



New Opportunities for Restaurant Business Development Based on Computer Modeling of Consumer Preferences

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ABSTRACT

The restaurant business is one of the most significant hospitality industry people. However, competition is very high here. Therefore, restaurants are looking for new ways to improve, so the article is devoted to studying the theoretical basis and developing recommendations for developing the restaurant business based on consumer requests. To develop measures, the authors used a theoretical-empirical method, namely, the development of methodological foundations based on the study of theoretical sources, the formation of recommendations on their basis and their empirical testing to form the final proposals. The authors examined consumer literature and consumer inquiries; analyzed traditional and new ways of managing consumer demand. The study's value is that the authors have developed methodological recommendations; namely, they proposed an algorithm for the restaurant business's development, taking into account computer modeling of consumers' preferences and schematically and graphically depicted ways to increase consumer preferences in a restaurant. The suggested recommendations have been tested in real restaurants, which has proven their effectiveness and applicability. The study showed that restaurants need to re-evaluate and review their business strategy and development periodically. There is no universal mechanism that would suit absolutely any restaurant. Still, the steps and principles proposed in the algorithm allow you to start/improve restaurant business development strategy correctly based on computer modeling of consumer preferences.

Keywords: Consumer Preferences, Advertising, Targeting, Restaurant Business.

JEL Classification: E37, D12, M21

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1. Introduction.

The restaurant business is one of the most critical hospitality industry components. One of the main tasks now is to analyze the market of restaurant services and identify the main trends in its development, which allow entrepreneurs to open new opportunities for starting a business in the most popular and promising segmental niches. It may lead to further development of the restaurant business in Ukraine.

The restaurant business is considered to be one of the most profitable areas of investment worldwide (Barchan et al., 2020; Bugil et al., 2019; Mura & Ključnikov, 2018). Relatively small capital costs to create a restaurant can pay off in a few years. In the last decade, Ukraine has seen accelerated growth of restaurant businesses and significant changes in the variety of service types and classes.

One of the most critical business elements is the study of consumer preferences based on computer modeling of consumer preferences (Lagodiienko et al., 2019). Assessing the effectiveness of the study of consumer preferences is crucial for management decisions. The study of consumer preferences must be complete, reliable and relevant. Marketing research aims to understand consumer behavior and preferences, threats, and business opportunities (Kwilinski et al, 2019; Prokopenko, 2011). Buyers are a factor of direct impact; they significantly affect business efficiency. The value of a product, work or service may vary depending on the company's efforts in consumers' eyes (Shpak et al., 2019). That is why the restaurant needs to look for new effective ways of developing, managing, among other factors, consumer preferences (Dzwigol et al, 2020).

2. Development of restaurant business based on consumer preferences.

2.1 Features of the restaurant business.

The restaurant business is different from all other types of business. It is an enterprise that combines the art and traditions of many generations, the management mechanisms and experience of marketers, the philosophy of the experience economy and the concept of psychological modeling. The most famous and successful restaurateurs believe that the concept of a restaurant today is an institution where food is not only sold but also the atmosphere, impressions, pleasure, social status, etc. The restaurant business's growing attractiveness leads to increased competition, which creates specific difficulties in industry enterprises' viability. According to statistics, 70 out of 100 restaurants are closed within 2-3 years; the restaurant business takes a very high place in turnover (for example, in the USA it is the third). Experts determine the initial investment amount for opening a restaurant-type establishment as 50-1000 thousand USD. The payback of these funds, depending on various reasons, is on average about three years. However, elite restaurants should be "removed" from the list of fast-paying restaurants. They are called "business for the soul" since they require huge investments, and not everyone can go to such a restaurant. At the same time, it is worth making a reservation that often, the invested funds do not pay off.

According to the main classifications, restaurant business establishments can be divided into the following types (Kim & Seo, 2018; Maliuga & Zagorodniuk, 2020; Rajagopalan, 2019):

1. By the principle of customer service:

- classic - dishes are prepared immediately after receiving the order. Semi-finished products are not used;
- fast food restaurant - based on the attendance of the restaurant, it assumes the use of blanks made by the restaurant staff only from fresh products;
- fast food restaurant (fast food) - involves the quick preparation of meals from semi-finished products.

2. By ethnicity:

- Italian Cuisine;

- Ukrainian food;
 - Chinese cuisine;
 - European cuisine;
 - Georgian cuisine, etc.
3. By the level of service provided (only for classic restaurants).
4. According to the price criterion, based on the size of the average check:
- elite restaurants (premium class). Assumes a high average check, conceptual interior, elite wines in the wine list; extensive menu. A distinctive feature of such a restaurant is customer service quality: waiters must know the rules of etiquette, the rules of table setting and the order of dishes, etc. Such restaurants are distinguished by the quality of dishes, cutlery, glass, tablecloths and napkins. The markup in such restaurants is up to 500%;
 - mid-price restaurants. Compared to the elite, they are distinguished by a more democratic style. The menu is not very different from that of premium restaurants. Decorations and serving items are of high quality but lower in price. The margin is up to 300%.
 - the lower price segment is represented by inexpensive restaurants, cafes and bars. Here, the requirements for decoration and serving are much lower. The food range is small and relatively simple. Dishes and cutlery are inexpensive. Serving is minimal. Accordingly, the average check is small.
5. Concerning positioning, restaurants are divided into:
- gastronomic;
 - restaurants of national cuisine;
 - classic;
 - retro;
 - restaurants for a "special occasion";
 - restaurants for "family vacations", etc.
- The restaurant business's functioning analysis made it possible to identify its development's general trends in current economic conditions.
1. Restaurants of the high price segment are going even higher, increasing the quality of dishes, products, and service level. Ultimately, such establishments should become benchmarks for the restaurant industry. Although it should be noted that only the wealthy and isolated audience will go to these restaurants.
2. The most popular type of restaurants - democratic (oriented towards the middle class), has several development trends: restaurants with an open kitchen and the emergence of thematic restaurants (steak house or fish house, etc.)
3. Increased demand for healthy products. Moreover, restaurant business enterprises establish direct long-term economic ties directly with agricultural producers.
4. Dissemination of national culinary traditions around the world.
5. Development of "fusion" cuisine (means "fusion, fusion").
6. Strengthening the focus on product quality.
7. Active development of "molecular cuisine".
8. Creation of networks and a further increase in its size. Moreover, there are two main types of networks:
- unified - providing for the standardization of all components of the concept;
 - mixed - involving a combination of marketing, advertising campaigns, a price loyalty program, etc.

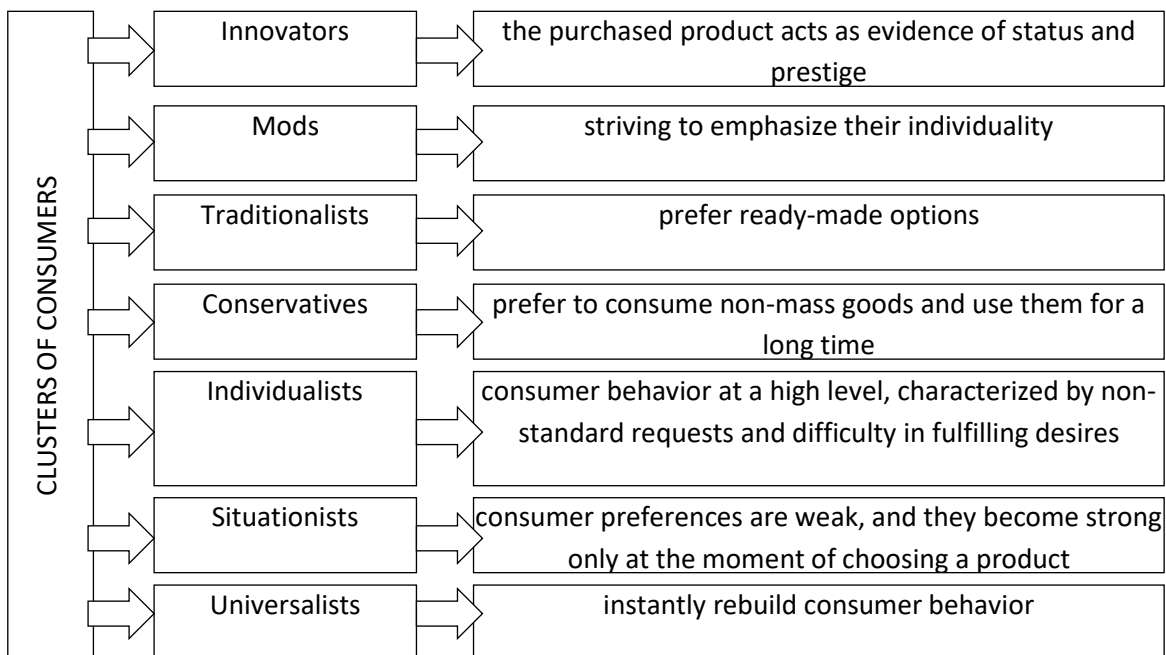
9. Development of specialized enterprises with a reduced range of services and meals offered. Their specialization can be varied; restaurants can specialize, as a rule, to prepare national dishes, dinners, and breakfasts. Sometimes, restaurants specialize in creating a particular atmosphere; for example, "Wild West" and others. It is also impossible not to mention such a type of restaurant as "free flow", or democratic restaurants. "Free flo" in translation means "free movement". As the world practice shows, democratic restaurants are a relatively dynamic segment of the restaurant market. The primary consumers of such enterprises are people of average income. The signs of such enterprises are: the absence of waiters, cooking in the presence of guests, a rich assortment of dishes. Such restaurants allow visitors to choose a place independently, accommodate comfortably, and feel at ease. All this is provided by a combination of "isolated islands": coffee, beer, hot dishes, as well as a self-service system with waiter service. Development of specialized enterprises with a reduced range of services and meals offered. Their specialization can be varied; restaurants can specialize, as a rule, to prepare national dishes, dinners, and breakfasts. Sometimes, restaurants specialize in creating a particular atmosphere; for example, "Wild West" and others. It is also impossible not to mention such a type of restaurant as "free flow", or democratic restaurants. "Free flow" in translation means "free movement". World practice shows that democratic restaurants are a relatively dynamic segment of the restaurant market. The primary consumers of such enterprises are people of average income. The signs of such enterprises are: the absence of waiters, cooking in the presence of guests, a rich assortment of dishes. Such restaurants allow visitors to choose a place on their own, accommodate comfortably, and feel at ease. All this is provided by a combination of "isolated islands": coffee, beer, hot dishes, as well as a self-service system with waiter service.

2.2 Consumers and consumer preferences.

Consider consumer clusters (Fig 1).

Consumer behavior is influenced – this is the fundamental principle that underlies the study of consumer preferences. The consumer is independent in his choice, but it is possible to affect both motivation and behavior if the offered product or service is designed to meet the consumer's needs and expectations. Their purchases are influenced by various groups of factors (Fig. 2), so it is necessary to manage these factors to increase the check amount.

Figure 1. Clusters of consumers

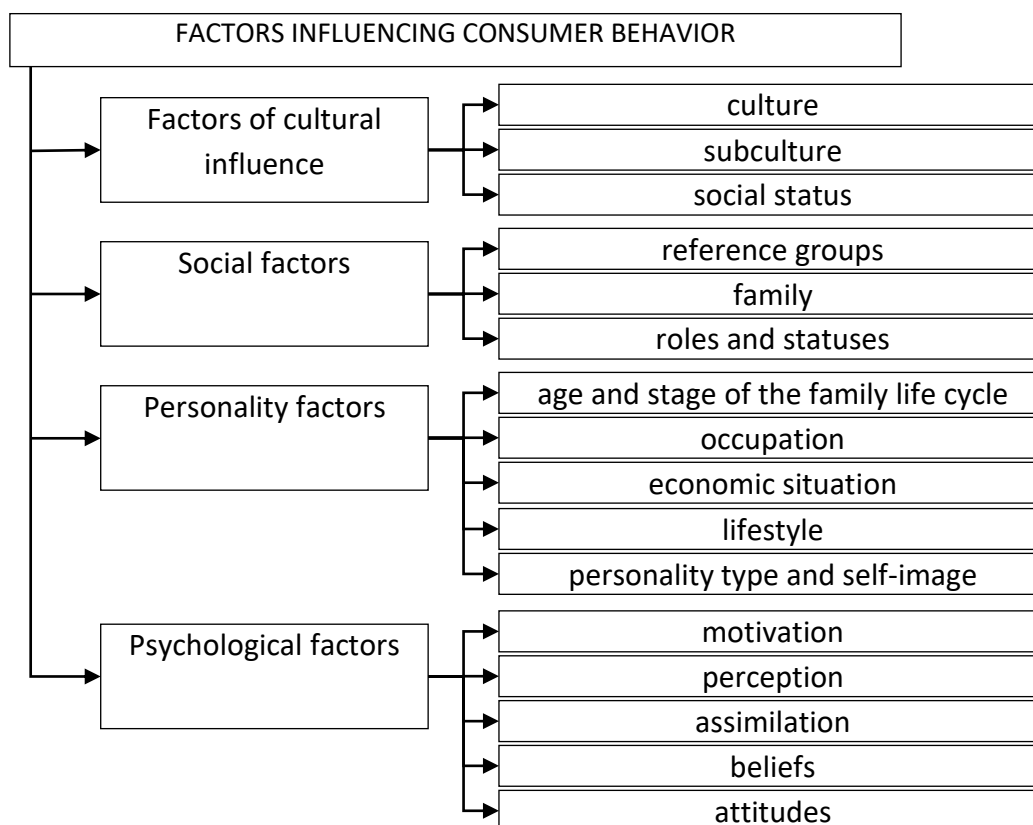


Source: Research findings

Studies of consumer preferences (they are more often called U&A studies, from "usage and attitudes") allow identifying a set of indicators such as capacity and market share, attitudes and consumption patterns, patterns of purchasing behavior, customer satisfaction, needs, problems, as well as attitudes towards products/brands, customer loyalty, a portrait of a typical consumer (Chandrasekar & Harikumar, 2019).

The activity to identify consumer preferences is shown in Fig. 3.

Figure 2. Factors influencing consumer behavior



Source: Research findings

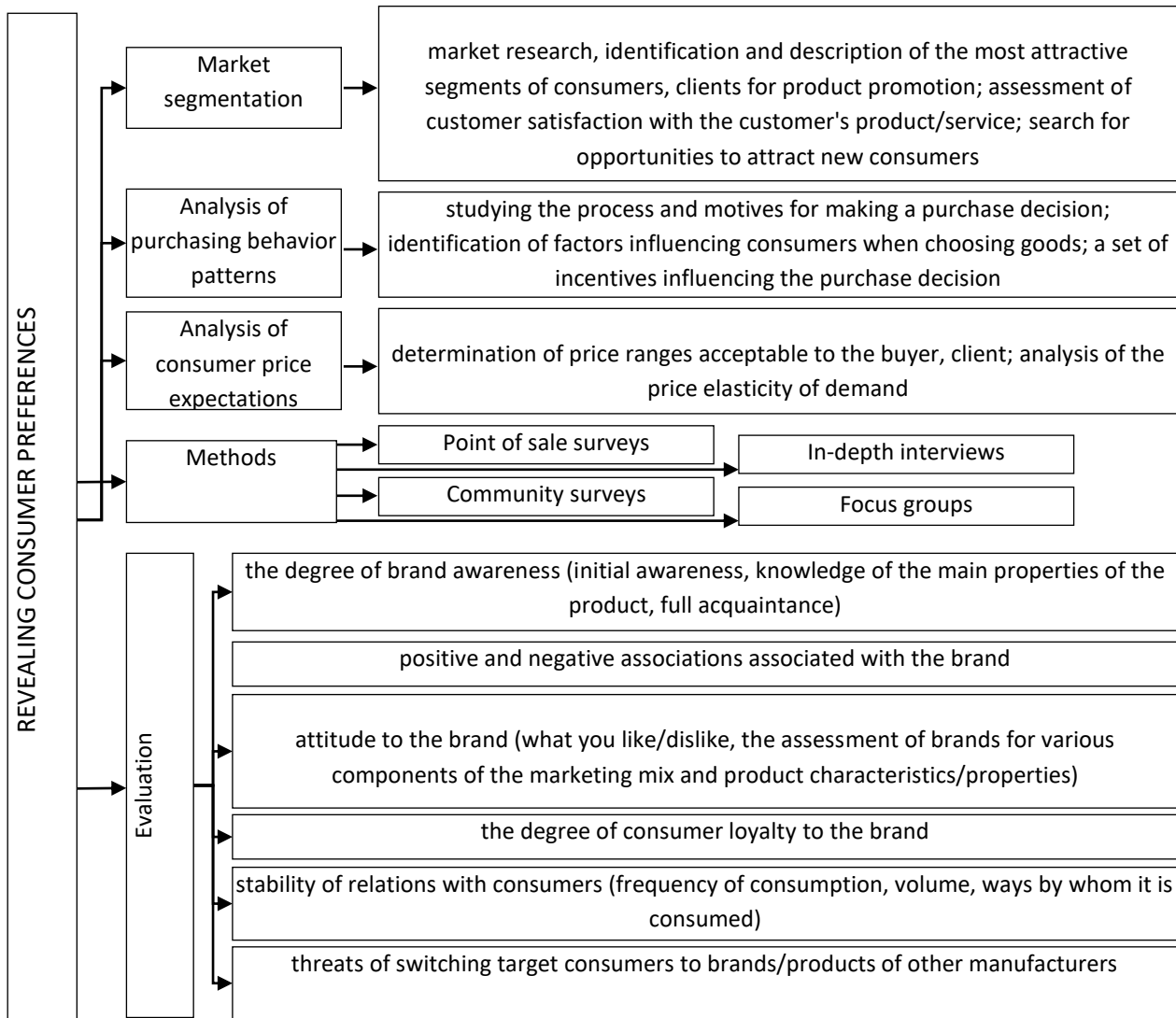
One of the main goals of consumer analysis is to identify segments with similar needs that will respond in the same way to a restaurant's marketing efforts. It is necessary to focus efforts on segments with high consumer potential. It guarantees commercial success: to create a product/service that is precisely tailored to specific consumer groups. Segmentation allows you to focus limited resources on the most profitable areas and achieve accurate targeting of marketing programs for selected segments' requirements. To segment the market, you need to conduct a consumer survey. The result of the study will be a set of consumer segments with a description of their socio-demographic, psychographic, behavioral and other characteristics. Besides, for each group, the volume of consumption of the product/service under study, the frequency of consumption, preferred locations, and so on are determined. Based on this information, the restaurant determines its target market – a segment or several segments to meet visitors' needs.

Thus, one of the essential elements of commercial activity is the study of consumer preferences. Research on consumer preferences allows us to identify: capacity and market share, attitudes and consumption patterns, patterns of purchasing behavior, customer satisfaction, needs, problems, attitudes towards products/brands, consumer loyalty, a portrait of a typical visitor.

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Figure 3. Revealing consumer preferences



Source: Research findings

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2.3 Traditional and new ways to manage consumer preferences.

Consider ways to raise consumer ratings:

Reality vs Perception. You can optimize the customer experience to be satisfied and the business is maximized.

Variability of perception. You can increase the consumer value of a product while not increasing the cost of its production, you just need to change the perception of customers of the product. We consider that perception is illogical. For example, people subconsciously value everything that is free, and a large selection on the shelves negatively affects sales.

Perception reframing. Reframing can help buyers think differently about the price of an item. This technique is used incredibly effectively in advertising. High-value products are particularly good at reframing. For example, it is better to write "great deal" than just "cheap offer"; it is better to use the word "exclusive" instead of "expensive"; applicable to the restaurant: expensive wines and cognacs must be exclusive. This seems reasonable since an exclusive offer is often the deciding factor in convincing a person to make a purchase.

Altruism. Studies have shown that people value foods that have a "hint of altruism" more. Survey data showed that 20% of people would prefer to buy a more expensive dish if some of the money goes to charity.

Package offers. Bundles, or the sale of two or more products in one heading, is a retail practice that has been proven effective over time. It can also be used in the restaurant business.

Reducing consumer risks. Consumer risk relates to the customer's level of uncertainty when making a purchase decision. Studies have shown that the lower the level of fear, the higher the product's consumer value.

Emphasis on safety and trust. There are many ways to gain customer confidence, such as guaranteed money back; free and easy return and exchange of goods; symbols of trust and safety; clear and transparent contact information.

Social proof. This can be done by posting customer letters of thanks, reviews on social networks.

Improving customer experience. Of course, you can reframe, increase prices, or make your product more exclusive, but also, why not work on creating a delightful customer experience that will impress your customers.

We examined the general ways of increasing the product's consumer value (while the product's objective value remained unchanged).

3. Methodological recommendations.

Each restaurant is unique, even if it belongs to a chain of restaurants, and the menu is standard: unique visitors, employees, restaurant interior, location, etc. Therefore, there is no ready-made universal scenario for the development of a restaurant; however, it is possible and necessary to create a mechanism that will allow the management, using standard steps, to adapt it to their needs.

Modern trends in the restaurant business are largely elusive – this type of activity is developing rapidly. The innovative activity has negative and positive meanings.

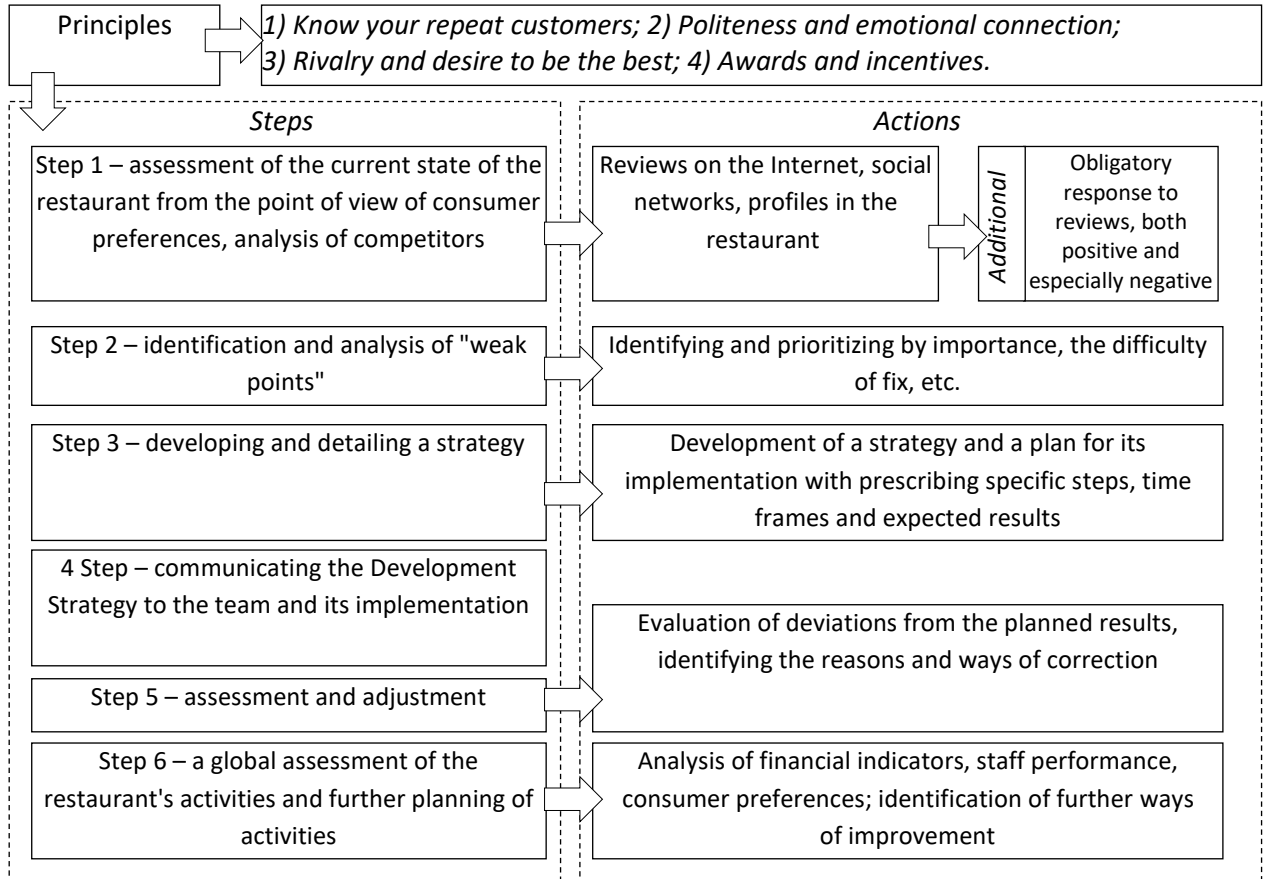
The negative values include changes under the influence of new laws and legislative acts and, as a result, changes in pricing policy. The positive is the introduction of innovations in the technological processes of providing services to restaurant guests and, as a result, an increase in the number of consumers. This can be achieved using the proposed algorithm (Fig. 4).

The passage of many stages is most convenient with the use of computer technology. Let's take a closer look at some of the steps that require clarification.

Step 1. In the era of global digitalization and people's desire to express their opinion, restaurateurs do not even have to strain to get reviews about their restaurant. One of the most common sites, TripAdvisor, publishes reviews and creates restaurants' ratings in various categories. Those. First, the restaurateur sees real reviews from people who can sometimes reveal imperceptible nuances. For example, several customers complain about the lack of a highchair, but since the restaurant was not initially positioned as a family restaurant, the restaurateur did not buy them. However, the purchase of 2 highchairs made it possible to attract an additional category of visitors

and made it possible to recoup them within a month. Secondly, it learns about its competitors - their successful and unsuccessful innovations. Simultaneously with reading the reviews, if this has not been done before, you need to respond to them – for the positive immediately, you need to thank. For the negative ones – ask to describe the situation in more detail, you can also offer additional bonuses to try to return the customer to the restaurant and "restore reputation."

Figure 4. The proposed algorithm for restaurant business development based on consumer preferences



Source: Research findings

Step 2. Prioritization by importance is possible if the restaurateur has highlighted the most important goals/criteria/consumer preferences. Next, you need to assess the labor costs of correcting them. So, several reviews were left about the seafood's incredible freshness under a competitor's restaurant. We find out that the restaurant supplier and try to negotiate with him – labor costs are almost minimal, the effect is incommensurable.

Step 3. The main criteria should be assessed quantitatively as much as possible, and target indicators determined for them.

Step 6. It is necessary to evaluate the activity continually. Step 1 should become permanent.

Consequently, customer appreciation can be increased by improving the quality of service. Gaming should be successfully used in the restaurant business so that every visit to the restaurant is not just an occasion to dine. To retain regular guests and attract new ones in the face of fierce competition with a stylish interior and high-quality, delicious food, the contact area personnel's qualified work is no longer enough. This is where innovations in the restaurant business come to the rescue, for the sake of which customers want more and more to go to this particular restaurant (Fig. 5) (Balatska, 2019; Lagodiienko et al., 2019; Vasylenko & Lytvynets, 2019).

Thus, we examined the general ways of increasing the product's consumer value (while the product's objective value remained unchanged). Restaurant guests need impeccable service for consumer preference. Consequently, customer appreciation can be increased by improving the

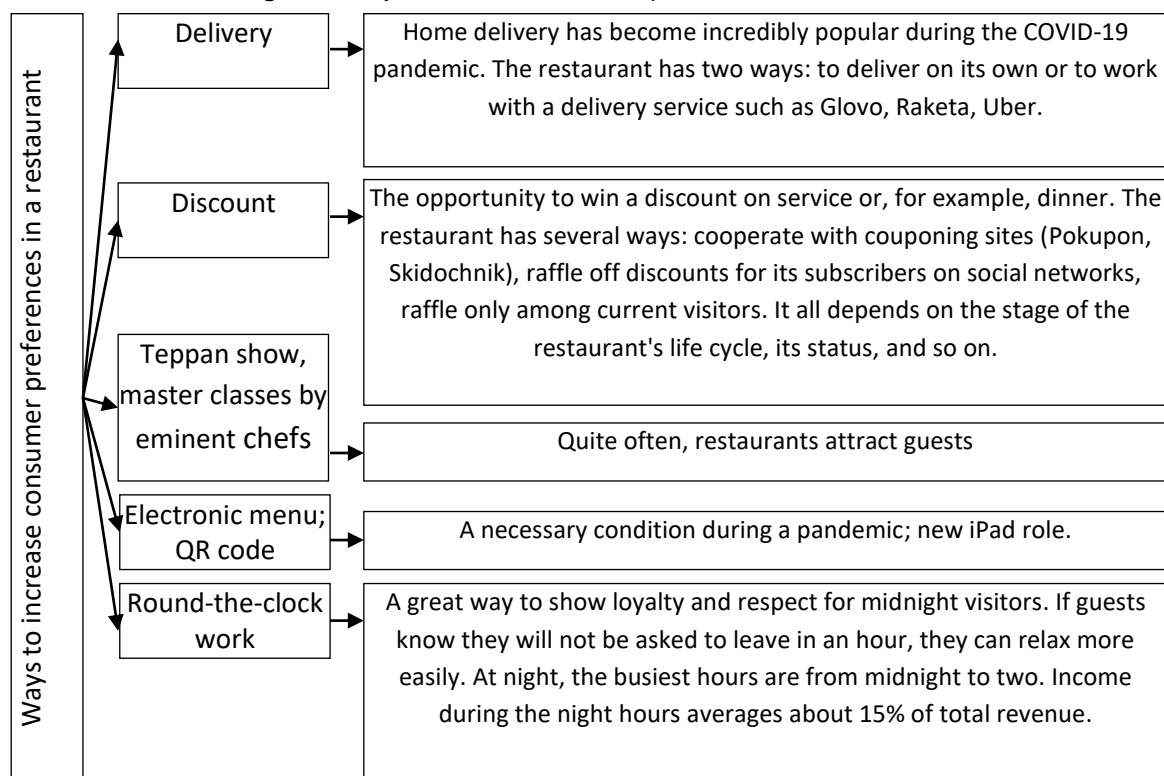
quality of service. Successfully use gaming in the restaurant business, ordering home delivery; the opportunity to win a discount on service; free wi-fi; teppan-show, master classes; electronic menu; QR code; round-the-clock operation.

4. Analysis of results.

The proposed methodology (algorithm and methods for increasing consumer preferences in a restaurant) was tested in several restaurants in Khmelnytskyi, Kyiv and Lutsk and showed its absolute effectiveness (increase in visitors and the average check amount). None of the restaurants managed to achieve a "clean" and initially correct strategy: which methods were more effective for Kyiv, but least for Khmelnytskyi and Lutsk, which once again proves the authors' position - there is no ready-made universal scenario for the development of a restaurant, any mechanism, you need to adapt it to your needs.

The probation method was carried out in 7 restaurants (Khmelnytskyi: BEEF & CAKE, Olive Cafe, Familiya, Kyiv: Barvy, Mr. Grill, Lutsk: Mojo Family, Show Basilic). The results are as follows (according to Fig. 4):

Figure 5. Ways to increase consumer preferences in a restaurant



Source: Research findings

Step 1. As a rule, restaurant management knew about its main competitors – as a rule, these were either nearby cafes or with a similar concept, they also knew the unspoken "TOP-5/10" restaurants in the city. Regarding reviews (social media analysis, reviews on Google maps, Tripadvisor):

- excellent and constant work in social networks, reaction to all reviews (Barvy, Olive Cafe, Mojo Family (reaction has slowed down since winter));
- there are many reviews, the restaurant reacts chaotically (BEEF & CAKE);
- a few reviews, the restaurant reacts to negative ones (Mr. Grill);
- in principle, there are few reviews; the restaurant does not respond (Familiya, Show Basilic).

Basically, those restaurants that are included in the TOP-10 of the city react.

Step 2. Weaknesses that were identified in restaurants (Table 1).

Thus, the effectiveness of the proposed methods of increasing consumer preferences confirmed and specific problems was identified: for example, due to the location of the Olive Cafe near the train station, it showed the need for an English-speaking waiter.

Step 3. After identifying the weaknesses, all restaurants developed a strategy to eliminate them, taking into account the basic principles (Fig. 4). For example, this is the strategy of the Olive Cafe restaurant (Table 2).

Table 1. Main restaurant problems and solutions

Problem	Solution
<i>General view of the restaurant and atmosphere</i>	
Insufficient lighting	Installation of additional lighting sources, incl. above the tables
Music volume	Adjustable on-demand; determination of "loud and quiet" places in the restaurant and initial seating, depending on preferences.
Lack of amenities for parents with children	Installation of a changing table in the toilet, purchase of several highchairs, discounts at certain "slow" hours.
Boring	Teppan show, master classes
Not enough tables during rush hour	Delivery, discounts for those who had to wait/leave, Round-the-clock work
<i>Service level</i>	
Long waiting time for order	Electronic menu
The waiter is not around	Application of penalties
The waiter is not convincing, does not know the peculiarities of the dishes	Application of penalties, professional development
The waiter does not speak a foreign language	Strengthening the staff by an English-speaking waiter
<i>Menu</i>	
Lack of desserts	Outsourcing
The range is not complete enough	Seasonal menu
"Bored" kitchen	Seasonal menu

Source: Research findings

In some restaurants, the strategies looked a little different, and some also put the first priority on those weaknesses that are most easily eliminated. It is also worth noting that almost all restaurants periodically complained about the waiters; field studies showed that sometimes it was not the waiters' fault and the visitors' bad mood. It is also worth noting that highly experienced waiters managed to smooth out conflicts and remain without negative reviews. This proves the fact that it is not worth saving on staff. Some restaurants did not prescribe the expected result because they believed that everything aimed to increase profits. Here we have to disagree because some facts affect the number of visitors. Some involve the average check; moreover, restaurants are profitable to attract more visitors, but during peak hours – to increase the average bill.

Step 4. At this step, almost all restaurants acted the same way: communicating the strategy to the administration, reporting to the staff and setting the date of implementation (from 2 days to a month).

Step 5. One of the most critical steps. Those restaurants that evaluated periodically and more often came to their "ideal" strategy faster. Those that did not assess in practice had to evaluate and revise the steps taken over time. So, for example, the restaurant filled up with discounts - both on couponing sites and visitors, which led to a decrease in income in existing general visitors began to visit only if they managed to get a discount.

Step 6. Let us provide the average impact of the tools used on the restaurant's performance (Fig. 6).

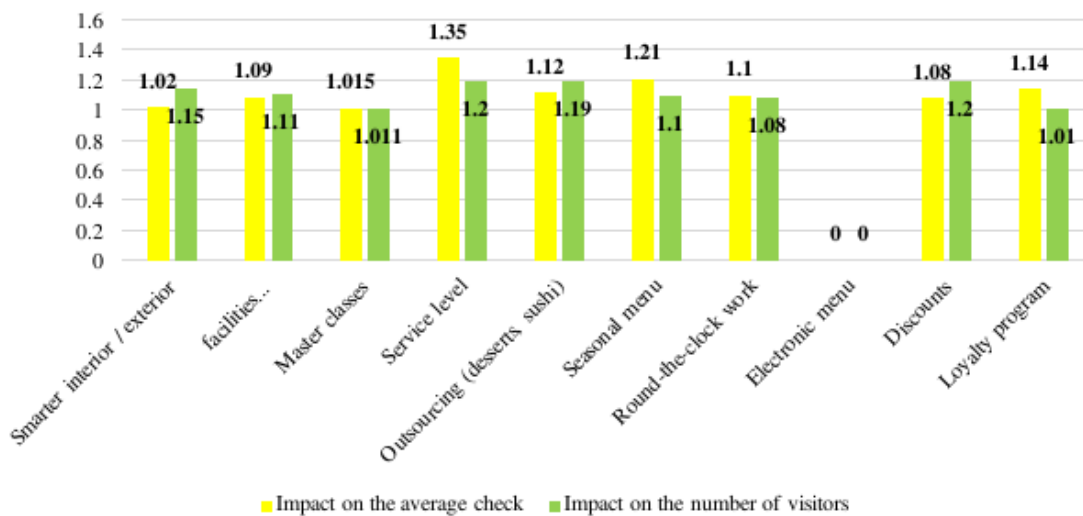
All restaurants assessed both their financial performance (using well-established methods) and the effectiveness of tools and staff performance. Significantly, the most remarkable growth in financial indicators was observed where each employee's performance was assessed, not the group/shift as a whole. First, it created competition and a desire to show oneself better, and secondly, it made it possible to identify the most mediocre workers.

Table 2. Olive Cafe restaurant strategy

Problem	Decision	Expected Result	Priority
General view of the restaurant and atmosphere (exterior)	Land improvement	Increasing the average check	2
Music volume	Adjustable on-demand; determination of "loud and quiet" places in the restaurant and initial seating, depending on preferences.	Increasing the average check	1
Lack of amenities for parents with children	Installation of a changing table in the toilet, purchase of several highchairs, discounts at certain "slow" hours.	Growth in the number of visitors	1
Boring	Masterclasses	Growth in the number of visitors, increasing the average check	3
Service level	"New policy" to personnel: training, professional development, penalties, recruiting an English-speaking waiter. Application of penalties, professional development	Increasing the average check	1
Lack of desserts	Outsourcing	Increasing the average check	1
"Bored" kitchen	Seasonal menu	Increase in the number of visitors, Increase in the average check	2

Source: Research findings

Figure 6. Impact of consumer opinion management tools on restaurant operations



Source: Research findings

It is worth noting that an electronic menu's introduction did not bring a visible effect. One of the conditions for obtaining permission to open a restaurant in a pandemic was precisely the presence of such a menu, which again proves that it is necessary to periodically reassess its activities and look for new ways of business development.

4. Conclusion.

The market for restaurant services is continually changing. It is due to the fact that the restaurant business is a particular field of activity, part of the hospitality industry, which depends entirely on the impressions of consumers. This means that the restaurant business should be further developed and maintained as part of the hospitality industry, which is the country's face, so this area needs further research. These trends lead to the emergence of new restaurant management types, increasing competition between them, and uncompetitive absorption.

The study showed that restaurants need to re-evaluate and review their business strategy and development periodically. There is no universal mechanism that would suit absolutely any restaurant. Still, the steps and principles proposed in the algorithm allow you to start/improve restaurant business development strategy correctly using computer modeling of consumer preferences.

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