

UDC: 640.43:338.46

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.15379634

## GASTRONOMY OF THE FUTURE: INNOVATION AND EMOTIONS AS KEYS TO COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

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**Abstract.** The purpose of this study is to analyze and systematize innovative strategies and approaches to the formation of emotional service in the restaurant industry, aimed at creating a unique gastronomic experience and ensuring sustainable economic competitiveness and market advantages in the restaurant industry of the future.

**Keywords:** innovation, trend, technology, restaurant business, ecology, healthy eating, dishes, competitiveness.

**Introduction.** Nowadays, the restaurant industry can be considered as a leading branch of the national economy, the basis of which is formed by enterprises that have common organizational and production characteristics and are focused on serving consumers. Such enterprises include the restaurant business, where the introduction of innovative technologies is not only an important component, but also a prerequisite for effective activity.

To ensure the competitiveness of the establishment, the restaurateur must pay special attention to the innovation factor in the process of business management. At the present stage, the innovative potential plays the role of a driving force in the development of the industry and demonstrates a high level of dynamics.

Therefore, continuous improvement of technological processes and current trends in the field of restaurant management remains extremely relevant today, acting as a key prerequisite for achieving high competitiveness of the restaurant enterprise.

**Literature review.** Analysis of literary sources on technologies in the field of restaurant management indicates a growing attention to ensuring the quality of healthy nutrition, which is due to the growing popularity of a healthy lifestyle and a conscious attitude towards one's own body. Rational nutrition is considered a key factor in maintaining good health, physical activity and general well-being.

**Aim and objectives.** The purpose of the article is to substantiate the key technologies and modern trends necessary for the effective functioning of restaurant enterprises, as well as to analyze innovative solutions that can transform the hospitality industry in the near future and provide stable competitive advantages in modern market conditions.

The following methods were used in the study: statistical analysis, competitive analysis method, generalization method and forecasting method.

**Main Part.** As M. Mikhnenko notes [3], these trends are actively spreading to the restaurant industry, forming new approaches to creating menus for restaurant-type establishments, in particular restaurants, cafes and hotels.

Gluten-free nutrition is gaining popularity not only among people with celiac disease — an autoimmune disease associated with gluten intolerance — but also among consumers who adhere to the principles of a healthy lifestyle. In accordance with demand, restaurant establishments adapt their menus, offering dishes based on gluten-free ingredients, such as corn and rice flour, potatoes, quinoa. Today, gluten-free bread, pasta, pizza and desserts are already familiar positions in many restaurants.

Vegetarianism is becoming a common practice among consumers who are guided by ethical, environmental or health considerations. In this regard, restaurant enterprises are actively expanding the range of meatless dishes, among which the popular ones are burger with portobello mushrooms, risotto with wild mushrooms, vegetable curry, vegetarian lasagna, etc. Low-calorie menus are another trend driven by the growing demand for balanced nutrition. More and more restaurants are including dishes with a specified calorie content in their menus, offering light soups, salads, steamed vegetables, mashed potatoes on water, which helps maintain optimal body weight without significant restrictions.

Superfoods — foods with a high content of nutrients — are also actively integrated into restaurant menus. Quinoa, chia, avocado, nuts, goji berries and acai

are increasingly used in the preparation of salads, smoothies, desserts and first courses due to their health-promoting properties.

Fermented products (kvass, kimchi, kefir, yogurt, sauerkraut, etc.) are distinguished by a high content of probiotics and vitamins, as well as better digestibility. Their inclusion in the menu is a response to the demand for functional food products among visitors.

Thus, the formation of menus in accordance with the principles of healthy eating is no longer perceived as a temporary trend, but is an integral part of modern restaurant culture. Restaurant establishments are actively responding to these challenges, adapting their offers to the expectations of the target audience.

Consumers pay special attention to the quality and safety of food products, which encourages restaurants to use environmentally friendly products grown without the use of pesticides, artificial fertilizers and GMOs. Such ingredients not only increase the nutritional value of dishes, but also reduce the negative impact on the environment.

An important vector of development is the use of local products. Focusing on supporting local farmers provides not only economic sustainability, but also guarantees the freshness and quality of raw materials. Minimizing logistics chains helps preserve the taste and nutritional properties of products.

Innovative approaches in the restaurant industry also include creating their own mini-farms for growing vegetables, herbs and spices, which allows you to control all stages of the production process - from growing to serving dishes, thereby increasing the quality of service and consumer trust.

In modern conditions, the safety and quality of food products are becoming a priority for consumers. The growing interest in environmentally friendly products grown without the use of pesticides, synthetic fertilizers and genetically modified organisms is due to the desire to preserve health and the environment. Such products have a natural taste, high nutritional value and contribute to reducing the environmental load. In this regard, their use is becoming a relevant trend in the restaurant industry.

Every year, restaurant business entities conduct a thorough analysis of the activities of their establishments - from the organization of service and the range of dishes to interior design and marketing strategies. All this is modernized in accordance with the latest trends and changes in consumer expectations.

Given the high level of competition in the Ukrainian restaurant market, the introduction of current innovations is a necessary condition for maintaining

competitiveness. Trends in this area change extremely dynamically, which causes constant updating of the formats of establishments and ideological concepts.

One of the striking examples of modern innovations is the emergence of specialized wine bars. The culture of wine consumption in Ukraine is actively developing, in particular, due to the growing popularity of domestic products. If 7–10 years ago wine was perceived mainly as an attribute of festive events, today there is a steady interest in wine culture in general. This is manifested in the expansion of the industry through lectures, tastings, master classes and other interactive formats of interaction with the audience [4].

Ukrainian winemaking is showing significant progress, and domestic wines are increasingly being featured on restaurant menus. Many Ukrainian wines are not inferior in quality to samples from traditional wine-making regions of Europe or the New World. Changes in consumer preferences, in particular the growth in demand for sparkling wines, indicate the formation of new models of consumer behavior. At the same time, gender stereotypes regarding the choice of wines are gradually losing their relevance: men and women are increasingly guided by taste preferences, rather than traditional ideas.

However, in modern conditions, the success of a restaurant is determined not only by the quality of dishes or the range of wine lists. One of the key factors is emotional service, which involves creating an emotionally comfortable environment for guests. This concept includes not only the quality of service, but also the ability of the staff to create a positive atmosphere that contributes to the formation of an emotional connection with the visitor.

The main role in the implementation of emotional service is played by the restaurant staff. The guest's impression depends on the manner of greeting, non-verbal behavior, communicative friendliness and awareness of employees, which, in turn, determines the level of his loyalty. It is important to note that the transmission of positive emotions from employees is possible only if there is internal motivation and satisfaction with working conditions. Guests easily read the true emotional state of the service staff, so insincerity or fatigue can negatively affect the impressions of the visit. In the domestic restaurant industry, the concept of emotional service is only beginning to take shape, remaining mainly at the stage of theoretical discussions. The main difficulty lies in the need to simultaneously work not only with the client, but also with the team. Effective implementation of this concept requires the restaurant manager to actively communicate with the staff, the ability to inspire and create conditions for the disclosure of the personal potential of each employee.

When selecting personnel, it is worth paying attention to such characteristics as charisma, friendliness, communicative flexibility and the ability to work in a team. However, these qualities are often revealed only in the process of practical interaction with guests, so the selection of personnel should be dynamic and accompanied by a constant analysis of the effectiveness of interaction.

The introduction of emotional service requires a deeper approach than just instruction: it requires the formation of a new corporate culture, in which empathy, attention to detail and a sincere desire to create a unique experience for guests in a restaurant establishment play a key role.

The concept of emotional service is closely related to the personal qualities of restaurant employees. Unlike technical skills that can be formed during training, such traits as empathy, friendliness, the ability to feel the guest's mood and maintain relaxed communication depend on the employee's internal emotional intelligence [2]. That is why the implementation of emotional service requires an individual approach to staff training. The effectiveness of such an approach can be assessed through consumer feedback, as well as with the help of the "mystery guest" service, which allows you to objectively track the level of emotional interaction with the client.

Against the background of growing expectations of visitors, traditional mono-format establishments are gradually losing popularity. Consumers are increasingly preferring hybrid formats - restaurant clubs, cafes within retail facilities, immersive establishments that combine elements of gastronomy with visual, theatrical or interactive components [1]. This approach allows you to simultaneously satisfy several customer needs: in food, entertainment, social interaction and convenience.

It is worth noting the development of multi-role establishments, such as cafe-shops or bars specializing in a particular drink. This forms a new segment in the restaurant market, in which the emphasis is placed not only on the gastronomic component, but also on the cultural and educational aspects of consumption. For example, with the spread of a culture of moderate and conscious alcohol consumption, the popularity of restobars focused on quality alcohol and appropriate service support is growing.

At the same time, the global trend of conscious consumption, based on environmental awareness, ethical values, and health care, is having a significant impact on the restaurant industry. The demand for plant-based alternatives to traditional products, including plant-based milk, yogurts, meat substitutes, and vegetable and fruit snacks, has grown significantly. Restaurateurs are also increasingly turning to seasonal and local products, which helps to improve the

quality of dishes, optimize costs, and reduce the environmental footprint of production.

Another significant direction is the implementation of ethical employment principles. The practice of a responsible attitude towards personnel, in particular, decent wages, creating favorable conditions for professional development, and ensuring the emotional well-being of employees, is becoming a key factor in shaping a positive image of the establishment. Studies conducted abroad, particularly in Australia, show that most consumers prefer establishments where staff are treated with respect and dignity [8].

In addition, the restaurant industry is adapting to new economic realities, including inflation and disruptions to supply chains. This is forcing establishments to revise their menus: reduce portions, introduce more vegetarian and seasonal dishes, and focus on local producers. In this context, the popularity of vegetarian and vegan dishes is growing, gradually moving out of the niche segment and into the mainstream of gastronomic offerings.

The last but not least trend is the trend towards nostalgia, which is actively used in the visual design, menu and atmosphere of establishments. In times of social instability and uncertainty, especially for the millennial generation, there is a growing need to return to the familiar and emotionally comfortable (tabl. 1). This is reflected in gastronomic concepts that appeal to the 80s and 90s, the revival of the popularity of dishes from the past, retro interior design and musical accompaniment [10].

Trend/Direction	Key features	Examples/Impact
Emotional Service	Focus on creating a positive emotional experience through the personal qualities of the staff	Training, "mystery guests" to assess service quality
Nostalgia	Using emotional connections with the past to drive sales and attract new customers	McDonald's: limited edition Happy Meal for adults, retro marketing
Hybrid Formats	Combining different formats to meet multiple customer needs at the same time	In-store cafes, club restaurants, immersive formats
Innovative Technologies	Implementing digital solutions to optimize business processes, improve quality and speed of service	Virtual restaurants (cloud kitchens), management systems, process automation
New Restaurant Formats	Creating temporary or mobile formats to attract new audiences	Pop-up restaurants, food trucks, gastrobars
Social Media and Marketing	Using digital tools to promote the brand, attract customers through visual content	Short videos, bright interior, active presence in social networks
Environmentalism and Conscious Consumption	Focus on using local, seasonal and environmentally friendly products, reducing environmental impact	Using local products, seasonal dishes, supporting ethical production
Ethical Employment	Ensuring staff well-being and motivation through fair pay and creating favorable conditions	Introducing additional fees to improve working conditions, corporate culture

Table 1 - Main research areas and their impact on the modern restaurant industry

The modern restaurant industry demonstrates a high rate of change under the influence of numerous social, economic and cultural factors. The main trends are environmental friendliness, conscious consumption, the use of local and seasonal products, as well as an ethical attitude towards staff. Emotional service is of particular importance, which is formed not only as an element of service, but as a full-fledged emotional and communicative experience for guests.

The role of gastronomic experience as a form of social interaction is growing, which is reflected in the popularity of wine culture, gastrobars, immersive restaurants and hybrid-format establishments. Nostalgia, in turn, serves as a powerful marketing tool that allows brands to awaken emotional memories and attract a wide audience.

It is worth noting the transformation of traditional formats: the emergence of pop-ups, food trucks, virtual restaurants and mobile solutions indicates the flexibility and adaptability of the modern market to new realities. All these phenomena indicate the need for constant monitoring of trends and rapid adaptation to changes, which is the key to the successful development of the restaurant business in conditions of fierce competition and high consumer expectations.

**Conclusions.** Restaurant trends in 2024 reflect profound transformations in the perception of food, service, and the experience of visiting public catering establishments. Successful restaurateurs not only respond to these changes, but also actively form new standards focused on the individual needs of the modern client. It is innovation, emotional involvement, conscious consumption, and the ability to communicate with the audience that become decisive factors in the fight for consumer attention.

Effective implementation of technologies, flexibility in the formats of establishments, rethinking classic approaches through the prism of nostalgia, new marketing solutions, and an active presence in social networks - all this determines the success of the restaurant business in modern conditions.

Marketing, which combines creativity, digital tools, and consumer behavior analytics, plays a key role in this. Entrepreneurs who are ready to change, experiment with formats, and listen to their client have every chance not only to survive, but also to thrive in conditions of high competition and constant challenges.

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