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Defining the Food Truck Phenomenon in Italy: A Feasible Explanation

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Introduction: street food can be defined a ready-to-eat food and/or beverage, sold by vendors or hawkers, mainly in the streets or similar places. It is an important element in a diet and is also integrated into the tradition and culture of numerous countries. In this context, the last decade has witnessed an increase in the food truck, serving a kind of street food, led by "Gourmet Food Trucks" that have been able to meet the consumers' requests in the urban area. Aim: this study aims at analyzing the food truck service in the Greater Torino area and evidences the two different business operating in this sector i.e. the Traditional Food Truck (TFT) and the Gourmet Food Truck (GFT). Methodology: a comparative analysis between TFT and GFT services is proposed by a Business Model Canvas (BMC). A total of 23 GF Truckers and 18 TF Truckers took part and semi-structured interviews collected the information to implement the BMC. Findings: the study brought to light some differences between TFTs and GFTs. The comparison shows the evolution of the Food Truck phenomenon and enhances the characteristics of the GFT service as to sustainable development and the multidimensional value proposition. Conclusions: the GFTs are changing the food truck service, by adopting new solutions in food preparation and their equipment, as well as where their services are provided, the food offer and the socio/environmental design.
1 Introduction

As known, street food has an elevated socioeconomic value for many the world over. It can be defined a ready-to-eat food and/or beverage sold by vendors or hawkers mainly in the streets or in similar places, according to FAO (2009). On the one hand, this kind of food allows for an easier food access, on the other, an income for producers that have limited resources to start an economic activity (FAO, 2009). It is not only an important element in a diet, but is also integrated into the tradition and culture of numerous developing countries, in as much as it is eaten by people from all walks of life (Simopoulos and Bhat, 2000).

However, street food is a worldwide common phenomenon in continuous evolution (Basinski, 2014) and it is able to tie habits and traditions of countries far from one another, both geographically and culturally, of which original Italian pizza is an example (Neffati et al., 2004; Macías et al. 2009). Several places are tied to street food, like Jemaa ElFnaa place, in Marrakesh (Minca, 2007; Skounti, 2012), which links it every day, or the Vendy Award, which is given in the United States of America in Governors Island, once a year (Vendy Award, 2017).

Street food has been analyzed mainly from the point of view of food safety. Indeed, there are many and varied contamination and risk factors involved in this sector, in urban and sub-urban areas, e.g. limited hygiene also of the handlers, inadequate access to potable water, approximate garbage disposal and unsanitary environmental conditions (FAO, 2009).

Defining the strategies to fight the sanitary risks of street food, the World Health Organisation (WHO) has adopted the Five Keys to Safer Food, mainly for developing countries, i.e. keep clean, separate raw and cooked foodstuff, cook thoroughly, keep food at safe temperatures and use safe water and raw materials (WHO, 2006; Donkor, 2009; WHO, 2010). Street food can be prepared in small scale food factories, in the home, in markets and/or on the street, according to WHO (2010).

1.1 Food truck services and events

Herein, the authors discuss street food prepared "on the street", as the name implies. In fact, there is a long-standing tradition of food services offered by trucks in Italy. This kind of service is usually carried out during concerts and/or sports events and as part of the Italian night life. Therefore, it has been called “Traditional Food Truck” -identified as TFT-, in this chapter. TFT is a commercial activity carried out in a public space by trucks or other vehicles that have been set-up specifically for the preparation and handling of food. The gastronomic offer involved in this sector is characterized by very cheap fast street food e.g. hot dogs, sausages
(salami) and precooked vegetables. However, the last 5 years have witnessed the birth of a new kind of food truck that operates with a new philosophy oriented to satisfy various requests for quality over hunger, through the use of selected raw materials, aesthetic presentation and revisited traditional recipes. This new service has been called “Gourmet Food Truck”-identified as GFT- in this chapter.

The number of events dedicated to GFT services have increased over the last 4 years. For example, there were 3 GFT events in 2014 and 34 in 2017, on the basis of the available online information (streetfood.it; streetfoodtruckfestival.com; facebook.com; foodtruckfest.it). The management of the Food Truck Fest events declared 15,000 people per event, newspapers and reporters estimated 60,000 persons/event organized by the Streetfood Organisation, 100,000 persons/event for the International Street Food Parade and for the Street Food Truck Festival (Table 1). These data seem to confirm the touristic value of food truck events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Number of GFT events in Italy by Organisation.</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Food Truck Festival</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Street Food Parade</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Streetfood.it</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food Truck Fest</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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Starting from the aforementioned information, this work analyzed the food truck phenomenon in a specific urban and suburban area in the North West of Italy, i.e. Torino Città Metropolitana. This is the city of the Salone del Gusto and Terra Madre, the most famous events of Slow Food (Parkins and Craig, 2009; Black, 2012; Myers, 2013; Hendrikx et al., 2017) and Eataly (Massa and Testa, 2012; Sebastiani et al, 2013; Bertoldi et al., 2015; D’Ippolito and Timpano, 2016; Di Gregorio, 2017), the only Italian distribution chain of national high quality food-stuffs, with supermarkets operating the world over.

The authors draw attention to the food truck service and its evolution in this area and, identifying the peculiarities, describe the different characteristics of the two kinds of food truck services, i.e. TFT and GFT, in order to define two different business models.

### 2 Literature review

The street food phenomenon is an alternative to globalisation, a social and useful tool to change diets, a means to support tourism and the incomes of various social classes (Tinker, 1999; Long-Solis, 2007; Steyn et al., 2014; Alves da Silva et al., 2014). It is also a global phenomenon as it is common through the world
amongst all social classes and promotes the various local traditions (Steyn and Labadarios, 2011; Privitera, 2015).

However, there are also some less positive traits as street food also involves meeting hygienic requirements. Indeed, various studies show there is a poor respect of these during food preparation, due to various elements, e.g. inadequate raw materials, sites and tools, personal hygiene of the vendors and the lack of inspections and controls all around the world including the U.S.A., China, Thailand, South Africa and Brazil (Faw and Tuttle, 2013; Liu et al., 2014; Khongtong et al., 2014; Mchiza et al., 2014; Alves da Silva et al., 2014; De Souza et al., 2015). Various alternatives have been proposed to meet these market requests i.e. set rules and guidelines dedicated to food street operations (Burnett and Newman, 2014), permanent professional courses (Mukhola, 2014; De Souza et al., 2015), implementing new areas and re-adaptation to standards for the old sites to prepare street food (Newman and Burnett, 2013; Yahiro et al., 2013; De Cassia Vieira Cardoso et al., 2014; Cortese et al., 2016) and the creation of Street Vendors Associations (Esparza et al., 2014).

The EU considers this topic to be very important as demonstrated by their having set-up a complex regulation system, dedicated to food safety, has been implemented. It provides the Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point (HACCP) system and a structured regulation (Panisello and Quantick, 2001) to define a useful protocol to prevent any food scandals like those in the past e.g. methanol in wine (Barbera and Audifredi, 2012) the Chernobyl contamination (Ake and Slorach, 1987; Schwaiger et al., 2004; Nesterenko et al., 2009), the dioxin contamination (Verbeke, 2001; Nemery et al., 2002; Loeber et al., 2011; Banati, 2011), the Bovine spongiform encephalopathy cases and human diseases (Will et al., 1996; Weber et al., 1997; Wehl and Roos, 1999), harmful additives (Commission Decision, 2003; Tateo and Bononi, 2004) and bacterial diseases (Cantoni et al., 2003; Bevilacqua et al., 2006; Nogarol et al., 2013).

In this context, street food can be a source of concern for the EU as to food safety and can be considered a feasible vehicle for bacterial diseases. Indeed, this can be seen in various studies that have shown the importance of this topic also in the EU. These include an analysis of the street vendors in Athens and their capability to meet requirements of the Regulation (EC) No. 852/2004 on food hygiene (Trafialek et al., 2017), another study reported that the Portuguese ready-to-eat street food from vending trailers can be a potential vehicle for bacteria and food handlers are a critical risk factor in this business (Campos et al., 2015), another one done in Italy, reported the risk of unfavorable metabolic and cardiovascular effects, due to large quantities of energy and saturated fats (Buscemi et al., 2012).

However, street food can be also a useful tool to fight the food insecurity in the EU i.e. promoting the use of street food in food aid programmes as a practical and economic way to prevent nutritional deficiencies in the homeless as reported in France by Darmon, 2009. Moreover, it is able to enhance typical products, promoting Italian cities, increasing tourism (Bellia et al., 2016).
2.1 The new Food Truck Movement

In this context, the last decade has witnessed an increase in the food truck, serving a kind of street food. For example, this industry has had a 50% increase in the USA during the 2007-2012 period (Anenberg and Kung, 2015), led by “gourmet food trucks” that have been able to meet the consumers’ requests in the urban area. In some cases, the success of the food truck movement seems to be due to the economic recession, which started in 2008 (Martin, 2014). In fact, the economic crisis cut back the money spent in restaurants, which led to a lot of young chefs being unemployed (Weber, 2012; Esparza et al., 2014). At the same time, this situation opened another door for the “unemployed chefs”. Therefore, many of them have pooled their talents with the food services guaranteed by trucks, thus providing high quality and inexpensive creative food. The evolution of this phenomenon led to the development of some support activities by the local entities e.g. new rules and guidelines dedicated to food truck operations (Hernández-López, 2011; Linnekin et al., 2012; Martin, 2014).

This was true also for Italy, where the fast, inexpensive and/or gourmet food strictly prepared on the road became a feasible pathway to business success. The American boom had influenced the new Italian food truckers: in seven years (and not days) numerous food trucks were appeared and mobile vehicles occupied the urban spaces in large Italian cities e.g. Roma, Milano and Torino. In 2015, there was a 13% increase in restaurant service on the road and the number of operative trucks in Italy rose to 2,271, 187 of these were in the Piedmont area (Coldiretti, 2016). In line with the US phenomenon, the food truck industry is the new way to fight the economic crisis and new entrepreneurs are young people with, or without specific training in the sector, but all tied by food passion. This passion transforms the food truck service in an innovative way, characterized by traditional foods, regional and local raw materials and sustainable approaches (Rosati, 2015; Coldiretti, 2016). This new food truck service also seems to be more efficient and profitable than the TFT (Alfiero et al., 2017).

2.2 Business Model Canvas and Innovation

The business model explains the strategy to create value by enterprise (Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010). The object of a business model is to stimulate the sharing of information to create a communication advantage and increase knowledge about the processes involved in all the organization levels.

The Business Model Canvas (BMC) is a visual language made up of blocks, each one a fundamental element of enterprise i.e.:

1) value propositions: the reason why customers turn to one company rather than another. Each value proposition includes a selected bundle of products and services that caters to the requirements of a specific customer segment;
2) **key resources**: the most important assets required to make a business model work; these resources can be physical, financial, intellectual, or human;

3) **key activities**: related to some strategic processes, like designing, making and delivering a product in substantial quantities and of superior quality;

4) **key partners**: to optimise the company's business models, to reduce risk, or to acquire resources. The authors distinguish between different types of partnerships, for example, strategic alliances between non-competitors, strategic partnerships between competitors, joint ventures to develop new businesses, buyer-supplier relationships to assure reliable supplies etc.

5) **customer segments**: the different groups of people or organisations a company aims to reach and serve;

6) **customer relationships**: the relationships that a company should establish with each customer segment to acquire and retain it;

7) **channels**: the interface with customers that are reached by communication, distribution, and sales processes;

8) **cost structure and revenue streams**: a distinction between cost-driven and value-driven cost structure to analyze how revenues can create value, in term of earnings.

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**Figure 1** The Canvas business model. Source: The Business Model Generation (2010)
The BMC is an useful support tool for entrepreneurial initiatives by education (Zeng and Honig, 2016; Hoveskog et al., 2015), to enhance students’ business initiatives (Huang-Saad et al., 2016; Haertel et al., 2016) towards team collaboration (McGee et al., 2016; Neumeyer and Mckenna, 2016) and to transfer business knowledge (Jackson et al, 2015). Moreover, it is considered a tool to plan and organize Universities (Ibrahim and Dahlan, 2017; Skripkin, 2016; Rytkönen and Nenonen, 2014) and healthcare sector (Quhem et al., 2017; León et al., 2016; Lacerda et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2013; Hídefjäll and Titkova, 2015; Hanner et al., 2014).

The BMC can be considered a feasible tool for Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs) to manage the critical phase of “grow or die” (Frick and Ali, 2013) and for the Start-ups (Ojasalo and Ojasalo, 2015). It is also useful to assess the evolution of the SMEs (Jingga and Limantara, 2015), to compare with other technical tools small business activities or students’ perception (Gavrilova and Alsuvey, 2015; Osterwalder and Pigneur, 2010; Türk, 2016; Toro-Jarrín, et al., 2016; França et al., 2017).

The BMC was applied in the food sector to industrial fisheries, aimed at improving sustainable development (Rivera and Hoyos Concha, 2016), on farms and farmers’ markets to support the protection and maintenance of the acquired advantages and competitiveness (Dudin et al., 2015; Pokorná et al., 2015), within the food supply chain to implement and develop complementary services (Martikainen et al., 2014).

In line with some authors (Bocken et al., 2013; Short et al., 2013; Bocken et al., 2014; Bocken et al., 2015; Baldassarre et al., 2017), BMC could be applied considering, not only one kind of stakeholder i.e. the customer, but also the environment and the society. This approach provides a more accurate assessment of value proposition carried out by TF and GF Truckers.

On the basis of the aforementioned information, the topic of this chapter ties the food truck service and its two different business i.e. the TFT and the GFT. In this context, a comparative analysis between TFT and GFT services is proposed by a Business Model Canvas. Research questions were formulated starting from this aim:

1. are there any substantial differences between TFTs and GFTs?
2. what peculiarities do TFT and GFT have?

3 Methodology

The Business Model Canvas (BMC) will be used to explain the value that the Gourmet Food Trucks and the Traditional Food Trucks offer to their stakeholders i.e. customers, environment and society. The framework is a description of the value that every kind of food truck offers to one or several segments of customers and the architecture of the firm and its network of partners to create marketing
and the delivery of this value and the relationship capital, in order to generate profitable and sustainable revenue streams (Cantino et al 2016).

The authors analysed the various food truck services, using semi-structured interviews (Alvesson, 2003), to collect the information necessary to implement the BMC. This was done between November 2015 and February 2016. It was possible to collect this information in two different ways and both the questions and their order were interchangeable, depending on the individual interviewed, in line with other authors (Pitron, 1984; Fideli and Marradi, 1996). The GFT truckers were interviewed during the Street Food Parade in 2015, in Turin. An event dedicated to the food truck movement and all the participants were potential interviewees. There was a prospective sample of 23 vendors and all of them accepted to take part. Whilst, the TFT interviews were made on different sites in the Metropolitan area of Turin, on the basis of “commercial style” of the traditional food truckers. Although the potential sample was 26 food trucks, only 18 accepted to reply.

As aforementioned, all the GF Truckers had a proactive attitude and participated in the study willingly. Whilst only a part of the TFT Truckers agreed to answer the questions.

The information requested and collected was as follows:

- personal details, i.e. age, gender, qualification and type of authorization for food and drink services;
- information on the interviewees geographical area;
- details on their vehicles;
- details as to the food and drink i.e. origin and provenance of raw materials, recipes, suppliers, philosophy of taste, prices;
- information on their customer segments;
- information on their compliance with hygienic requirements.

The questions on hygiene included: professional requirements, how the trucks were fitted out, details of personal hygiene education/training, details as to the cleanliness and hygiene of the cooking area and the vehicle as a whole, how they applied the HACCP system.

There were two members on the interview team. These were taken from the 4 authors according to availability. One of them asked the questions and the other completed the check list and noted the answers. Each interview lasted around 40 minutes and the results were analyzed singularly by one of the authors, to avoid any influence amongst them in the evaluation phase (Atkinson and Shaffir, 1998). Lastly, the results were pooled and compared, then the fundamental issues pertinent to the aim of the chapter, were extrapolated.

4 Findings

This section describes the two different kinds of truck services, GFT and TFT, using business models. GFT and TFT differ as to size, organisation structures and
production processes and represent the scenario of the Italian food truck service, the street food "on the road". All members of the study group were either owners or managers of their activities, the TFT study group included 16 males and 2 females and the GFT group included 18 males and 5 females. Our study showed that the GFT operators were younger than the TFT operators, i.e. 5/23 were <30, 8/23 < 40 and 9/23 were <50, only 1 was > 50. Whereas, the TF Truckers had a more homogenous age distribution with 2 < 30, 2 < 40, 8 < 50, 2 < 60 and 5 > 60.

The GF interviewees had a higher level of education than the TFTs: 13/23 had a high school certificate, 5/23 a Degree and 5/23 had left school at 14 years of age. Only 1/18 of the TFTs had a Degree, 7/18 left school at 14 years of age, 6/18 had a primary school certificate and 4/18 had a high school certificate.

The two services can be described as follows.

4.1 The Traditional Food Truck Service

As aforementioned, the Food Truck Service is a kind of street food, i.e. prepared "on the street", and the Traditional one is a longtime service that has provided on the Italian streets since ‘50s. This kind of service is usually carried out during concerts and/or sports events and as part of the Italian night life. The analysis of the case study TFT service is presented according to the business model Canvas, as follows.

1. Value Proposition. The value proposition of TF Truckers is characterized by conventional and cheap food products, i.e. very cheap fast street food e.g. hot dogs, sausages (salami), chicken breast, French fries and precooked vegetables. Recently, some of them have introduced the kebab sandwich, another cheap Mediterranean food with large diffusion in Italy. The TF Truckers provide a necessary service, in as much as they satisfy the need to eat by the consumers in particular situations i.e. in "night life" for night people, during big events like football matches, music concerts, theatrical events. Therefore, the TF Truckers substitute the conventional food services offered by restaurants, pizzeria etc. when conventional food services are closed.

2. Key Resources. The TFTs in our study were very old vehicles: 12/18 TF Trucks were registered between 2000 and 2002 and the newest were registered in 2010; 2 trucks were registered in 1995 and 3 before 1993. The TFTs were equipped with a traditional faucet i.e. it can be turned on/off with an elbow lever in 14/18 and is automatic (sensor) in the other 4/18; 1/18 TFTs had no extractor fan. The TFTs were equipped with: 18/18 an electric stove, 5/18 a deep fryer and 4/18 a kebab spit. A total of 9/18 TFTs had 2 freezers, 4/18 2 refrigerators and 1 freezer, 3/18 3 refrigerators and 1 freezer, 1/18 1 refrigerator and 1 freezer and only 1/18 1 refrigerator. A total of 12/18 TFTs stored their good both in the truck and a warehouse, 4/18 used only the truck and 2/18 only a warehouse.

Most of the TF Truckers had taken a professional course (17/18) and the remaining 1/18 only declared to have had met the requirements of experience in terms of time in the service.
When the question of hygiene was investigated, 6/18 TFT operators did not wear professional clothing, but wore an apron, 4/18 wore a professional cap, 2/18 gloves, 3/18 casual clothes (t-shirt jeans). All the TFT operators declared that they cleaned the kitchen once a day. A total of 16/18 TF Truckers declared that they respected and applied the HACCP system and 9/18 used the HACCP manual; 2 of them did not have any HACCP documents or manual on hand. The TFT waste management differed: 8/18 did no recycling at all and 10/18 did some recycling; none of them did organic or paper recycling.

3. Key Activities. The main key activities for the TFTs are provided by the big events in the urban and suburban area, when there are no conventional food services or after closing hours or are insufficient to meet the demand. Other key element is their ability to understand the situation i.e. they know the programme of the events, the local rules and regulations and know exactly when they have to arrive on the site. These capacities make it possible for them to be the first ones to arrive and monopolize the best places. Sometimes, some of them update their food and beverage offer (see kebab).

4. Key Partners. In most cases, the TF Truckers are a group of friendly competitors as their business is often the same, in the same places/events with the same people. The main challenge for them is to get the best place, but they never undercut prices over their competitors. Moreover, the TF Truckers manage the rules of the street food service very well and collaborate with the urban police forces and other corps. The raw materials and ingredients are mainly supplied by the large distribution operators and the TF Truckers’ scope is that of getting the best deals to keep the prices down.

5. Customer Segments. The customer segment is that of hungry consumers who simply want to eat and drink something in particular situations, like big events. The customers’ demands are:

- cheap food and drink of easy access;
- fast food and drink ready to consume;
- food and drink when the event doors or other food services are closed;
- food and drink when the queue to entry in event site is too long;
- food and drink when the event is over and the consumer is going back home;
- food and drink when there no other food service.

6. Customer Relationships. The TF Truckers establish a unique relationship with their customer segment, i.e. the customers need food and drink and the TF Truckers provide them. They satisfy their primary need to eat something.

7. Channels. The TF Truckers do not need any communication channels to inform their customers because they will be there and their customers know it. This is a confidence relationship: the customers know that the TF Truckers will be on the site ready and willing to distribute inexpensive fast food and drink. However, most of the customers are not linked to a particular TF Trucker and what is offered and, when choosing, other elements come into play, like how long the queue is, and empathy.
8. Cost structure and Revenue streams. The food trucks enrolled into the study are under no obligation to deposit a balance sheet at the Chamber of Commerce. Therefore, it was not possible to analyze them in terms of the structure of costs and revenues as they have no managerial accounting. We identified the average receipt as an indicator of revenues, which was around 5 Euros for TFTs.

4.2 The Gourmet Food Truck Service

As aforementioned, the GFT service is the new way to fight the economic crisis and integrate young people into the business world. This service is usually carried out during specific events dedicated to the street food movement. The analysis of the case study GFT service is presented according to the business model Canvas, as follows.

1. Value Proposition. The value proposition of the GF Truckers is characterized by local and typical Italian gastronomy products. Moreover, the GF Truckers emphasize the importance of raw material selection, the origin and/or the provenance of vegetables, meat and ingredients, the method used to produce food and ingredients and the short supply chain. Usually, they distinguish themselves for the higher quality of their offer than that of conventional operators and their service for the unusual location where the food is eaten and the beverage is drunk. Moreover, the GFTs are sensitive as to environmental aspects: they use ecological friendly flatware and dedicate a lot of time to the collection of waste and dividing it. Therefore, the value proposition is characterized by tradition, territory, raw materials, supply chain and production methods.

2. Key Resources. The GF Truckers also have distinct original trucks e.g. an oven that cooks with wood on an Ape car, which, in comparison, is a very small vehicle; a recent registration or fashion design furnishing of an old truck i.e. 17/23 of the GF Trucks were registered between 2011 and 2015, 1 in 2010, 2 in 2007-2008, 2 before 1995; the truck equipment i.e. innovative kitchen appliances like roiners, efficient preservation systems, ecological flatware; autonomous power generators.

A total of 14/23 GFTs were equipped with traditional taps on the kitchen sinks, 7/23 with automatic taps and 2/23 had no running water; 10/23 GFTs had no extractor fan. However, GFTs are not obliged to have extractors due to their special cooking methods, which do not necessitate the use of an extractor fan. A total of 12/23 GFT had an electric stove, 6/23 an electric oven, 5/23 a deep fryer, 3/23 a gas stove and 2/23 a roiner. Only 3 GFTs did not have any cooking tools because they sold pre-prepared food. The GFTs’ equipment included: 11/23- 1 refrigerator, 4/23- 2 refrigerators, 3/23- 3 refrigerators, 2/23- 1 refrigerator and 1 freezer and 1/23- 2 refrigerators and 2 freezers. A total of 2/23 GF Truckers declared using another vehicle to preserve their food and raw products. Moreover, 10/23 GFTs stored their foodstuffs in a warehouse, 4/23 in the truck itself, 3/23
both in their truck and a warehouse, 3/23 in their refrigerated truck and a warehouse, 2/23 in 2 different trucks and 1/23 in another refrigerated truck. A total of 12/23 GFT Truckers had been on a professional course, 10/23 declared to have had met the requirements of experience, in terms of time in the service and only 1/23 had a professional education.

When the question of hygiene was investigated, 12/23 GFT operators did wear professional clothing, i.e. a jacket, trousers, a hat and gloves, apron and gloves (6/23), apron, gloves and a hat (4/23) and an apron and a hat (2/23). All the GFT operators cleaned their cooking area at least once a day. A total of 7/23 GFT operators cleaned their cooking area twice and 1/23 three times per day. All GFT Truckers declared to respect and apply the HACCP system and 15/23 used the HACCP manual that, at the moment of interview, was in the truck.

The GFT Truckers were also environmentally sensitive as to waste disposal. The GFTs dedicated time to the collection and division of their waste. Indeed, all GFTs declared they did recycling: 10/23 used recycling and biodegradable materials and carried out an organic recycling, 10/23 applied recycling paper, glass and plastic and 3/23 recycled only paper.

3. Key Activities. The GFTs worked mainly at food and beverage events. Such events are dedicated to street food and food trucks or other issues that have some connection with gastronomy. In line with the philosophy of this service, some producers took part in festivals in particular places, like shopping centres that have a luxury goods section.

Another key element is their ability to adapt to the dynamics of the event market they take part in. On the basis of the site and its specific customers, some GFT Truckers carried out:

- diversification of the product price on the basis of the context e.g. assessment of the competitors in each place: the same price for the same product;
- diversification of the gastronomic offer e.g. changing some ingredients to satisfy different customers in diverse places.

Moreover, some GFT Truckers periodically updated their food and beverage offer and their vehicle.

4. Key Partners. In most cases, the GFT Truckers are a group of friendly competitors; as their business is often the same, in the same places/events with the same people. The main challenge for them is to offer the best intrinsic quality of gastronomic offer, but they never undercut prices over their competitors. The suppliers of raw materials is another important key to define the market rules; indeed, the quality of raw materials is a peculiarity of the GFT service that allows them to be in line with their goals. Moreover, the GFT Truckers have created associations that define the rules for the food trucks and the organisation of selected events.

5. Customer Segments. The selected customer segment is made up of the enthusiastic regular clients of food and beverage events. They are ready to try new food experiences, to re-define the tradition of food, both in terms of historical recipes e.g. the Miasse, a traditional product obtained by corn and water and served with
salampatata (a traditional pork salami, pork fat, potatoes, salt and aromas) and/or salignun (a traditional fresh cheese with chili and cumin), both in terms of service “on the street” and the related finger eating. In this context, the client target can be defined as consumer characterized by:

- enthusiasm to consume foods and beverages on the street;
- enthusiasm to consume finger food;
- passion for traditional recipes;
- enthusiasm to new recipes with high quality raw materials;
- willing to pay more for high quality of food and beverage.

6. Customer Relationships. The GF Truckers establish specific relationships with their customer segment, characterized by:

- it being a storytelling service. All GF Truckers describe their activities to highlight some aspects such as the selection of their raw materials and/or their traditional recipes;
- innovation. The GF Truckers base their activities on innovative services and serve food and beverage using ecological flatware, innovative recipes, gastronomic offers to satisfy some requirements e.g. specific diets;
- creating community. The GF Truckers create groups on social networks to share information about events, news and any other utilities for customers.

7. Channels. The main channel to interface with customers are the social networks. The event organization companies provide a useful service to decide the place and date of the event and inform their followers, i.e. the customer segment. Some GF Truckers have their own channel to communicate with their costumers as to the event which they will be taking part in. Most food truck costumers are tied to the events “on the street” but they are not very linked to any single GF Trucker or their offer. Moreover, the trucks can be considered a communication channel i.e. the design is essential to communicate the services offered.

8. Cost structure and revenue streams. The average receipt for GFTs is about 8 euros, which is roughly 60% more than the one for TFTs. This difference in price can be is justified by the higher quality of the raw materials thy use.

5 Discussion

Our results are in agreement with several other authors. Indeed, Jingga and Limantara (2015) evidence the evolution of the Food Truck phenomenon, Rivera and Hoyos Concha (2016) emphasize the characteristics of GFT services in relationship with sustainable development and several others (Bocken et al., 2013; Short et al., 2013; Bocken et al., 2014; Bocken et al., 2015; Baldassarre et al., 2017), report on the aforementioned multidimensional value proposition. Moreover, the comparison between the two truck services brought to light some interesting differences. The main difference is the gastronomic offer, i.e. the GF Truckers base their offer on the high quality of the ingredients they use, the declaration of origin.
and provenance of raw materials, traditional and/or innovative recipes, innovative production methods, specialities and typicalities. Conversely, the TF Truckers concentrate their offer on fast, inexpensive food and drinks. Consequently, as expected, the GFT gastronomic offer is slightly more expensive than that of the TFTs. Moreover, the GF Truckers choose events that are specifically dedicated to high quality street food and drink. The TF Truckers choose periodical big events and meet night life needs, providing a periodic and methodical service. Therefore, the customer segment differs: on the one hand, the GFT service satisfies customers that want high quality food and attend related events; on the other, the TFT service provides a fast reply to the need to eat.

One particular aspect of TFTs is the age of the truck and the activities it is used for. On average the TF Trucks have been on the road for 16.39 years and most TF operators have decades of experience in their particular sector of food service. Whilst, the average age of GF Trucks is only 4.59, which usually corresponds to the years of experience. All operators met the requirements as to the energy and water plants, water management systems, food preservation systems and fume extraction plants. All TFTs have an electric generator that can be connected to the power grid, potable water tanks and drainage that can be connected to the communities waste systems. All TFTs have an electric stove to prepare the food, whilst the GFTs have various appliances, e.g. the roner, an innovative tool for vacuum cooking, that satisfies the need to cook both creative and traditional foodstuff. The two food services have different philosophies, i.e. the TFTs serve conventional, quick and low price food, whilst the GFTs offer territorial and traditional food with selected raw materials and high added value, that is slightly more expensive.

The waste management philosophies also differ. The GFTs show interest in environmental friendly methods, cleaning and complying to the HACCP system and wear professional uniforms or particular garments. The TF Truckers are less interested in environmental factors, but met the hygienic requirements, even if 2 of them declared not to have either HACCP documents or manual.

As the TF and GF Truckers provide services in two different contexts they are not competitors for the moment, but the scenario could change if the GF Truckers were to decide to operate also at periodical big events and night life. Indeed, the TFTs customer segment could become a GFT segment, but the TFTs cannot compete with the GFT services. Moreover, the study confirms the importance of developing complementary competitive services (Martikainen et al., 2014; Alfero et al., 2017).

6 Conclusions

The food truck phenomenon in the Turin area is in constant evolution. The GFTs are changing the food truck service by adopting new solutions in the preparation of street food, the equipment on the trucks and also change where the service is provided and the food offer. Another point is the social and environment design of the GFTs. The food prepared is linked to tradition and innovation and
the high quality of the food; the raw materials and ingredients, the food processes, the food management and the flatware are all selected to meet sustainable criteria. This philosophy stimulates the perception of sustainable development, satisfies a social need to support tradition and territory, meets the environmental requirements and a sustainable waste management. This tendency is a worldwide phenomenon where the Gourmet Food Trucks are increasing the number of high quality food products offered and the innovation processes used in their preparation.

7 Limitations and future research

We are aware that the number of trucks studied poses a limitation. However, at the time of the study, the 23 GF Trucks represented the majority of the truckers who took part in the main events dedicated to quality Street Food in North Italy. Whilst the TF Truckers showed only a very limited interest in taking part in the study, making for a natural low number of participants. Moreover, the results on hygiene were based on a personal declaration by the stakeholders. Further studies are ongoing on larger areas than this preliminary study covered, so as to collect more information on these evolving Food Truck Services.

Summary

This chapter analyzes a particular type of street food service i.e. the food truck phenomenon. There are two kind of business model i.e. Traditional Food Trucks (TFTs) and Gourmet Food Trucks (GFTs). This chapter defines their peculiarities and competitive advantages. Indeed, the GFTs are changing the food truck service in as much as they adopt new solutions in the preparation of street food, linking tradition to innovation and stimulating the perception of sustainable development. All of which satisfies the social aspect of supporting tradition and territory, whilst, at the same time, meets the new tourist’s requirements.

References


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