table service, a waiting time of 8 min max. from payment, and a menu price range of €3.99 to €10.00.	Age group from 25 up and a few families. Customers who are willing to wait longer.	Age group from 25 up and a few families. Customers who are willing to wait longer.
Customer relationships	Fast and inexpensive. Innovative services.	Fast and inexpensive.	Offering based on tradition and territory.	Offering based on tradition and territory.
Channels	Radio, TV, Internet, social media, posters.	Radio, TV, Internet, social media, posters.	Radio, Internet, social media.	Radio, Internet, social media.

4. Discussion

The analysis of a business model offers great support to growing companies, because it serves as guidance when managing and developing their business. Indeed, it is crucial that business models describe the correct value elements, as well as the targeted market segments, to attract and sustain users. In particular, from the analysis of the seven elements of the business model, it is possible, even more, to highlight the common and different elements among the four operators and the difference between the two types of hamburger food services. The main difference is described in the “value proposition” block, in which the final object of IHF and LHF is clear. The nature of the value proposition impacts on the orderly identification of the key elements of the business.

On the one hand, IHFs, i.e., McDonald's and Burger King, appeared to be highly focused on customer service (in terms of order, efficiency, and speed), human resources management (considered essential for attaining the envisaged customer service standards), and processing management (food preparation) as per Ford-Taylor. Burger King presents a menu that is definitely more simple

and standard than McDonald's: proposing products with similar ingredients means less waste of raw materials and at the same time lower sales prices. The far more numerous variants of McDonald's, e.g., in the list of ingredients, as well as in the various seasonal experiments, maybe including local raw materials and ingredients, and the innovation technology, represent the answer of the company to the new trend of the hamburger gourmet to continue to pamper their customers and try to remain an efficient machine [19–21,23,25]. Moreover, the gastronomic offer of McDonald's stimulates the perception of "regionality" in the consumer both through the use of European certifications, e.g., PDO, both more recently through the use of testimonials that guarantee the authenticity of the ingredients and the goodness of the recipes, highlighting the importance of marketing for final commercial success [27].

On the other hand, LHF's goal was reducing the length of the supply chain in an attempt to go back to the past. Indeed, as already mentioned, the distance between producer and consumer has considerably grown through the globalization of the food system; however, in the last 20 years, there has been an attempt to counter these effects by activating various initiatives that are referred to as "local food movements". In this case, the word "local" is associated with such attributes as quality, freshness, ecological agriculture, small-scale agriculture, and even a short food supply system [28,32,35,36]. Moreover, LHF's seemed to integrate the concept of quality that was reintroduced by Slow Food in the 1990s. This definition of quality is multisensory and includes, in addition to the organoleptic-sensorial aspects, also historical, cultural, social, institutional, and natural factors. The processing conditions, which contribute to quality products, have become an essential element [68], combining attention to and respect for local communities, the environment, and biodiversity, in line with the figure of "homo edens" as a consumer attentive to product and psychological requirements [71]. Consumption of local and sustainable food has become a tool to help local communities and respect the environment, reducing the distance between producer and consumer. This approach tends to educate consumers to be active subjects in the definition of high-quality food, puts them in contact with producers to create opportunities for social and cultural exchange, enables them to recognize the value of biodiversity not only in terms of fruits, vegetables, and animal species, but also of local tradition that makes food enjoyable and convenient. In this context, the two cases analysed, i.e., M** Bun and L'Hamburgeria di Eataly, fall into this category and are characterized by having redefined fast food in terms of high quality, striking a compromise between speed and price that is typical of fast food. Moreover, ingredients and flavours are selected at the regional or national level. The main ingredient, namely the beef used for burgers, is sourced exclusively from Piedmont. In both cases, the meat originates from a few selected producers of the metropolitan hinterland and from the La Granda producers' consortium, which is located in the Province of Cuneo, about 60 km from Turin. On the basis of the aforementioned consideration, the value proposition of the IHFs and LHF's can be summarized as follows (see Figure 3).

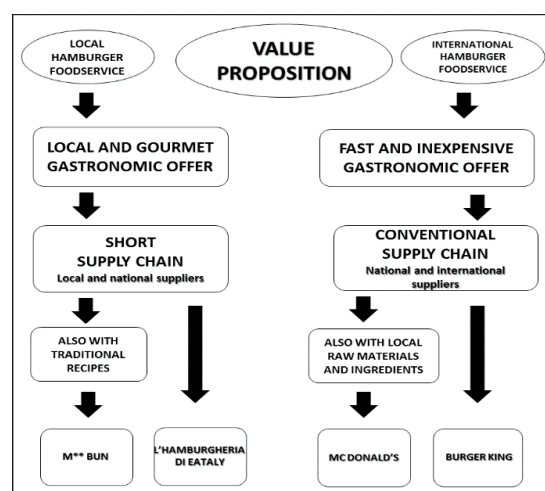


Figure 3. A flow-chart of the value propositions by the Hamburger Foodservice in the Greater Torino area.

In line with other authors [27–29,35,36], such initiatives support a reduction in the length of the supply chain and of logistics in terms of transport, the safeguard of local production activities, and, to a certain extent, also food security as in these two cases. The two meat productions are the subject of more stringent monitoring of animal feed and animal welfare compared to average livestock farmers, which should ensure both food safety and sustainability [33,34].

5. Conclusions, Implications, and Limitations

LHF provides food that is prepared by linking tradition and territory for high-quality standards. Raw materials and ingredients, food processes, food management, and consumables are also selected with sustainability in mind. This philosophy stimulates the perception of sustainable development, satisfies social needs to support tradition and territory, and meets environmental requirements by ecological butchering and managing waste sustainably. IHF conducts its business so as to maximize efficiency through a standard service by providing fast, inexpensive, and tasty food, innovation technology being a crucial element of this kind of foodservice. McDonald's has already introduced customer self-ordering, to reduce waiting time, quickly followed by Burger King.

This study has several theoretical and practical implications for the literature on foodservice and its interaction with local supply chains, highlighting the interest in local raw materials and ingredients, and providing some information on the needs of foodservice operators. It also evidences the consumer transition toward meals of high-quality standards in terms of the raw materials and ingredients that foodservice operators have attempted to satisfy and suggests to foodservice managers the peculiarities of the food market.

The gaps in this work that could be bridged in the future include the relatively small sample size (11 restaurants in the limited metropolitan area of Turin in North-West Italy). Future studies should integrate other geographical areas of Italy and the European Union, and the findings should be compared to gain a clearer understanding of the phenomenon. Finally, this analysis should be supported by in-depth studies on consumers' behaviour and managers' perceptions to cover more aspects of the fast-food service and improve the knowledge thereof.

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