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MODERN RESTAURANT BUSINESS AS A GROWTH DRIVER OF THE HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM SECTOR

The modern restaurant business plays a pivotal role in the development of the hospitality and tourism sector, acting as a multifunctional driver of economic growth, cultural representation and innovative practices. The relevance of this study stems from the need to systematically understand the mechanisms through which restaurants enhance tourist attractiveness, create unique customer experiences, and strengthen destination branding. The main objective of the study is to substantiate the concept of competitiveness in the modern restaurant business and develop a methodological framework for its evaluation within the dynamic hospitality and tourism market. The methodology employs an integrated approach combining analytical and comparative methods as well as assessments of service quality and managerial practices. The study demonstrates that implementing innovative menus, digital services, sustainable practices and integration with local tourism clusters increases economic efficiency, promotes gastronomic tourism, strengthens destination branding, and fosters cultural diplomacy. The findings indicate that restaurants act not merely as food service providers but as strategic centers of economic, cultural and innovative development. The conclusions highlight the importance of comprehensive management of restaurant enterprises to ensure sustainable tourism development, enhance tourist experiences and reinforce regional competitiveness. These results can inform strategic planning, policy-making in support of the restaurant sector and the development of tourism and hospitality infrastructure.

Keywords: restaurant business, hospitality, tourism, innovation, sustainable development, competitiveness, cultural diplomacy, digital service.

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СУЧАСНИЙ РЕСТОРАННИЙ БІЗНЕС ЯК ДРАЙВЕР ЗРОСТАННЯ У СФЕРІ ГОСТИННОСТІ ТА ТУРИЗМУ

Сучасний ресторанний бізнес відіграє ключову роль у розвитку індустрії гостинності та туристичного сектору, виступаючи мультифункціональним драйвером економічного зростання, культурної презентації та інноваційних практик. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена потребою в системному розумінні механізмів, через які ресторани сприяють підвищенню туристичної привабливості, формуванню унікального клієнтського досвіду та зміцненню бренду дестинації. Метою дослідження є обґрунтування концепції конкурентоспроможності сучасного ресторанного бізнесу та розробка методології його оцінки в умовах динамічного розвитку ринку гостинності та туризму. Методологія базується на інтегрованому підході, що поєднує аналітичні та порівняльні методи, а також оцінку якості обслуговування і управлінських практик. Дослідження демонструє, що впровадження інноваційних меню, цифрових сервісів, практик сталого розвитку та інтеграції з місцевими туристичними кластерами підвищує економічну ефективність ресторанів, сприяє розвитку гастрономічного туризму, зміцнює бренд дестинації та стимулює культурну дипломатію. Результати вказують, що ресторани виступають не лише як сервіси для харчування, а як стратегічні центри економічного, культурного та інноваційного розвитку. Висновки дослідження підкреслюють важливість комплексного

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управління ресторанными підприємствами для забезпечення сталого розвитку туризму, покращення досвіду туристів та зміцнення конкурентних позицій регіонів. Отримані результати можуть бути використані для стратегічного планування, розробки політик підтримки ресторанного бізнесу, а також розвитку туристичної та гостинної інфраструктури.

Ключові слова: ресторанний бізнес, гостинність, туризм, інновації, сталий розвиток, конкурентоспроможність, культурна дипломатія, цифровий сервіс.

Problem Statement. The hospitality and tourism sector increasingly recognises modern restaurant businesses as strategic actors in economic development, destination attractiveness and cultural exchange. Within contemporary tourism systems restaurants operate not only as service providers but also as platforms for experiential consumption innovation and the expression of local identity. Nevertheless, despite their growing importance, the mechanisms through which restaurant businesses contribute to tourism development, destination competitiveness and overall sectoral performance remain insufficiently explored and weakly systematised in academic research.

Moreover, restaurant enterprises operate under conditions of heightened and persistent uncertainty caused not only by global health threats but also by large-scale geopolitical instability and armed conflict. In particular, the war in Ukraine has significantly disrupted tourism flows, supply chains, labor markets and investment conditions, intensifying risks and accelerating structural transformations within the hospitality sector. Alongside technological change, sustainability pressures and shifting consumer expectations, these challenges require restaurants to adopt highly adaptive, resilient and innovative management models while preserving cultural authenticity. Under such conditions, a deeper scientific understanding of the role of modern restaurant businesses as drivers of resilience, recovery and sustainable growth becomes essential for policymakers, destination managers and hospitality entrepreneurs [1; 2].

Literature Review. Recent research highlights the growing significance of gastronomic tourism and restaurant management in shaping tourist experiences and enhancing destination competitiveness. Restaurants are increasingly recognised as key actors in destination development by offering authentic and culturally embedded dining experiences that foster tourist satisfaction and destination loyalty [4].

The literature identifies innovation and sustainability as central determinants of restaurant performance and competitiveness. Managerial innovation including transformational leadership technological adoption and process optimisation is strongly associated with improved service quality and operational efficiency [3].

Sustainability practices such as local sourcing food waste reduction and energy-efficient operations further enhance competitive advantage and customer satisfaction [5; 9]. Empirical evidence confirms that tourists increasingly value authentic innovative and environmentally responsible restaurant experiences which positively influence willingness to pay and revisit intentions [6; 7].

From a strategic perspective restaurants function as instruments of destination branding and tourism promotion through their integration with local producers cultural institutions and tourism infrastructure [11]. Traditional heritage-oriented

restaurants contribute to maintaining destination identity while attracting diverse market segments. Recent studies also emphasise adaptability in the post-pandemic context noting that restaurants implementing digital solutions contactless services and flexible operating models demonstrate greater resilience sustained consumer engagement and stronger competitive positions [8; 10].

The aim of this study is to substantiate the concept of competitiveness in modern restaurant business and to propose a methodological framework for its evaluation within scientific research. The study seeks to identify the key factors influencing restaurant performance including innovation, service quality, customer engagement, sustainability practices and market positioning.

The methodology is based on an integrated analytical approach combining empirical, comparative and performance assessment methods. This framework enables a systematic evaluation of operational efficiency, customer experience, culinary innovation and managerial practices, ensuring the scientific validity and practical applicability of the research results for strategic management and destination development.

Research Results. Restaurants constitute an integral element of the tourism product offering, serving not only as venues for dining but also as spaces for cultural expression and experiential engagement. They enhance the attractiveness of destinations by providing authentic culinary experiences that reflect local traditions and gastronomic identity. Empirical studies indicate that the presence and diversity of restaurants directly influence tourist satisfaction, destination loyalty and overall perception of hospitality quality [4; 11].

By integrating culinary offerings into the broader tourism product, restaurants contribute to the holistic development of the hospitality industry and reinforce the competitive positioning of destinations [2].

Creating a unique customer experience is central to the strategic role of restaurants in the hospitality sector. Modern establishments employ innovative approaches including experiential menus, thematic décor, interactive cooking experiences, and digital engagement to differentiate themselves and enhance perceived value. Research shows that customer engagement and willingness to pay are positively correlated with restaurant innovativeness and service creativity [7].

The cultivation of memorable gastronomic experiences strengthens brand loyalty, encourages repeat visitation and fosters positive word-of-mouth promotion, thus reinforcing the restaurant's contribution to the destination's tourism product [6].

Restaurants operate in close interaction with hotel and tourism infrastructure, facilitating integrated service delivery and enhancing the overall visitor experience. Strategic location, partnership with hotels and tourism agencies and alignment with local supply chains create synergies that amplify operational efficiency and value creation [3; 5].

Integration with accommodation and recreational facilities allows restaurants to participate in comprehensive tourism packages, thereby contributing to the economic performance and competitiveness of the hospitality sector [8].

In conclusion, restaurants act as key drivers of the hospitality industry by integrating into the tourism product, delivering distinctive customer experiences and collaborating with broader tourism infrastructure. Their strategic role encompasses eco-

conomic, cultural and experiential dimensions, reinforcing the competitiveness and attractiveness of destinations [1; 9].

Table 1. Key Roles of Restaurants in the Hospitality Industry, own elaboration

Key Role of Restaurants	Description	Examples / Impact
Element of Tourism Product	Restaurants provide culinary experiences integrated into the destination's tourism offering	Local and traditional cuisine, food festivals, gastronomic tours
Creating Unique Customer Experience	Innovation in service, menu and presentation enhances engagement and satisfaction	Experiential menus, themed dining, interactive cooking, digital engagement
Interaction with Hotel-Tourism Infrastructure	Synergies with hotels, agencies and supply chains improve service delivery and destination competitiveness	Partnership with hotels, integrated packages, sustainable sourcing

Modern restaurant businesses increasingly rely on fusion and signature cuisine to distinguish themselves in competitive markets. Fusion cuisine combines traditional culinary elements with innovative techniques and international influences, enhancing the uniqueness of the gastronomic offering and strengthening the destination's culinary brand. Signature dishes, often created by acclaimed chefs, serve as gastronomic landmarks that attract both tourists and locals, contributing to the restaurant's reputation and market positioning.

The introduction of fusion and signature cuisine also supports cultural exchange and experiential tourism. By integrating local ingredients with international recipes, restaurants offer guests a sensory journey that simultaneously showcases local culinary heritage and global culinary trends. This approach has been shown to increase customer satisfaction, promote repeat visitation and enhance destination loyalty [6].

Table 2. Fusion and Signature Cuisine as a Factor of Cultural Tourism, own elaboration

Factor	Description	Impact on Tourism
Fusion Cuisine	Combination of culinary traditions into innovative dishes	Attracts tourists seeking unique culinary experiences, supports cultural immersion
Signature Cuisine	Chef-driven, creative and original dishes	Enhances destination branding, encourages gourmet tourism and workshops
Restaurant Business	Overall restaurant infrastructure and service quality	Increases tourist satisfaction, repeat visitation, positive reputation, integrated tourism packages

Restaurants not only drive economic growth but also serve as instruments of cultural diplomacy. They communicate local identity, culinary heritage and cultural values to both domestic and international tourists [11]. Culinary experiences in restaurants contribute to a destination's soft power, fostering positive perceptions, cross-cultural understanding and tourism development [1; 2].

Research highlights that restaurants engaging in heritage preservation and promoting local culinary traditions generate added value for tourism. Tourists increas-

ingly seek authentic experiences that reflect local culture, history and sustainable practices. This enhances the competitiveness of the destination while supporting local producers and small-scale food enterprises [5].

Table 3. Restaurants as a Space for Cultural Diplomacy, own elaboration

Aspect of Cultural Diplomacy	Description	Impact
Culinary Heritage	Presentation of national and regional dishes	Enhances cultural understanding and appreciation
Signature and Fusion Cuisine	Innovative dishes reflecting local and global influences	Promotes intercultural dialogue and soft power
Gastronomic Events	Festivals, collaborations, workshops	Facilitates networking, cultural exchange and destination branding

The economic significance of modern restaurants is multidimensional, encompassing direct revenue generation, employment creation and stimulation of related sectors such as local agriculture, tourism and entertainment. Studies demonstrate that innovative restaurants achieve higher profitability through enhanced service quality, technological integration and unique offerings [3].

Restaurants also influence the tourism multiplier effect, where expenditures on dining extend to local suppliers, transport and accommodation services, amplifying the economic benefits of tourism development. Empirical evidence shows that destinations with diverse and high-quality culinary offerings attract more tourists, increase average tourist spending and enhance overall economic performance [11].

Table 4. Economic Impact of the Restaurant Business, own elaboration

Economic Dimension	Description	Examples / Impact
Direct Economic Contribution	Revenue from food and beverage sales, taxes, employment	Job creation, GDP contribution, tax revenues
Innovation and Profitability	Creative menus, experiential dining, digital solutions	Higher operational efficiency and profitability
Sustainable Practices	Local sourcing, waste reduction, energy efficiency	Cost reduction and long-term economic value
Regional Development	Integration with tourism clusters and local supply chains	Stimulates ancillary industries and multiplier effects

The integration of modern restaurant technologies such as digital ordering, inventory management systems, energy-efficient equipment and waste reduction protocols strengthens both operational efficiency and sustainability.

Restaurants implementing eco-friendly practices (local sourcing, waste minimisation, renewable energy usage) enhance environmental responsibility while appealing to environmentally conscious tourists.

Thus, modern restaurants are not merely service providers but strategic actors within the tourism ecosystem. Their contributions encompass economic growth, cultural enrichment, experiential tourism and alignment with global innovation trends.

Effectively managed, the restaurant sector can significantly enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of destinations while fostering sustainable and culturally rich tourism development.

Conclusions. The modern restaurant business performs a multidimensional role as a strategic driver within the hospitality and tourism sector. Restaurants contribute to destination development through employment creation revenue generation and stimulation of local supply chains while simultaneously shaping the cultural and experiential dimensions of tourism. By offering distinctive culinary experiences restaurants enhance destination attractiveness strengthen visitor loyalty and encourage repeat visitation.

Innovation is a core determinant of competitiveness in the contemporary restaurant industry. The integration of creative menus experiential formats signature concepts and technological solutions increases customer engagement service quality and overall satisfaction. Such innovation enables restaurants to respond effectively to changing consumer preferences and global trends related to sustainability wellness and gastronomy positioning them as integral elements of the tourism product rather than auxiliary services.

Restaurants also function as instruments of cultural representation and economic resilience. By preserving and reinterpreting local culinary heritage and participating in gastronomic initiatives they promote cultural exchange and reinforce destination identity. At the same time environmentally responsible practices health-oriented offerings and sustainable management models support long-term viability and generate positive multiplier effects for regional economies. Future competitiveness depends on continuous adaptation international integration and strategic investment in culinary and service innovation within an increasingly dynamic global hospitality environment.

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