



Project number 2023-2-PL01-KA220-VET-000171447



Handbook

An additional set of tools to improve the professional
situation of students on the labor market.

Disclaimer



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GastroNet - Vocational Education and Training

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Introduction



**Training Script:
Enhancing VET
Students'
Competencies in
Gastronomy
Sector
GastroNet –
Vocational
Education and
Training**

Gastronet Handbook Introduction



Thank you to all project partners – especially to the chapter authors and to the editor of the script.



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Gastronet Handbook Introduction

The GastroNet project was created to enhance the competences of VET learners graduating from gastronomic schools, with a focus on sales techniques and customer acquisition through new technologies and the Internet. By equipping participants with knowledge of current trends in online sales and social media engagement, we aim to empower them to strengthen their qualifications and increase their attractiveness to future employers.

The essence of our training framework lies in fostering adaptability to dynamic market conditions – a crucial trait highlighted during the pandemic, when many food establishments had to rely heavily on online operations. Through this training, we strive to cultivate resilience among culinary students, helping them navigate labor market challenges and respond effectively to market shifts. All these elements were carefully considered to ensure wide dissemination of experiences to our partners and participants, fostering collaboration across educators, VET learners, and employers.

One of the main pillars of this training is this handbook – a practical tool designed to enhance learners' qualifications, improve their professional stability, and support educators in strengthening their own competences. The handbook consists of five chapters, enabling VET learners to structure their knowledge, identify gaps, and acquire new skills.

The first chapter, prepared by Staropolska Izba Przemysłowo-Handlowa, is a comprehensive and practice-oriented unit that promotes entrepreneurial thinking and business management skills. Its goal is to equip future professionals with the ability to conceptualize, develop, and manage food-related enterprises – from local culinary initiatives to international ventures – while adapting to the realities of today's food economy. Key topics include business planning and strategy, financial literacy and resource management, and opportunity recognition through market insights and cultural awareness.

The second chapter, written by the Zofia Zamenhof Foundation, introduces the fundamentals of e-commerce, its connection to e-business, and its growing importance in the gastronomy sector.

The goal is to help learners understand why digital channels are now essential to every aspect of food business operations – from taking orders to building lasting customer relationships.

The third chapter, prepared by EPRALIMA, explores how digital transformation is reshaping gastronomy and how businesses can adapt to emerging technologies – from online ordering and reservation systems to AI-driven customer interactions and digital marketing strategies. This module offers practical tools and insights to help learners enhance customer acquisition and retention by engaging effectively with guests, handling objections, upselling confidently, and personalizing service.

The fourth chapter, developed by Cnipa Puglia, examines the strategic role of marketing in the gastronomy sector, where consumer habits, sales channels, and customer expectations evolve rapidly. It introduces key marketing principles through the classic 4Ps of marketing – product, price, promotion, and distribution – with a strong applied focus on the gastronomic context.

The final chapter, written by ZDZ Kielce, focuses on social media. It demonstrates how platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok can support restaurant promotion, brand building, customer communication, and sales growth. It also highlights differences between Polish, Italian, and Portuguese markets, helping learners understand how cultural factors shape consumer preferences. This chapter aims to develop learners' skills in creating engaging content, planning marketing campaigns, analyzing online performance, and communicating effectively in the dynamic digital environment.

Each chapter includes practical exercises designed to reinforce the material. We recommend completing these exercises either after each chapter or as a summary at the end of the handbook.

The GastroNet project was designed and implemented by five partner organizations. The partnership brings together diverse perspectives, skills, and expertise to address the educational gap faced by VET graduates in gastronomy. Research has shown that school curricula often fail to keep pace with labor market needs, particularly in relation to new technologies and the Internet's role in professional practice. This is why the GastroNet partnership combines employers' organizations, a gastronomic school, and teams of marketing, sales, and social media experts. Their combined experience made it possible to create engaging, labor market-oriented training modules.

As a final note, we wish to share the background that inspired the creation of the GastroNet project. In 2019, we conducted a training course on new technologies at a social cooperative operating a restaurant. The course, closely linked to participants' work needs, was highly successful. During subsequent research on vocational education, we identified a strong demand for training that connects sales techniques, the Internet, and new technologies in the catering industry. GastroNet was developed in response to that need.

Today, it is impossible to imagine success in gastronomy without online sales and digital customer acquisition. By combining the expertise of marketing, social media, and education specialists with diverse international experience, we aim to help VET learners from culinary schools expand their skills in sales and digital communication. We believe that empowering them with practical knowledge in online marketing and social media will not only strengthen their professional qualifications but also increase their value in the job market.

Project

GastroNet - Vocational Education and Training



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An additional set of tools for vocational education and training in gastronomy to improve the professional situation of students on the labor market

Throughout our work, we want to show how to solve social problems. We want to contribute to increase the level of education of various social groups in countries where we are going to run our work and to have an influence on the integration processes between nations. We are certain that this is education which gives a chance to grow and makes the social differences smaller. Intercultural dialogue is possible thanks to education. Thus, our work aims also at education and training, also in the aspect of international cooperation. We also want to propagate the knowledge about the people connected with the ideas of our foundation.

Our main focus are the groups at the risk of social exclusion with regards to labour marker such as disabled, NEETs, lowskilled adults and domestic violence victims. Our experts have expertise in higher education and adult education.

Acquiring new knowledge related to new technologies and sales techniques in order to better prepare the training plan • development of pedagogical innovation formulation of a training plan and outline for students of gastronomic schools.

Project Partners



Zofia Zamenhof Foundation



Zofia Zamenhof Foundation aims at propagating the idea of freedom, the rules of democracy, cultural diversity and tolerance. Throughout our work, we want to show how to solve social problems. We want to contribute to increase the level of education of various social groups in countries where we are going to run our work and to have an influence on the integration processes between nations. We are certain that this is education which gives a chance to grow and makes the social differences smaller. Intercultural dialogue is possible thanks to education. Thus, our work aims also at education and training, also in the aspect of international cooperation. We also want to propagate the knowledge about the people connected with the ideas of our foundation. Foundation is involved in the educational and scientific activities related to the social causes and reduction of unemployment. There is a strong focus on cooperation with Eastern Partnership countries and working with educational institutions at various levels. Our main focus are the groups at the risk of social exclusion with regards to labour marker such as disabled, NEETs, low- skilled adults and domestic violence victims. Our experts have expertise in higher education and adult education. Members of our educational committee are PhD holders in different specializations of social sciences (mostly economics and sociology) or PhD candidates. We have also people who have long experience of work in educational industry, including adult education perspectives.

www.zofiazamenhof.pl

www.gastronet-edu.eu



EMPRALIMA – The professional school of opportunities



The Ministry of Education homologated EPRALIMA in 1999, as a private non-profit organization, based on a cooperative regime that provides vocational training at various European levels. Epralima is composed of 3 branches: the head-office in Arcos de Valdevez; branch in Ponte da Barca and another in Ponte de Lima; a Skills Assessment Centre which recognizes, validates and certifies skills giving individuals an opportunity to receive academic equivalency; and finally a Technical Centre which works with transnational and communitarian projects. Epralima contributes to projects due to its: broad knowledge of the region and close relationships with the target-groups; ability to promote the encouragement of networks and mobilize different organizations; experience in the development of different Work Packages: management, assessment, diagnosis, design and implementation. Its sustainability is linked to the dynamics of the Upper Lima Region, overcoming needs through training.

www.epralima.com



Zakład Doskonalenia Zawodowego w Kielcach



The Vocational Development Institute in Kielce is a leading educational institution in the region, operating continuously for 75 years. The association has an extensive network of teaching facilities in 20 cities in the following voivodeships: Świętokrzyskie, Mazowieckie and Lesser Poland. This expansion of the training base enables access to high-quality education not only in large agglomerations, but also in smaller towns. The aim of ZDZ is to improve the professional competences of adults, as well as to educate young people and adults in the school system. The plant is an important link in the national education system influencing the development of human resources in the region, not only through its schools and organized courses, but also thanks to educational projects co-financed by the European Union. ZDZ has the widest educational offer in the voivodeship, which includes courses and seminars as well as schools for youth and adults. It also allows you to obtain certificates, diplomas, attestations and specialist qualifications, which give you the opportunity to obtain tangible benefits from the acquired knowledge and skills not only on the domestic but also on the international labor market. In recent years alone, several thousand clients have benefited from this form of improving their qualifications. The priority for ZDZ in Kielce is a high level of service and customer orientation. The highest standards of education in schools during courses have been confirmed by granting the Department the ISO and IQNet certificates and numerous awards and distinctions, including the Polish Promotional Emblem "Teraz Polska", which strengthened the company's position as a leader among educational institutions in the region.

www.zdz.kielce.pl



Staropolska Chamber of Industry and Commerce



The Staropolska Chamber of Industry and Commerce is the largest business environment organization operating in the Świętokrzyskie Province. It has been operating on the market since 1990. It currently brings together over 150 companies that employ a total of approx. 14 thousand people. The Staropolska Chamber of Industry and Commerce was established as a result of the natural desire of entrepreneurs to unite in order to create a representative office representing their interests, among others, by influencing state and regional authorities in order to create favorable conditions for the development of enterprises, establishing business contacts, collecting, processing and sharing information useful in business activities, conducting professional training and coaching, organizing meetings of business people. The Staropolska Chamber of Industry and Commerce provides services, among others, in the areas of: partner matching, legalization of commercial documents, consulting and training, economic information, lobbying activities. Since 1996, the Staropolska Chamber of Industry and Commerce has been a member of the national network of centers providing development services for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises: initially it was the network of the National System of Services, and since 2017 it has been a network of entities providing development services. The aim of the network is to increase the competitiveness of Polish SMEs by providing them with high-quality consulting, training, information and financial services. In order to make it easier for enterprises from the Świętokrzyskie region to function on the Single European Market, the Chamber runs the Enterprise Europe Network Center – a representation of the European Commission.

www.siph.com.pl

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The professional school of opportunities CNIPA PUGLIA



The CNIPA Puglia is a regional agency responsible for technical and technological development, professional education, scientific research, and continuing education. It is an ACCREDITED non-profit professional training entity with its legal headquarters in Bari and 5 other offices/schools located in other important cities in the Puglia Region. Since 1995, it has offered professional and academic training courses, as well as courses and services for students, young people, and adults, with over 15 projects per year. Its objectives are social inclusion of people at risk, employment, culture, and environmental protection. For social inclusion, it works to promote social rights, equal opportunities, European citizenship, adult and minor rights, migrants, and refugees. In the field of employment, it promotes entrepreneurship, career guidance, mentoring, and active participation of young people. In terms of culture, contemporary culture, cultural democratization, cultural heritage, artistic expression, and promotion of young artists, and traditional crafts are promoted. As far as technology is concerned, digital literacy courses and webmaster courses are carried out. The CNIPA Puglia has around 20 employees and almost 100 accredited teachers from schools and the business world who are used as external professionals from time to time. In addition, it has an average of 170 minor students per year. The organization is also involved in orientation, work accompaniment, and job search projects, with training and consulting actions, and activating internships in companies and institutions. In addition, the organization promotes training and information activities on topics of interest to people, such as the use of digital tools, career guidance, financial education, entrepreneurship, digital culture, and the development of transversal skills.

www.cnipapuglia.it

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CHAPTER 1



**Training Script:
Enhancing VET
Students'
Competencies in
Gastronomy
Sector
GastroNet –
Vocational
Education and
Training**

By Staropolska Izba Przemysłowo-Handlowa, Poland

Entrepreneurship

Enhancing VET Students' Competencies in Gastronomy Sector.



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Module Overview

This module has been conceived as a comprehensive and practice-oriented unit aimed at fostering entrepreneurial mindsets and operational business skills among learners in vocational education and training (VET) pathways within the gastronomy sector.

Its primary objective is to equip future professionals with the capacity to conceptualise, develop, and manage food-related enterprises—ranging from local culinary initiatives to cross-border gastronomic ventures—while responding to the dynamic realities of today's food economy.

Structured to support progressive competence development, the module guides students through key thematic areas including:

- Business planning and strategic modelling in gastronomy
- Financial literacy and resource management in food service
- Opportunity identification through market insight and cultural awareness

Pedagogical content is enriched by real-life case studies and sectoral examples drawn from the culinary ecosystems of Poland, Italy, and Portugal. These national perspectives enable learners to recognise contextual diversity and to engage with tangible practices across the European food landscape.

Designed with versatility in mind, the module offers flexible delivery formats—supporting both classroom-based and digital learning environments. Emphasis is placed on active, collaborative, and inclusive methodologies that reflect the multicultural and multidisciplinary nature of contemporary gastronomy.

In line with the European Union's priorities for vocational education, this programme supports the acquisition of entrepreneurial competences as defined in the EntreComp Framework, while reinforcing cultural sensitivity, sustainability, and innovation as foundational pillars of modern food entrepreneurship.

Sections:

Section 1: Introduction to Entrepreneurship in Gastronomy

Section 2: Structuring Vision into Strategy – The Role of the Business Plan in Gastronomy

Section 3: Defining the Unique Value – The Role of the Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

Section 4: Regulatory Framework – Licences and Certifications in Gastronomic Entrepreneurship

Section 5: Financial Management in Food Service – Building a Sustainable and Resilient Business Model

Section 6: Opportunity Identification in the Food Sector – Turning Change into Strategic Advantage

Section 7: Cross-Cultural Gastronomy – Embracing Diversity in Entrepreneurial Practice

Section 1: Introduction to Entrepreneurship in Gastronomy

1. The Essence of Entrepreneurship in the Gastronomic Sector

Entrepreneurship is widely recognised as a fundamental driver of innovation, economic development and social progress across Europe. It encompasses the ability to identify market opportunities, mobilise resources, take calculated risks and create value—economic, social or cultural. Within the gastronomy sector, entrepreneurship extends beyond the opening of a restaurant or café; it involves developing sustainable food service models, introducing innovative culinary concepts, adapting to changing consumer preferences, and responding to global challenges such as environmental sustainability and digital transformation.

In the context of the European Union, entrepreneurship is not merely a matter of individual ambition. It is viewed as a strategic policy area. The European Commission emphasises entrepreneurship education and support mechanisms to empower individuals, particularly young people, to develop the entrepreneurial skills required for the 21st century. This is especially relevant in gastronomy, where the fusion of tradition and innovation offers fertile ground for creative business endeavours.

Entrepreneurship in gastronomy entails a multi-faceted approach: from identifying culinary trends, to sourcing local and sustainable ingredients, managing food safety, maintaining quality standards, and applying sound financial and marketing strategies. Moreover, gastronomic entrepreneurs are increasingly expected to contribute to broader societal goals, including public health promotion, food waste reduction, and community engagement.

2. Legal Forms of Conducting Business Activity

When embarking on a gastronomic venture, the choice of legal structure is among the most significant decisions an entrepreneur must make. It determines the legal obligations, tax implications, liability, and governance of the business. Below is an overview of the legal forms available in three EU Member States—Poland, Italy, and Portugal—tailored to the needs of prospective entrepreneurs in the food service sector.

2.1. Poland

Poland offers a flexible regulatory environment for entrepreneurs, with the most common legal forms in the gastronomy sector including:

- **Sole Proprietorship** (Jednoosobowa działalność gospodarcza):
 - This is the simplest and most common legal form. It requires registration in the Central Register and Information on Economic Activity (CEIDG). The owner bears full personal liability for the business's obligations and pays taxes either under general rules, a flat rate or a lump-sum system. It is ideal for small restaurants, cafés or catering services.
- **Civil Law Partnership** (Spółka cywilna): Typically used by at least two natural persons, this form is not a legal entity but a contract-based cooperation between partners. It is appropriate for small gastronomic ventures operated jointly.
- **Limited Liability Company** (Spółka z ograniczoną odpowiedzialnością – Sp. z o.o.): A preferred form for larger or more complex enterprises. It provides legal personality and limits the liability of shareholders to the amount of their contributions. The company must be registered in the National Court Register (KRS).
- **Simple Joint-Stock Company** (Prosta Spółka Akcyjna – P.S.A.): Designed to support innovative startups, including those in gastronomy tech or delivery platforms. It offers a simplified structure and limited liability, with flexibility in share capital requirements.

2.2. Italy

Italy presents a variety of legal forms, with the most suitable for gastronomic entrepreneurship being:

- **Sole Proprietorship** (Ditta Individuale): Common among small restaurants and family-run businesses. Registration is required with the Business Register (Registro delle Imprese) at the local Chamber of Commerce. The owner assumes unlimited liability.
- **Partnerships** (Società di persone): These include:
 - Società in nome collettivo (SNC) – all partners have unlimited liability.
 - Società in accomandita semplice (SAS) – a mix of general and limited partners.
- **Limited Liability Company** (Società a responsabilità limitata – S.r.l.): Offers limited liability and is suited for medium-sized or expanding food businesses. It requires articles of association and registration, and it ensures a higher level of operational autonomy.
- **Simplified Limited Liability Company** (S.r.l.s.): Tailored for young entrepreneurs (under 35), this form allows lower startup capital and simplified registration, making it attractive for gastronomy startups.

2.3. Portugal

Entrepreneurship in Portugal benefits from a supportive legal framework and digital services for company registration. Common legal forms include:

- **Sole Proprietor** (Empresário em Nome Individual): Easily established and frequently used in the food service sector. The entrepreneur is personally liable for business debts.
- **Individual Limited Liability Establishment** (Estabelecimento Individual de Responsabilidade Limitada – EIRL): Offers limited liability while retaining the simplicity of a sole proprietorship.
- **Private Limited Company** (Sociedade por Quotas – Lda.) The most popular choice for small and medium gastronomic enterprises. It provides limited liability, requires at least one partner, and allows for flexible capital requirements.
- **Single-Member Private Limited Company** (Sociedade Unipessoal por Quotas): This is a subtype of the Lda. that enables sole ownership with limited liability. It is commonly used by individual entrepreneurs seeking protection from personal liability.

3. Conclusion

Understanding the nature of entrepreneurship and the available legal frameworks is a fundamental prerequisite for any successful venture in gastronomy. Whether aspiring to open a small artisanal bakery, a food truck, a sustainable restaurant or an innovative food-tech startup, entrepreneurs must align their creative aspirations with strategic and regulatory considerations.

In the European context, the gastronomy sector holds not only economic significance but also cultural and environmental importance. The European Union supports initiatives that empower new and existing entrepreneurs to innovate, grow, and contribute to a resilient and inclusive gastronomic economy.

Section 2: Structuring Vision into Strategy – The Role of the Business Plan in Gastronomy

1. The Business Plan as a Strategic Foundation in Gastronomy

In the European context of entrepreneurial development, a business plan constitutes a key strategic instrument for the establishment and sustainable growth of any commercial initiative—particularly in sectors where creativity intersects with complex operational demands, such as gastronomy. Far beyond being a formal requirement, the business plan in the food service sector represents a comprehensive articulation of vision, viability, and value creation.

It serves as a cornerstone document that transforms culinary ambition into a structured and implementable enterprise model. Whether the aim is to launch a local bistro, a specialised street food truck, or an internationally inspired fine-dining establishment, the business plan provides the essential framework through which the entrepreneurial journey is navigated—from initial concept to long-term sustainability.

Critically, it consolidates the entrepreneurial thought process, ensures the efficient organisation of resources, supports informed decision-making, and enhances the potential to secure external financing or partnership. In this way, the business plan fulfils not only a managerial function but also a communicative and promotional one, acting as a gateway to stakeholder engagement.

2. Structural Composition of a Gastronomic Business Plan

A well-prepared business plan unfolds much like a carefully composed culinary experience—each section offering clarity, cohesion, and complementarity. The following elements typically form the backbone of such a plan:

Executive Summary

This opening section encapsulates the essence of the venture: its identity, mission, and objectives. It introduces the reader to the nature of the gastronomic business—be it a vegan café, a regional trattoria, or a pop-up fusion concept—and outlines the core value proposition.

Vision and Concept

Here, the entrepreneur sets out the defining characteristics of the establishment. What is its unique culinary philosophy? Will it focus on seasonality, sustainability, or innovation? What type of experience is intended for guests—intimate and artisanal, vibrant and youthful, or exclusive and refined? This section bridges emotional intent with business rationale.

Market Analysis

Grounded in empirical observation and research, this component assesses the demand landscape. It identifies target customer segments, analyses consumer behaviour, reviews competitors, and recognises prevailing and emerging trends such as plant-based dining, zero-waste practices, or digital ordering systems. It is this evidence-based reflection that transforms creative aspiration into market-aware strategy.

Product and Service Offering

This section delineates the gastronomic concept in operational terms: the menu structure, pricing policy, food and beverage identity, and any value-added services (e.g. wine pairings, chef's tables, delivery options). It also defines the service model—whether table service, buffet, counter service or hybrid—thus aligning customer expectations with operational logistics.

Operational and Organisational Plan

Comprehensive and practical, this part addresses the enterprise's daily functioning. It includes kitchen infrastructure, staff roles and recruitment strategy, supplier networks, inventory systems, and hygiene procedures.

It also considers location-specific factors such as lease agreements, facility adaptation, or licensing compliance. Digital systems such as reservation platforms or POS integration are also addressed.

Marketing and Communication Strategy

Given the increasing digitalisation of consumer interaction, the business plan must include a strategic marketing blueprint. It considers brand positioning, use of social media platforms, customer engagement tactics, loyalty programmes, and collaborations with influencers or event organisers. The strategy must ensure consistent brand identity across all customer touchpoints.

Financial Plan

At its core, a gastronomic business must achieve financial viability. This section projects costs (equipment, staff, lease, ingredients), revenue estimates, and breakeven analysis. It includes startup capital requirements, cash flow forecasts, and financial risk mitigation strategies. For entrepreneurs seeking investment or credit, this section demonstrates fiscal responsibility and profitability pathways. In essence, the business plan in gastronomy is akin to a chef's *mise en place*: a disciplined arrangement of all ingredients—ideas, resources, and processes—before service begins. It is an indispensable tool for entrepreneurial clarity, stakeholder trust, and strategic foresight.

Section 3: Defining the Unique Value – The Role of the Unique Selling Proposition (USP)

1. Understanding the USP in Gastronomic Entrepreneurship

In a sector as saturated and emotionally driven as gastronomy, the Unique Selling Proposition (USP) emerges as a vital differentiator. It articulates the distinctive element that defines the food business and sets it apart from a multitude of alternatives. More than a slogan or feature, the USP embodies the experience, essence, and promise of the gastronomic brand.

The USP addresses a fundamental market question: “Why should customers choose this establishment over others?” The answer may lie in an exclusive recipe, a culturally immersive environment, a sustainable sourcing ethos, or a personalised guest experience.

When authentically defined and consistently communicated, the USP becomes central to brand identity and competitive strategy.

2. Strategic Role of the USP

The USP is not merely a marketing device; it shapes strategic decisions throughout the enterprise:

- Guides concept development (menu design, service format, ambiance)
- Informs communication (visual identity, storytelling, promotional channels)
- Builds customer loyalty by aligning with shared values or unmet needs
- Differentiates pricing strategies through perceived added value
- Enhances internal coherence by offering staff a clear orientation of business philosophy

3. Crafting a Strong USP

The process of defining a USP entails reflection on several critical areas:

- Product Differentiation: What culinary or service elements are truly unique?
- Emotional Impact: What kind of atmosphere or memory is created for guests?
- Market Gap: Are there needs not currently met by local competitors?
- Guest Feedback: Are recurring themes evident in customer reviews or social media?

Once articulated, the USP must be embedded in all dimensions of the brand: naming, interior design, menu presentation, staff interaction, and digital presence. A strong USP is not declared—it is experienced by every guest.

Section 4: Regulatory Framework – Licences and Certifications in Gastronomic Entrepreneurship

1. Overview

Operating a gastronomy business in the European Union entails compliance with specific national regulations concerning public health, safety, and trade. These regulations are harmonised to a degree through EU-level directives but are ultimately implemented at the national level. Below is a summary of core regulatory obligations in three Member States: Poland, Italy, and Portugal.

2. Poland

- Sanitary Approval (Decyzja Sanepidu): Required from the State Sanitary Inspection. The premises must pass inspection covering hygiene, ventilation, and structural standards.
- Business Registration: Through CEIDG (for sole proprietorships) or KRS (for companies), including relevant PKD codes (e.g., 56.10.A).
- HACCP System Implementation: Obligatory risk-based food safety documentation and staff training.
- Zoning and Fire Safety Approval: Verification of compliance with building and fire codes, possibly involving municipal and fire brigade inspections.
- Alcohol Licence (Optional): Separate municipal application based on the category of alcohol offered.

3. Italy

- SCIA (Certified Notice of Starting Activity): Notification to the municipality including hygiene and fire compliance declarations.
- Health Authorisation: Issued by the Local Health Authority (ASL) following physical inspection.
- HACCP Compliance: Staff must complete training and follow documented procedures aligned with HACCP principles.
- Commercial and Alcohol Licences: Required for the sale of food and beverages, including alcoholic products.

4. Portugal

- Business Registration: Conducted via the “Empresa na Hora” initiative or online portal. Includes tax and social security registration.
- Operating Licence (Licença de Utilização): Issued by the municipality based on suitability of premises for gastronomic use
- Sanitary Certification: Inspection by ASAE covering hygiene and food handling procedures.
- HACCP Compliance: Mandatory implementation of HACCP with trained personnel.
- Alcohol Licence: Required when alcoholic beverages are served; regulated by local authorities.

Section 5: Financial Management in Food Service – Building a Sustainable and Resilient Business Model

1. Introduction: The Strategic Relevance of Financial Management

Within the dynamic and competitive environment of the food service sector, financial management emerges as a fundamental pillar of business sustainability. Whether managing a restaurant, a catering enterprise, a food truck, or a small neighbourhood café, effective financial stewardship is essential to ensure that creative culinary ambitions are supported by economic viability.

Financial management in gastronomy is not confined to bookkeeping or accounting; it encompasses a holistic process of planning, organising, monitoring, and controlling financial resources. Its primary objective is to balance operational realities with long-term vision—ensuring profitability, sustaining liquidity, and enabling strategic growth. Amid the sector's sensitivity to price fluctuations, food waste, seasonality, and changing consumer behaviours, robust financial oversight equips entrepreneurs to navigate uncertainty and adapt with resilience.

2. Core Objectives of Financial Management in Gastronomy

Strategic financial management seeks to align economic discipline with entrepreneurial creativity. The following objectives are central to this endeavour:

- **Ensure Profitability:** Align revenues and expenditures to generate a sustainable profit margin that enables reinvestment and business continuity.
- **Control Costs:** Monitor direct and indirect costs—including food, labour, and fixed operational expenditures—to optimise resource use and reduce inefficiencies.
- **Maintain Healthy Cash Flow:** Safeguard liquidity to ensure that day-to-day obligations (such as staff salaries, supplier payments, and rent) are met in a timely manner.
- **Support Capital Investment Decisions:** Guide decisions related to the acquisition of new equipment, marketing campaigns, facility upgrades, or expansion into new markets.
- **Implement a Viable Pricing Strategy:** Set menu prices that reflect the interplay between production cost, perceived customer value, and prevailing market rates.

3. Understanding the Cost Structure in Food Service

Accurate cost analysis constitutes the foundation of financial planning in the food service sector. The cost structure typically comprises the following categories:

Fixed Costs

These are recurring and relatively stable expenses independent of business volume:

- Rent or mortgage obligations
- Core utility expenses (e.g. water, heating, electricity)
- Salaries of full-time staff
- Insurance premiums and mandatory licences

Variable Costs

These fluctuate with the level of business activity:

- Procurement of raw materials and beverages
- Hourly wages for temporary or part-time staff
- Disposable materials and packaging
- Promotional and advertising expenditure
- Transport or delivery costs

Hidden or Frequently Overlooked Costs

Often underestimated, these can erode profitability over time:

- Food waste and spoilage
- Depreciation of kitchen equipment and furnishings
- Costs related to staff turnover, onboarding, and training

A sound financial strategy requires the regular monitoring and categorisation of these cost types, ensuring that decision-making is grounded in accurate and transparent data.

4. Financial Metrics and Key Performance Indicators

To assess financial health and guide operational improvements, gastronomy entrepreneurs must utilise standardised metrics and ratios. Key indicators include:

- Food Cost Percentage Indicates the proportion of food cost relative to revenue.
Formula: $(\text{Cost of Goods Sold} \div \text{Food Sales}) \times 100$, Target Benchmark: 28–35%
- Labour Cost Percentage Measures labour expenses as a share of total revenue.
Target Benchmark: Ideally below 30% for most business models.

- Prime Cost. The combined total of food and labour costs. This is the most critical cost indicator in the food service industry.
- Gross Profit Margin. Reflects the operational profitability after direct costs are deducted from revenue. It provides insight into efficiency and pricing effectiveness.

By continuously tracking these indicators, entrepreneurs can make evidence-based decisions and implement timely corrective measures.

5. Budgeting and Forecasting: Planning for the Future

Effective financial management is inherently forward-looking. It involves:

- Sales Forecasting: Based on historical performance, upcoming events, market trends, and seasonality.
- Expense Forecasting: Encompassing planned menu changes, recruitment cycles, and supplier agreements.
- Break-even Analysis: A vital exercise to determine the minimum revenue required to cover all fixed and variable costs, enabling informed planning and investment.

Budgeting allows businesses to prepare for different scenarios, allocate resources efficiently, and mitigate risks associated with financial volatility.

6. Menu Engineering and Pricing Strategy

Profitability in food service is directly influenced by menu composition and pricing decisions. Menu engineering applies financial logic to culinary design:

- Contribution Margin Analysis: Calculate the margin (selling price minus cost) for each menu item to prioritise high-performing dishes.
- Psychological Pricing Techniques: Utilise consumer behaviour insights to enhance perceived value (e.g., pricing at €19.90 instead of €20.00).
- Strategic Rotation and Upselling: Introduce value enhancements—such as seasonal ingredients or visual presentation—to justify price adjustments.
- Menu Layout and Design: Influence customer choices by promoting high-margin items through strategic placement and description.

This approach integrates financial rationality with the guest experience, maximising both satisfaction and profit.

7. Digital Tools for Financial Monitoring and Control

- Modern gastronomy businesses are increasingly dependent on digital systems that enhance financial visibility and precision:
- Point of Sale (POS) Systems: Provide real-time data on sales performance, dish popularity, and revenue trends.
- Inventory Management Software: Track stock levels, automate replenishment, and reduce spoilage.
- Accounting Solutions (e.g., QuickBooks, Sage): Generate financial statements, monitor tax obligations, and streamline record-keeping.
- Cash Flow Dashboards: Visualise inflows and outflows to facilitate liquidity planning and early intervention.

The integration of digital tools enhances efficiency, reduces human error, and supports regulatory compliance.

8. Challenges and Risk Factors in Financial Management

- The food service sector is inherently exposed to several financial challenges:
- Escalating food and labour costs
- Demand fluctuations due to inflation, tourism cycles, or public health measures
- Complex regulatory and taxation environments
- Competitive pricing pressure and market saturation
- Losses from food waste, spoilage, or theft

Mitigating these risks requires not only financial discipline but also proactive adaptation to external changes, innovation in service delivery, and investment in staff training and retention.

9. Conclusion: Financial Stewardship as a Strategic Competence

Financial management in gastronomy is far more than a compliance exercise—it is a strategic competence that underpins every decision, from menu development and supplier negotiation to marketing campaigns and staffing models. The most successful food service enterprises are those that integrate creative expression with financial rigour, achieving both culinary excellence and commercial sustainability.

As the European food economy continues to evolve—driven by digitalisation, sustainability imperatives, and shifting consumer values—entrepreneurs equipped with strong financial acumen will be best positioned to thrive, innovate, and lead.

Section 6: Opportunity Identification in the Food Sector – Turning Change into Strategic Advantage

1. Introduction: The Strategic Imperative of Opportunity Identification

In the context of modern entrepreneurship, the ability to identify and act upon emerging opportunities is widely recognised as a cornerstone of sustainable business development. This is particularly true in the food sector, a domain characterised by rapid innovation, evolving consumer preferences, and increasing socio-environmental expectations.

Opportunity identification refers to the structured process of recognising market gaps, unmet consumer needs, or novel ideas with the potential to generate economic, social, or environmental value. It is not a matter of chance, but of strategic awareness—of scanning the environment systematically and responding with agility and foresight.

Within the food industry, the capacity to perceive opportunity is essential. It enables businesses not only to innovate but also to remain resilient amid high levels of competition, global trends, and fluctuating market conditions. Whether operating as a local restaurant, an artisan food producer, a retail outlet, or a delivery platform, the pursuit of opportunity is a prerequisite for long-term relevance and profitability.

2. Why Opportunity Identification Matters in the Food Sector

The food sector occupies a unique space in the economy, shaped by deep cultural significance and intense market dynamism. Several characteristics highlight the urgency of opportunity identification in this field:

- **Fast-paced Evolution:** Driven by shifts in consumer awareness around health, nutrition, sustainability, and lifestyle.
- **High Competitive Pressure:** Particularly in urban centres, where saturation and brand differentiation are constant challenges.

- Influence of Global Trends: Including the growth of plant-based diets, convenience-driven consumption, and digitalised customer experiences.

In this environment, businesses that are proactive in identifying and exploiting new opportunities benefit in several ways:

- Product and Service Innovation: Launching offerings aligned with current and future market needs.
- Strategic Differentiation: Creating a competitive edge through unique value propositions.
- Early Market Entry: Capturing emerging demand before competitors react.
- Expansion into Untapped Segments: Addressing niches that are underserved or overlooked.

3. Principal Sources of Opportunity in the Food Sector

Opportunities in gastronomy and food entrepreneurship frequently emerge at the intersection of macro trends and local insights. Key drivers include:

A. Changing Consumer Preferences

- Growing demand for healthy, organic, low-sugar, or low-carb options.
- Rising interest in allergen-free, vegan, or gluten-free alternatives.
- Preference for convenience: pre-prepared meals, meal kits, or takeaway services.
- Popularity of experience-based consumption: immersive dining, pop-up events, themed menus.

B Technological Advancements

- Proliferation of online delivery platforms and third-party logistics (e.g., Uber Eats, Glovo).
- Emergence of smart kitchen technologies, automation in food preparation, and digital monitoring tools.
- Adoption of virtual menus, mobile reservations, and contactless payment systems.

C. Social and Cultural Shifts

- Increasing consumer awareness around sustainable packaging, food waste reduction, and circular economy practices.
- Ethical sourcing preferences—support for local producers, organic farming, and fair-trade certification.

- Globalisation of food culture—rising appeal of international fusion cuisine and street food innovations.

D. Demographic and Lifestyle Trends

- Urbanisation and time-poor lifestyles fuelling demand for ready-to-eat solutions.
- Aging populations requiring tailored nutrition and dietary care.
- Younger consumers (millennials, Gen Z) seeking transparency, authenticity, and social engagement from brands.

E. Regulatory and Environmental Influences

- Policy changes and environmental mandates creating space for innovation (e.g., bans on single-use plastics opening markets for biodegradable packaging).
- Financial incentives and support mechanisms for green and socially responsible businesses.

4. Methods for Identifying Opportunities

A structured and data-informed approach is essential to identifying viable and impactful opportunities. Common methodologies include:

A. Market Research

- Conducting surveys, interviews, and focus groups to understand evolving customer preferences.
- Monitoring digital platforms, blogs, and social media for trends and sentiment analysis.

B. Competitive Analysis

- Systematically evaluating competing businesses to identify service gaps, product limitations, or operational weaknesses.
- Recognising underserved geographies, demographics, or culinary niches (e.g., a lack of late-night vegan options in a district).

C. Customer Engagement

- Gathering insights from regular clientele, online reviews, and loyalty programme data to reveal unmet expectations and new needs.

D. Trend Intelligence

- Consulting global and national food trend reports (e.g., Mintel, Euromonitor, industry journals) to anticipate future developments and align business strategy accordingly.

5. Conclusion: From Awareness to Action

- In the food industry, opportunity identification is not a static task—it is a dynamic and ongoing process of observation, analysis, and adaptation. Entrepreneurs who succeed in this process do so not by chance, but through intentional curiosity, empathy for their customers, and an openness to evolve.
- In a sector where consumer loyalty is fluid and innovation cycles are accelerating, the capacity to foresee and act on new opportunities becomes a decisive competitive factor. It allows businesses to remain relevant, deepen their impact, and build models that are not only profitable, but also responsive to broader societal needs.

Section 7: Cross-Cultural Gastronomy – Embracing Diversity in Entrepreneurial Practice

1. Introduction: Culture as a Driver of Gastronomic Innovation

- Food, beyond its nutritional function, is a powerful expression of cultural identity, collective memory, and social values. Within the European Union's culturally diverse landscape, gastronomy is a domain where tradition meets innovation, and where cross-cultural sensitivity is not only a matter of inclusion, but also a strategic business advantage.
- Cross-cultural gastronomy refers to the study and application of how culinary practices, dietary habits, and food-related behaviours differ across cultures, and how these differences influence entrepreneurship, product development, and service delivery in the food sector. For food entrepreneurs, understanding these cultural dynamics is essential for market relevance, consumer engagement, and brand credibility.
- In an increasingly globalised and interconnected food economy, cultural awareness enables entrepreneurs to move beyond the standardisation of products and services. Instead, it allows them to design experiences and offerings that reflect local values, honour culinary traditions, and engage diverse consumer communities.

2. Gastronomic Entrepreneurship in a Cultural Context

Gastronomic entrepreneurship involves the creation, development, and management of enterprises within the food sector, including restaurants, cafés, food trucks, bakeries, and culinary startups. It demands not only business acumen and creativity but also the ability to interpret and respond to cultural expectations and values.

Incorporating cultural insight into gastronomic business models enables entrepreneurs to:

- Develop authentic menus or innovative fusion concepts
- Cater to specific dietary customs and restrictions (e.g. vegetarianism, halal, kosher)
- Shape dining experiences aligned with social norms (e.g. leisurely dining vs. fast service)
- Position brands in a way that resonates with local identity and emotional connection

By embracing cultural diversity as a source of inspiration rather than a challenge, gastronomic entrepreneurs can unlock new markets, cultivate loyalty, and strengthen their value proposition.

3. The Cultural Dimension of Gastronomy: Key Influences

Culture influences gastronomy in multifaceted ways, from taste preferences to service expectations. The following dimensions illustrate how culinary tradition, social customs, and daily practices shape food entrepreneurship.

A. Food Preferences

Cultural heritage determines what is considered tasteful, nutritious, or comforting:

- In Poland, meals often feature hearty ingredients—meat, potatoes, fermented vegetables—with bold, sour notes.
- In Italy, freshness and simplicity define excellence, with seasonal produce and regional specialities forming the core of cuisine.
- In Portugal, rustic flavours, seafood, and olive oil dominate, reflecting the importance of local, home-style cooking.

B. Meal Structure and Timing

Customary eating schedules and rhythms vary widely:

In Poland, the main meal is traditionally served at midday, with lighter dinners in the evening.

Italy

- Cultural traits: Deep respect for culinary heritage and regional specialisation.
- Entrepreneurial implications:
 - Emphasis on artisanal preparation (e.g., handmade pasta, traditional baking) strengthens authenticity.
 - Concepts aligned with slow food, sustainability, and farm-to-table sourcing attract informed consumers.
 - Global brands must localise (e.g., McDonald's offering Panzerotti or Pesto Burgers) to gain acceptance.

Portugal

- Cultural traits: Home-style meals and local ingredients are central to national pride.
- Entrepreneurial implications:
 - Petiscos (small plates) and regional specialities (e.g., from Alentejo or the Algarve) are well-received.
 - Urban centres (Lisbon, Porto) are hubs for successful fusion concepts—Portuguese-Asian or Brazilian-Portuguese.
 - Celebrated products such as pastéis de nata, regional wines, and artisanal cheeses offer branding opportunities rooted in heritage.

4. Cross-Cultural Opportunities in Gastronomy

Entrepreneurs who integrate cultural understanding into their strategy can access a range of innovative opportunities:

- Adaptation of International Concepts: Local reinterpretations of global dishes (e.g., sushi using Baltic fish, veganised Polish classics).
- Cultural Fusion Menus: Creative combinations of cuisines (e.g., Italian-Portuguese seafood pasta, Polish-Korean street food).
- Themed Dining Events: Events that celebrate cultural rituals (e.g., aperitivo nights, pierogi workshops, Portuguese wine tastings).
- Tourism-Oriented Gastronomy: Experiences for international visitors that narrate national culinary traditions, adding educational and cultural value to the meal.

Such initiatives do not simply attract diverse customer segments—they also enrich the food landscape, promote intercultural dialogue, and contribute to local economic development.

5. Conclusion: Culture as a Strategic Asset

Cross-cultural awareness is not an ancillary skill in gastronomic entrepreneurship—it is a core competency. By recognising how food intersects with identity, memory, and social interaction, entrepreneurs can design more meaningful experiences and products.

In practical terms, this means:

- Respecting tradition while welcoming innovation
- Creating inclusive menus that honour dietary customs and values
- Entering foreign markets with cultural sensitivity and contextual intelligence
- Engaging diverse communities through authentic storytelling and responsible branding

In the diverse and interconnected food sector of the European Union, embracing cultural diversity is not only a reflection of shared values—it is a strategic pathway to sustainable success.

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AND TRAINING

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Practical tasks to the chapter

Practical Task 1- Digitalization in Gastronomy

Title: “Digital Tools in Your Food Service Establishment”

Objective:

To design digital solutions that support the operation and development of your own food service establishment.

Task Instructions:

Design a digital strategy for managing a selected type of food service business, taking into account three key areas:

1. Choose the type of food establishment, for example:

- Café with homemade pastries
- Food truck offering Mexican cuisine
- Bistro with plant-based dishes
- Milk bar near a school
- Seasonal food stand by a lake

2. Propose a set of digital tools in the following three areas:

- Planning and Promotion: e.g., Canva, Facebook, Instagram, Google My Business
- Sales and Financial Management: e.g., POS system, invoicing app, Excel/Google Sheets
- Customer Communication and Needs Analysis: e.g., newsletter, Google Forms, TripAdvisor, Google Reviews

3. Describe specific uses of the selected tools, for example:

- “I will use Instagram to promote seasonal offers and special events.”
- “Using a POS system will help me track revenue and identify the best-selling items.”
- “Google Forms will allow me to collect customer feedback after introducing a new menu.”

4. Prepare a short multimedia presentation (max 8 slides), in which:

- You present your establishment and its profile
- Show the selected tools and their functions

- Include sample visuals, screenshots, or mockups
- Describe the benefits of using each tool

Practical Task 2 – Digitalization in Gastronomy

Title: “A Day in the Life of a Digital Manager of a Food Service Establishment”

Objective:

To develop the ability to manage crisis situations in gastronomy, select digital tools that support daily operations, practice planning and logical thinking, and improve digital and entrepreneurial competencies.

Task Instructions:

Take on the role of the manager of a small food service establishment (e.g., a café or food truck). Your task is to solve three specific problems that occurred during a single business day using selected digital tools. You are the owner of a small café. Here are the three situations that happened during the day:

1. Morning– part of a scheduled delivery did not arrive. You need to quickly inform customers about changes in the menu.
2. Afternoon– a negative online review regarding service has appeared.
3. Evening– you need to prepare a short daily summary: how many items were sold, which products were the most popular, and what the revenue was.

Student Tasks:

1. Describe each problem in your own words (3–4 sentences each).
2. Propose one digital tool for solving each problem (e.g., Google Sheets, Facebook, Instagram, Canva, POSbistro, Google My Business, Google Forms, ordering apps).
3. Briefly explain how you would use each tool, for example:
 - I will use Instagram to inform customers about menu changes and promote takeout.”
 - I will respond to the Google review with an apology and offer a discount.”
 - I will create a simple Google Sheets file to summarize the day.”
4. Prepare a presentation or a written report (1 A4 page or 3–5 slides) including:
 - A list of the problems
 - The selected tools for each issue
 - Screenshots or visuals (if in presentation format)

CHAPTER 2



E-COMMERCE

**Training Script:
Enhancing VET
Students'
Competencies in
Gastronomy
Sector
GastroNet –
Vocational
Education and
Training**

By Fundacja im. Zofii Zamenhof, Poland

E-COMMERCE

Enhancing VET Students' Competencies in Gastronomy Sector.



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1. INTRODUCTION TO E-COMMERCE

The rise of e-commerce has completely changed the way businesses – including those in the food industry – operate. This chapter introduces the core concepts of electronic commerce, its relationship with e-business, and the role e-commerce plays in today's gastronomy. We will also cover the basic types of e-commerce, which serve as the foundation for the upcoming chapters. With this introduction, participants will better understand why using digital channels is now essential in every part of running a food business – from taking orders to building customer relationships.

1.a. Definition

E-commerce, in its simplest form, refers to electronic commerce – a model of conducting business transactions through the use of the internet and digital technologies. Its range of services consists of the sale of goods and services via mobile applications, websites, online marketplaces, and remote customer communication.

By the usage of electronic communication and digital information processing in business transactions, which is the core of e-commerce technology, we are able to redefine the value dynamics between organizations, as well as between organizations and individual customers, enhancing the overall quality of these relationships.

In the context of food service businesses, e-commerce primarily enables:

- online sale of meals,
- accepting orders through mobile applications,
- promoting products on the web,
- providing customer supply remotely.

1.b. E-commerce VS e-business

For restaurant owners, understanding the distinction between these two terms is particularly important, even though they are often used interchangeably. E-commerce refers specifically to online commercial transactions. E-business, on the other hand, is a broader term that includes all online business operations – not only sales, but also marketing, accounting, customer service (such as call centers or helplines), and logistics.

To illustrate with some examples: creating a website with a menu and an ordering option falls under e-commerce. However, implementing a delivery management system, a loyalty program, or a newsletter feature – that's e-business.

1.c. the Importance of e-commerce in the food service industry

Given today's technologies and trends, e-commerce is no longer a luxury or an optional gadget – it has become a necessity. In an era where customers primarily search for food online, the lack of an online presence can result in a significant loss of sales.

Among the key benefits of using e-commerce in gastronomy are:

- 24/7 availability – customers can place orders at any time and schedule deliveries according to their needs,
- extended geographic reach – a restaurant is no longer limited to serving only its immediate surroundings,
- improved customer interaction – enabling quick communication, feedback exchange, and personalized offerings,
- cost optimization – reducing expenses related to traditional advertising and maintaining a full-scale call center.

Case study example:

(source: <https://www.upmenu.com/case-studies/sushi-kushi/>)

In 2013, the Polish franchise Sushi Kushi implemented an online ordering system provided by UpMenu, integrating it directly into their own website. This gave them access to a comprehensive set of tools designed to increase sales, customer loyalty, and brand visibility online. Their use of a mobile app, an interactive website, and a centralized system for managing multiple restaurants significantly boosted overall profits, with the majority of gains coming directly from online orders. (Data: January 2023 – 2024)

- Orders: 73,484 online orders
- Revenue: \$2,520,111.78
- Savings: More than \$1,500,000 saved in third-party commissions over ten years of partnership with UpMenu.
- Customer Engagement: Increased loyalty and repeat orders through the branded mobile app (25% of orders) and efficient online ordering system.

(source: <https://www.upmenu.com/case-studies/how-to-make-money-on-pizza-ordering-system-the-case-of-little-italy/>)

Another example highlighting the major importance of e-commerce in the food service sector is the case study of Little Italy, a pizzeria. The owners were looking for a simple and effective ordering system that would boost revenue and allow customers to place orders through various online channels. At the same time, their goal was to provide easy access to promotions, discounts, and vouchers.

By implementing e-commerce solutions, they introduced an online ordering system, promotional tools, a mobile app, and the option to order directly via Facebook. Additionally, they launched a loyalty program, using e-commerce tools to send customers vouchers and exclusive offers through email and text messages – a strategy that resulted in substantial additional profit.

By expanding customer access channels and strengthening their presence on social media, Little Italy received 255 online orders in the very first month of using UpMenu services.

1.d. types of e-commerce

In practice, six common e-commerce models are recognized – several of which have direct applications in the food industry:

MODEL	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE IN GASTRONOMY
B2C (Business to Consumer)	business → end customer	a customer orders pizza via the restaurant's website
B2B (Business to Business)	business → business	a restaurant orders ingredients from a wholesaler online
B2A (Business to Administration)	a business interacting with public institutions	submitting food safety documentation online
C2C (Consumer to Consumer)	customer → customer	a private person selling homemade baked goods through their Facebook page

MODEL	DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLE IN GASTRONOMY
C2B (Consumer to Business)	customer → business	a customer suggests a dish idea, and the restaurant adds it to the menu
C2A (Consumer to Administration)	a customer interacting with public institutions	submitting health department documents online

EXERCISE

List three e-commerce features you've noticed in your favorite food establishment. In what form do they appear?

2. E-COMMERCE MODELS IN THE FOOD SERVICE INDUSTRY

The food industry can use many different e-commerce models, depending on the business profile. In this chapter, we explore various approaches – from direct-to-consumer (B2C) sales, to working with marketplaces, to mobile-based m-commerce. Understanding these models helps identify which sales strategies and distribution channels best fit a given type of restaurant. This knowledge lays the groundwork for future planning in marketing, tech, and logistics.

2.a. e-commerce models and their characteristics

All of the modern food service establishments are increasingly operating within the digital world, making use of e-commerce technologies. Today, maintaining an online presence is no longer optional – it's rather a requirement for sustaining operations and unlocking significant revenue potential through the opportunities provided by digitalization.

This means that selecting the appropriate e-commerce model for a restaurant or food venue is a strategic and critical decision. Understanding the available models and their distinct features allows restaurant owners and entrepreneurs to choose the most effective channels for reaching customers and business partners.

B2C MODEL (Business to Consumer)

This is the most common model in the food service industry. It involves selling products and services directly to the end customer via the internet. It differs from traditional sales, mainly because customers typically have more information about the products they are purchasing and expect more competitive pricing online.

Examples:

- a restaurant offering online ordering through its own website,
- a café providing breakfast sets with delivery via a mobile app,
- online sales of gift or discount vouchers.

Advantages:

- direct relationship with customers and easy access to them,
- ability to personalize offers and marketing campaigns,
- savings on commission fees paid to external platforms,
- customer loyalty building (e.g. via vouchers and coupons).

Challenges:

- the need to develop or integrate an IT infrastructure or partner with platforms offering such services,
- managing returns, reviews, and complaints,
- handling logistics and delivery operations.

B2B MODEL (Business to Business)

The B2B model refers to electronic transactions between businesses. In the food industry, this primarily concerns relationships with suppliers and wholesalers.

Examples:

- a restaurant ordering products from an online food wholesaler,
- a bakery purchasing takeaway packaging through a B2B platform,
- a bar chain using an app to automate supplier orders.

Advantages:

- streamlined logistics and inventory management,
- access to wholesale pricing, discounts, e-invoicing, and delivery schedules,
- fixed cooperation terms and payment conditions.

Challenges:

- IT systems integration,
- dependency on suppliers,
- requires precise time and quantity management.

B2A MODEL (Business to Administration)

This model refers to interactions between businesses and public administration. It includes the submission of mandatory documents, reports, permits, tax payments, insurance contributions, and other legal or regulatory fees required in the country where the business operates.

- Examples:
- submitting a hygiene permit application online,
- registering a business via the CEIDG platform,
- filing social security and VAT declarations.

Advantages:

- saves time and reduces paperwork,
- faster approval of official documents,
- ability to track application status online.

Challenges:

- sometimes the forms and legal requirements can be complex and complicated,
- need for a qualified electronic signature,
- lack of standardized processes across different institutions.

C2C MODEL (Consumer to Consumer)

This model includes transactions between private individuals, often conducted via online platforms. In the food industry, this typically appears in the form of micro-businesses or hobby sales.

Examples:

- a person selling homemade cakes and pastries through OLX (a Polish market platform) or other C2C listing services such as Subito.it (Italy), Gumtree (United Kingdom), Craigslist (USA), or Sahibinden.com (Turkey),
- selling homemade preserves and honey through a Facebook page.

Examples:

- a person selling homemade cakes and pastries through OLX (a Polish market platform) or other C2C listing services such as Subito.it (Italy), Gumtree (United Kingdom), Craigslist (USA), or Sahibinden.com (Turkey),
- selling homemade preserves and honey through a Facebook page.

Advantages:

- low entry costs and simple setup,
- access to local and niche products,
- direct interaction with the customer.

Challenges:

- legal compliance and sanitary regulations,
- lack of integrated payment or automation systems,
- difficulties with scaling the business.

C2B MODEL (Consumer to Business)

In this model, customers offer content, ideas, services, or products to businesses. In gastronomy, it may involve collaborations with creators, competitions, or crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing refers to sourcing input or resources from a large group of people, usually via the internet, by assigning tasks to the broader community. In food service, this could include asking customers to suggest new menu items, organizing a vote for a favorite ice cream flavor, or collecting customer reviews and photos for use in social media.

Examples:

- customers submit suggestions for new menu items,
- food influencers review restaurants in exchange for a free meal,
- customers share food photos for promotional use by the business.

Advantages:

- it strongly engages the community
- can generate authentic marketing content,
- helps discover trends and ideas that might not emerge within an internal team.

Challenges:

- content moderation and quality control,

- intellectual property ownership issues,
- the need to fairly compensate valuable contributions.

C2A MODEL (Consumer to Administration)

This model involves citizens using public administrative services online, which is an important aspect for individuals looking to open or manage a food service business.

Examples:

- requesting a copy of a food establishment's health record,
- applying for public support for a new micro-enterprises,
- checking tax records for a restaurant.

Advantages:

- convenience and 24/7 availability of services,
- transparent administrative processes,
- no need for in-person visits to government offices.

Challenges:

- uneven digitalization across different regions,
- technical issues or the lack of user-friendly interfaces,
- requires familiarity with legal and procedural frameworks.

2.b. marketplace – digital sales brokers

A marketplace is an online platform that acts as a broker between sellers and customers. In gastronomy, a marketplace functions as a digital aggregator of offers, allowing users to browse, compare, and order meals from various establishments in the most efficient way – typically via mobile app or website.

A marketplace serves as an external sales channel– a broker in the B2C model – where a restaurant shares its offer on a platform owned by another company. Examples include: Pyszne.pl (for the Polish market), Uber Eats, Wolt, Glovo, Just Eat, Yemeksepeti (Turcja) or DoorDash (USA).

These forms of e-commerce are extremely popular in the food service industry, especially in large urban areas. It allows restaurants to reach a broad audience without the need to invest in their own IT or logistics infrastructure. However, the major downside are the high commission fees and limited access to customer data, which makes building customer relationships and loyalty difficult.

The transaction remains outside the restaurant's control and becomes purely technical, removing direct communication and the human element.

Examples:

- a new restaurant adding its menu to a platform owned by the Takeaway.com network, known in different countries as Pyszne.pl (Poland), Lieferando (Germany), Thuisbezorgd (Netherlands), and Just Eat (UK), in order to quickly attract its first customers,
- a bakery chain using Uber Eats to expand delivery sales without building its own logistics system.

Advantages:

- fast and easy launch without the need to invest in a website or logistics,
- access to a large, ready-made user base with instant reach,
- built-in payment systems, order tracking, and customer support.

Challenges:

- high platform commissions (even up to 30–35%),
- no access to customer data,
- dependence on platform rules and policies,
- high competition – a restaurant must stand out among hundreds of listings.

2.c. m-commerce – mobile sales

M-commerce (mobile commerce) refers to the sale of products and services via mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. This is a dynamic and impactful form of e-commerce, especially in the restaurant industry, where most customers place food orders mainly through their phones.

For food businesses, m-commerce is not just about selling, it's also a tool for building loyalty, sending notifications, running loyalty programs, or launching limited-time promotions.

Examples:

- a restaurant enabling customers to order through a mobile app with quick online payment,
- a café offering a coffee discount via a mobile QR code,

- a pizzeria sending birthday discount coupons through its app.

Advantages:

- convenience for customers – everything in one place: menu, ordering, payment, delivery status, and even returns,
- instant and personal communication – push notifications,
- mobility – customers can order on the go without needing access to a computer.

Challenges:

- need to optimize the website for mobile devices,
- cost of developing and implementing a custom app or a mobile sales system,
- need to ensure user data and transaction security.

2.d. Summary

In today's digital gastronomy reality, understanding fast-growing and popular e-commerce models is a key ingredient for success. Restaurants don't have to rely on a single model, they often combine B2C, marketplace, m-commerce, and B2B solutions to maximize their reach and quality of customer engagement, reduce costs, and increase efficiency.

The choice of the right model, or a combination of models, depends on:

- the type and size of the business,
- the target customer group,
- available technical and logistical resources,
- the level of digital infrastructure in a given region.

E-commerce in gastronomy is not just a sales channel, it's rather a way of thinking about running a modern, competitive business where technology supports every stage of customer interaction, with the goal of optimizing the entire experience. From the first menu click to the review left after the meal, the customer is interacting with the digital system. It's extremely crucial to recognize the interconnectedness of the different e-commerce models and develop the skills to use them in the most effective, optimal and integrated way.

EXERCISE:

Below you'll find four short scenarios. Match each one with the correct e-commerce model and briefly explain your choice:

- Kasia sells homemade jams through designated platforms and Facebook groups.
- A coffee shop chain orders cups, espresso machines, and napkins in bulk from one supplier via an online platform.
- A newly opened burger place shares its menu on Uber Eats.
- A restaurant allows customers to suggest their own dishes for the weekly menu.

3. TECHNICAL ELEMENTS AND PLATFORMS

As presented earlier, modern gastronomy increasingly relies on digital technologies. For a venue with a strong online presence and operating efficiently within e-commerce models, having the right technical tools and well-matched digital platforms is no longer a competitive advantage, it has rather become a condition for survival and further growth.

This chapter will discuss the key components of the technical infrastructure of modern online food service businesses: from the website, through essential systems like POS and CRM, to the role of social media as a technical communication channel.

3.a. website with ordering functionality

The most basic and easiest to create sales tool in gastronomy e-commerce is a responsive website with the ability to place orders, browse the venue's offer, and access all essential information about the business. It often acts as the digital business card of a restaurant, long before a customer decides to order anything.

A well-designed website should include:

- an interactive menu with prices, photos, and ingredients of dishes,
- integration with an online payment system,
- various options for delivery, pickup, and adding notes to orders,
- optionally, popular features like a customer review section and loyalty systems,
- integration with CRM and POS systems, enabling order tracking and automatic data flow to the kitchen, inventory, or accounting,
- basic accessibility features (WCAG), such as contrast settings and keyboard navigation.

Aesthetics and UX (User Experience) are of key importance here – as many as 63% of surveyed consumers in Poland believe that food that looks attractive tastes better, and 41% are guided by the appearance of the dish when choosing it (Pyszne.pl survey, K+Research 2024).

User Experience (UX) refers to the overall experience a user has when interacting with a given service or product. In gastronomy, this includes things like how easy it is to find the menu, how intuitive the ordering process is, and how convenient the payment options are. Good UX shortens the decision-making time and increases the chances of a repeat order – that's why it's so important and should be a top priority for any restaurant owner. First impressions, often visual ones, largely influence whether an order will be placed at all. Restaurants that invest in professional food photography and maintain a consistent visual style of their website significantly increase their chances of attracting and keeping customers.

3.b. POS system (Point of Sale)

POS system is an integrated IT solution that supports the sales process in retail and service outlets. In gastronomy, it also serves as a very useful business management center. Its use allows for:

- receiving and processing orders,
- managing inventory and stock,
- synchronizing data with the kitchen and delivery services,
- generating financial and sales reports.

An integrated POS system handles both in-house and online orders, making the whole process much more automated and efficient. Examples of commonly used systems in Poland include: POSbistro, Gastro POS, and UpMenu POS. Modern POS systems also work in mobile versions, allowing staff to take orders directly at the table.

According to the results of the study titled Market Demand for Skills and Qualifications in the Field of Gastronomy and Table Service, conducted in 2023 as part of the Sectoral Skills Centre project implemented by the Polish Chamber of Gastronomy and its partners, a large number of business owners reported that graduates of culinary schools lack the skills needed to operate systems such as POS.

This presents a significant barrier to effective digitalization in the gastronomy sector, which is why raising awareness and improving competence in this area is extremely important.

3.c. CRM and customer relationship management tools

CRM systems (Customer Relationship Management) are less visible, but equally essential components of the technical infrastructure for food businesses looking to operate in the e-commerce sector. They mainly allow for:

- tracking order history,
- analyzing purchasing habits,
- targeted promotional campaigns,
- running remarketing campaigns – for example, if a customer hasn't placed an order in 30 days, the system automatically sends them a discount code,
- segmenting customers by loyalty and activity.

Birthday coupons, reminders about favorite dishes, or personalized promotions are actions that significantly strengthen customer loyalty without requiring extra effort from the staff. That's why knowing how to make smart use of CRM systems is crucial. Popular CRM tools integrated with gastronomy include Salesforce, LoyaltyTool, and UpMenu CRM.

It's also worth adding that customers increasingly expect personalized service and place high value on it. Data from the Chamber of Commerce report shows that even younger generations associate gastronomy more with experience and emotion than with the transaction itself – CRM systems make it possible to implement this approach from a technical angle.

3.d. social media as a technical part of the sales platform

Although social media is usually seen as a marketing tool, in practice it also plays an important role as a technical sales channel, including:

- receiving orders via Messenger integration,
- using chatbots (e.g., for automating the table reservation process),
- posting menus with current promotions,
- increasing the venue's visibility online.

According to our own research conducted for this project, social media is no longer just a business card – it's a real sales tool. 70% of respondents check a venue's social media before placing an order, and one in five Poles orders food with the intention of posting it on Instagram or Facebook. Additionally, 42% of Poles say they visit restaurants recommended by influencers, and over half check Google or TripAdvisor reviews before deciding on a place. Proper profile management is visibly becoming a technical factor that directly affects sales.

Many platforms (e.g., Meta, TikTok, Google Business) offer free tools for:

- placing orders directly from the profile (e.g., the “Order Now” button on Facebook),
- integrating with the restaurant's menu catalog,
- tracking conversions from sponsored posts – the system shows how many users clicked, how many placed an order, and what the order value was.

All of these features show just how much value social media brings to the technical side of e-commerce sales. It's worth being aware of these tools on a daily basis and learning how to use them effectively when running a food business.

3.e. Conclusions and recommendations

To sum up, technology in gastronomy e-commerce is not optional – it's necessary. Venues that make the right investments in strong technical infrastructure and well-selected digital platforms:

- become more independent from middlemen,
- gain full access to customer data,
- can run personalized campaigns and build real loyalty,
- improve service quality and automate repetitive processes.

At the same time, as the research shows, there is a significant digital skills gap among employees and graduates of culinary schools. That's why tech development should go hand in hand with education – for both staff and business owners.

It's worth starting with the basics: creating a simple website, and gradually integrating more systems, automating recurring tasks, and analyzing system data. At the same time, it's crucial to remember about data security – systems must comply with each country's privacy laws and be protected against unauthorized access.

In the era of digital gastronomy, the website is the new front of the venue, the POS is its heart, and social media is its voice. When these elements are connected and properly integrated, the restaurant runs its operations in the most optimal way possible.

EXERCISE:

1. Choose any food venue (e.g., your favorite restaurant or a local place nearby).
2. Check if it has:
 - its own website with an ordering option?
 - an active profile on Facebook or Instagram?
 - the option to sign up for a newsletter or customer account?
 - any other technical solutions?
3. Answer the questions:
 - what digital channels does it use?
 - can you find information about the menu, prices and available promotions?
 - are the systems integrated (e.g., online ordering + payment + delivery)
4. Suggest 2 specific technical improvements for this venue. What is it missing?

4. LOGISTICS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE

EDUCATION

Good logistics and high-quality customer service are key success factors in online food sales. In this chapter, we will go over how to plan deliveries, manage orders, and handle customer communication – both in day-to-day operations and in unexpected situations. We will also look at best practices and tools that support automation. This chapter brings together insights from both the technical and sales perspectives, with a focus on putting them into action in everyday operations.

4.a. The role of logistics in gastronomic e-commerce

In the context of gastronomic e-commerce, logistics is not just about delivering meals to the customer – it also includes managing ingredient deliveries, product rotation, and kitchen supplies. Efficient logistics directly affect the quality, freshness, and speed of order fulfillment, which in turn impacts customer satisfaction, the number of positive reviews, and ultimately the popularity of the venue.

Three delivery models:

- in-house delivery: the restaurant hires its own couriers or handles deliveries independently. This gives more control over quality, but also means higher operational costs.
- external couriers: cooperation with Uber Eats, Glovo, Wolt, etc. This comes with lower initial costs, but over time, high commissions and limited control can become a problem.
- hybrid model: a combination of both solutions depending on the time of day, location, or order volume.

The use of logistics apps helps optimize delivery routes, predict delivery times, and track the courier in real time.

4.b. Customer service in the e-commerce model

Digital customer service is no longer just about answering the phone – it's a whole integrated system:

- automatic order confirmations,
- status updates and estimated delivery time,
- communication via email, Messenger, WhatsApp,
- contact forms and chat windows on the website.

Nowadays, customers expect not only fast order processing but also quick, professional, and easy support if something goes wrong at any stage of the order or delivery. Good practices include informing customers about potential delays, compensating for mistakes (e.g., with discount codes or vouchers), and responding to reviews – both positive and negative.

According to Salesforce data from 2023, 89% of customers are more likely to make a repeat purchase after a positive customer service experience, so it's definitely worth taking care of this part, also in the digital space.

4.c. Challenges and good practices to be prepared to face them

Even the best-prepared venue can run into problems, some predictable and others completely random. When working with people, mistakes are simply a part of the process, so it's smart to prepare for them and eliminate as many as possible in advance.

To avoid issues like unavailable couriers, undelivered or delayed orders, incorrect items in the order, or poor communication with the customer, it's a good idea to implement various crisis procedures (e.g., automatic notifications, automated complaint protocols, an emergency courier support line). It also pays off to regularly train the team in communication, customer care, and empathy.

4.d. Summary

Smooth logistics and professional customer service are not just a requirement of a digitalized world, they're also a very powerful tool for building brand value. Customers often remember not only how the food tasted, but how they were treated and how the service process went. Restaurants that invest in automation, team training, and efficient logistics and customer care procedures gain an advantage over competitors and build strong customer loyalty.

5. CHALLENGES AND TRENDS IN GASTRONOMIC E-COMMERCE

5.a. introduction

Modern digital gastronomy is evolving at an unprecedented pace, constantly driven by technological progress, shifting consumer preferences, and pressure from the competition. E-commerce in gastronomy is no longer just a matter of convenience, it's becoming the foundation of how modern food businesses operate. This chapter will cover the most important trends and challenges shaping the online gastronomy market, based on global reports and articles as well as our own research results. This chapter gives the reader a broader view of the current market landscape along with tips on how to adapt to changes and invest in long-term business development.

5.b. Main trends in gastronomic e-commerce

- Mobile & voice commerce (M-commerce i V-commerce)

M-commerce has already been discussed in detail in one of the previous chapters, but voice assistants are also gaining popularity. Their success comes from customers' expectations for being able to order on the go and the simplicity of voice-based transactions.

- Personalization and data analysis

E-commerce platforms are increasingly using behavioral data to predict customer needs. Based on order history and food preferences, they can personalize recommendations, discounts, and even the appearance of the website. Artificial intelligence is also playing a growing role in this area.

- Omnichannel i channel integration

Omnichannel is a marketing and sales strategy that's all about providing an integrated and consistent customer experience across all brand touchpoints – no matter which channel the customer uses. The key is to allow people to move smoothly between channels and still have a unified, personalized experience. Customers switch between websites, apps, social media, and physical locations, expecting a seamless journey across all of them.

- Marketplaces and D2C sales

More and more restaurants are choosing to sell directly to the customer (Direct to Consumer), cutting out middlemen. At the same time, marketplaces like Uber Eats or Wolt still play a major role and remain dominant sales channels, especially for new or smaller business owners just starting out.

- Zero coding and simplified user experience

Digital tools are becoming more accessible thanks to zero coding techniques – you can build websites and even simple apps without writing a single line of code! Modern platforms like Tilda, Shopify, or UpMenu allow you to launch your own online ordering system without needing any IT skills, which makes things a whole lot easier for beginners. E-commerce now welcomes everyone and that means no more excuses.

- Ecology and green commerce

Customers are more and more often expecting – or even demanding – eco-friendly packaging, compostable options, and clear, reasonable waste management policies. Marketplaces and restaurants are starting to include “eco” labels and report their CO2 emissions, aiming to stay honest and transparent with their customers on these issues.

- AR, VR and expanded menu presentation
- Augmented reality technology lets customers “see” a dish in 3D or even “place” it on their table before ordering. While still considered niche, these kinds of tools are gaining traction.

- It's worth keeping them on your radar and watching closely how early adopters are using them

5.c. main challenges

- Data security and GDPR

The growing importance of personalization goes hand in hand with collecting personal data, which requires compliance with legal regulations (like GDPR). Restaurants have to make sure that customer data is safe and handled according to the law in their country by using clear instructions and policies.

- The lack of digital skills in the gastronomy sector

According to the research report from 2023 (which we already discussed earlier in the script), business owners point to serious skill gaps among graduates of culinary schools, especially when it comes to POS systems, online promotion, social media management, and cost calculation. Even though online tools and tutorials are more accessible than ever, it's still crucial for students to learn these skills in school so they can start their careers with more confidence and safety.

- System integration

One of the big challenges for many restaurants is integrating multiple platforms: ordering systems, POS, inventory, CRM, and social media. When these tools don't work well together, it causes chaos and lowers efficiency, that's why it's often worth spending more on an expert to help with proper integration.

- Price competition and platform commissions

Restaurants are often forced to compete on price, both on delivery platforms and on the open market, and sometimes face high commission fees. It's hard to build customer loyalty when each order is treated as a one-time transaction, so this area also needs good planning and long-term thinking.

- Technical issues and risk of cyberattacks

Low-quality hosting, website downtime, or shadow banning (a form of visibility restriction on social media) are real threats to online sales. Without proper digital protection, a restaurant risks both customer data and its reputation.

- Inequality in access to technology

Digital divide means that some small businesses or venues in rural areas don't have

access to the infrastructure needed to run or use online sales channels. This affects both the restaurant side and potential customers.

5.d. Directions for development and recommendations

- implementing automation and system integration tools,
- supporting digital and interpersonal education for staff,
- staying up to date with legal and regulatory changes,
- building direct communication channels with customers,
- investing in data-driven marketing and content that follows current trends,
- introducing green gastronomy principles (zero waste, emission reduction, transparent practices).

5.e. Summary

Gastronomic e-commerce is a fast-paced space that connects innovation, technology, and evolving customer expectations. The development of trends like m-commerce, personalization, and sustainability brings new opportunities, but also serious challenges – from staffing shortages to cybersecurity risks. Proper responses, investments in education, and technological awareness will help restaurants not just survive, but grow and build strong relationships with customers in the digital world, making full use of e-commerce and tapping into all its potential.

EXERCISE:

Which trend discussed in this chapter do you notice most often in food venues? How do restaurants make use of it? What challenges come with it? Analyze it based on venues you know.

6. NEWONCE FROM THE WORLD OF E-COMMERCE

6.a. introduction

Digital gastronomy is developing at an incredibly fast pace. Along with it, more and more innovative ways of ordering, promoting, and delivering food are emerging, and it is crucial to stay on top of them in order to keep improving your venue and stay ahead of the competition.

Gastronomy digitalization no longer just means websites and marketplaces, but full tech ecosystems that are transforming the customer experience on the level of personalization, speed, and interaction with the restaurant.

Below are some of the most interesting and cutting-edge directions in digital food sales, which (although still not very widespread) can already be observed on the market. Some of them – like voice ordering or green e-commerce – have been mentioned briefly in earlier chapters, so here we focus on the most innovative options. This chapter is meant to broaden horizons, pointing out where the food industry may be heading in the years to come.

6.b. The newest and most innovative e-commerce solutions

- Predictive ordering

Modern systems are able to predict what the customer wants to eat before they even realize it themselves. By analyzing order history, order time, weather, and even location, the system can suggest a ready-made order. One example is Starbucks – their app sends a reminder about a morning coffee before the customer even leaves the house.

- Dynamic pricing – real-time pricing

Prices adjusted based on demand, time of day, or ingredient availability. Restaurants run online "happy hours" or offer discounts when a product is close to its expiry date, maximizing potential revenue and minimizing food waste at the same time.

- TikTok shop & Instagram Shopping

These apps offer a "Buy Now" or "Order Now" button right after viewing a promotional video. The integration of e-commerce with social media shortens the distance between the customer seeing something they want and actually completing the transaction – right then, from that exact restaurant.

- QR codes

QR codes are no longer just for opening menus. Dynamic codes can recognize the time of day or loyalty status of the customer and show a personalized offer – for example, a different menu in the morning, a lunch deal at noon, and a wine list in the evening.

- Personalization and automation

New systems learn the customer's lifestyle and adjust the menu based on mood, order history, or even the weather.

For example, if the app notices that the customer often orders pizza or pasta on Friday evenings, it will automatically suggest those dishes with a discount, helping build loyalty and making the ordering experience more comfortable.

6.c. Summary

Online gastronomy is becoming a testing ground for technological innovation, where speed, personalization, and smart multichannel integration make all the difference. Restaurants that follow the trends and implement even small-scale innovations gain an edge, not only in the market but also in the eyes of the customer, who no longer sees online food orders as just transactions, but as full-on experiences. That's exactly why personalized offers and loyalty-building matter more than ever nowadays.

7. SUMMARY

Modern gastronomy is using digital tools more boldly and more consciously than ever before. E-commerce has become not just an additional sales channel, but a key part of survival and growth strategy for food businesses – from small local spots to large restaurant chains. Today, it's an essential part of running a food service operation. Thanks to it, restaurants can reach customers beyond their immediate physical range, build loyalty, and increase sales. This guide has shown how much customer expectations have changed – from the need for convenience to demands for personalization and fast service. Summing up all the chapters, it's worth highlighting the main takeaways and recommendations that came out of the analysis.

We explored various e-commerce models that can be used in gastronomy: B2C, B2B, B2A, C2C, C2B, and C2A, as well as marketplaces and m-commerce. Each one comes with its own benefits and challenges – from direct customer sales to cooperation with public administration to using third-party platforms. One of the biggest challenges is building customer loyalty while working with marketplaces, which make direct contact with the customer more difficult.

The chapter on technical infrastructure showed how important it is to integrate tools such as a website with an ordering system, POS, CRM, and social media.

Modern technologies make it possible not only to process orders but also to analyze data, run marketing campaigns, and manage customer loyalty. What really matters is that all systems are integrated and easy to use – both for staff and customers.

Logistics and customer service are areas that have a direct impact on how customers rate a venue. Efficient delivery, clear and timely communication (including automation), and the ability to manage complaints and reviews are all essentials for success.

Modern online gastronomy also faces a number of challenges: high platform commissions, system integration issues, growing demands for data protection, and GDPR compliance. At the same time, we're seeing rapid development of trends like voice commerce, predictive ordering, green commerce, dynamic pricing, and omnichannel strategies. Venues that react quickly to changes and adapt to new technologies gain a real competitive edge – staying up to date is worth it.

Tech innovations are driving how fast gastronomic e-commerce is evolving. Online gastronomy today is not just a sales tool – it's a space for building customer experiences, testing innovation, and developing a strong brand.

To sum it up: gastronomic e-commerce requires constant growth, learning, and flexibility.

What matters most is:

- choosing the right e-commerce models tailored to the venue's specific needs,
- investing in technology and making sure it's properly integrated,
- improving the digital skills of the team,
- consciously responding to trends and changing market demands.

The future of gastronomy belongs to those who understand that e-commerce is not just about tech – it's rather a mindset for doing business and building customer relationships in a digital world. And those who learn how to embrace technology and use it to its full advantage will always be one step ahead.

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CHAPTER 3



Sales Techniques & Consumer Service in Gastronomy

Training Script:
Enhancing VET
Students'
Competencies in
Gastronomy
Sector
GastroNet –
Vocational
Education and
Training

By EPRALIMA, Portugal

Sales Techniques & Consumer Service in Gastronomy



Enhancing VET Students' Competencies in Gastronomy Sector.

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1. Introduction

In today's fast-paced and competitive food and hospitality industry, mastering effective sales techniques and delivering exceptional consumer service are more critical than ever. With the digital transformation reshaping gastronomy, businesses must adapt to new technologies – from online ordering systems and reservation platforms to AI-powered consumer interactions and digital marketing strategies. These innovations not only change how services are delivered but also raise the expectations of tech-savvy consumers.

At the heart of business success lies the consumer experience. In an industry driven by human interaction and personal satisfaction, how a consumer feels before, during, and after their visit can determine whether they return, leave a glowing review, or recommend the business to others. A positive experience builds loyalty and enhances reputation, while a poor one can spread quickly and damage even the strongest brands.

Through this module, students will gain practical tools and insights to improve consumer acquisition and retention. By learning how to engage effectively with guests, handle objections, upsell confidently, and personalize service, future professionals will be better equipped to not only attract new consumers but also turn them into long-term advocates.

2. Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, students will be able to:

- Understand the impact of digital transformation on the gastronomy industry and identify key digital tools used in consumer service and sales.
- Recognize the value of consumer experience and its influence on brand loyalty, reputation, and business growth.
- Analyse real-world scenarios to identify best practices and common pitfalls in gastronomy consumer service.
- Apply empathy mapping techniques to better understand consumer needs, emotions, and behaviours at various service touchpoints.

- Develop professional communication skills tailored to both in-person and digital consumer interactions.

3. The Changing Landscape of Hospitality

The hospitality industry – especially food service and accommodation – has always been shaped by consumer trends and market demands. However, in recent years, the pace of change has accelerated due to factors like digital transformation, changing consumer behaviour, economic shifts, and global events (such as the COVID-19 pandemic). Understanding these forces is essential for anyone entering the industry today.

This unit explores how businesses are adapting to these changes, what challenges they face, and how they can leverage new technologies and consumer-centric strategies to stay competitive.

3.1.1 Overview of the Modern Food and Hospitality Industry

The food and hospitality industry has undergone major shifts in recent years due to globalization, shifting consumer expectations, and technological innovation. Today, the industry is characterized by:

- Experience-driven service: Consumers value memorable experiences over products. Ambience, personalization, and emotional connection are key to consumer satisfaction.
- Speed and convenience: Services like delivery apps, mobile reservations, and digital payments are now standard expectations.
- Sustainability and ethics: Consumers are increasingly conscious of where food comes from, how it's prepared, and the social/environmental impact of businesses.
- Global fusion and culinary diversity: Menus are becoming more globalized, driven by travel trends, immigration, and curiosity.
- Labour market shifts: Staffing shortages, automation, and skills training challenges impact service delivery and business resilience.

3.1.2. Key Challenges and Opportunities in a Digital-First Market

Challenges:

- High competition online: Digital platforms make it easier to find alternatives, therefore consumer loyalty is harder to maintain.
- Tech adoption costs: Small and mid-sized establishments may struggle to invest in necessary technology.
- Staff adaptability: Training existing staff to work with new digital tools can be slow/resisted.
- Negative online reviews: A poor review can reach thousands, impacting reputation quickly.
- Cybersecurity: Increased use of digital systems brings risks of data breaches or system outages.

Opportunities:

- Enhanced consumer insight: Digital ordering and CRM (Consumer Relationship Management) tools allow for data collection to personalize experiences.
- Operational efficiency: Automation of reservations, orders, and inventory improves time and cost management.
- Marketing power: Social media, influencer marketing, and online ads allow small brands to reach wide audiences affordably.
- Omnichannel presence: Businesses can operate online, in-store, and via third-party platforms, expanding reach.
- Loyalty programs: Digital tools make it easier to track and reward repeat consumers, encouraging retention.

Class Discussion: What made Domino's successful? How did tech enhance their brand?

Failure Case: Traditional Family Restaurants Without Online Presence



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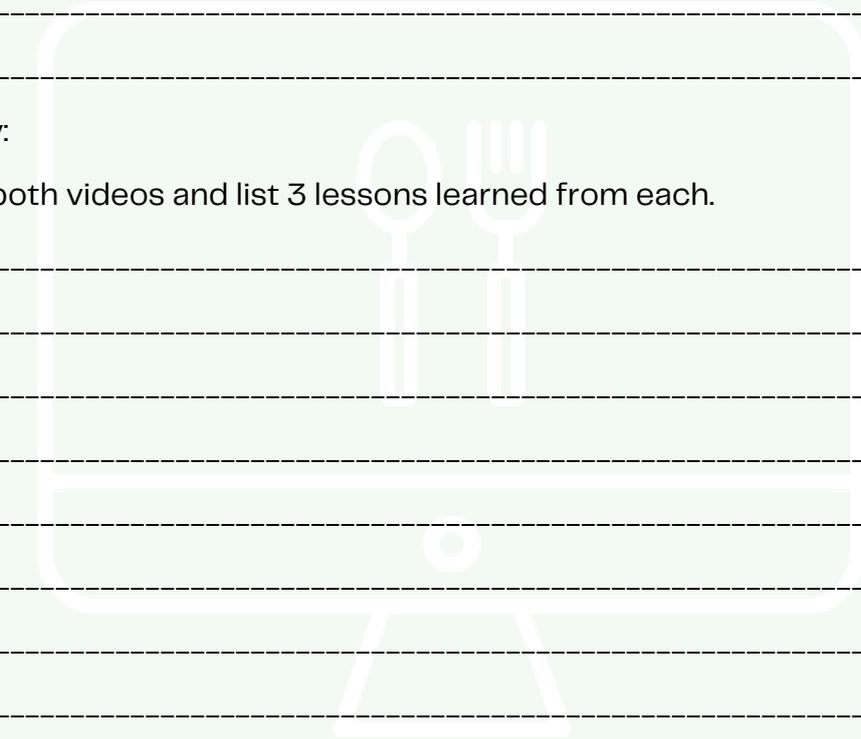
Numerous local diners and small restaurants saw a significant decline during the COVID-19 pandemic because they had no online ordering system, social media marketing, or delivery partnerships. While larger competitors pivoted quickly, these businesses either closed or faced severe losses.

Watch the video on [How Coronavirus Decimated The Restaurant Industry Overnight – YouTube](#)

Identify at least 3 key ideas:

Group Activity:

- Compare both videos and list 3 lessons learned from each.



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Individual Exercise:

- How do you see your future role in a digitally evolving FOOD industry?"
- Write a 300-word reflection: "One thing I learned from this lesson that will shape my career."

4. Digital Transformation in Gastronomy

In today's fast-evolving gastronomy sector, technology is playing a pivotal role in redefining how businesses interact with consumers, manage operations, and promote their services. From online reservations and digital menus to social media marketing and data-driven decision-making, digital tools are now essential for staying competitive.

This unit explores how technology is reshaping consumer interactions, marketing, operations, and service in the gastronomy sector. The emphasis is on understanding both the tools available and the strategic value of digital transformation for long-term success.

4.1. Digital Ordering and Payment Systems

Digital ordering and payment systems allow consumers to place and pay for orders through online platforms (websites, apps, kiosks, or QR-code menus).

Examples:

- Third-party apps: Uber Eats, Deliveroo, DoorDash
- In-house solutions: Domino's mobile app, Starbucks app with order-ahead
- Contactless payment systems: Apple Pay, Google Pay, NFC terminals

Benefits:

- Increased convenience and reduced wait times
- Streamlined operations and order accuracy
- Valuable consumer data collection

Challenges:

- High commission fees on third-party platforms
- Integration with existing POS (Point of Sale) systems
- Digital exclusion of certain consumer groups

4.2. CRM (Consumer Relationship Management) Tools

CRM systems help businesses manage and analyse consumer interactions and data throughout the consumer lifecycle to improve service, retention, and sales.

Features:

- Consumer profiles and history

- Email and SMS marketing automation
- Loyalty and reward program integration
- Feedback and satisfaction tracking

Examples:

- Toast, Square for Restaurants (CRM + POS integration)
- OpenTable, SevenRooms (CRM with booking and consumer tracking)
- Salesforce Hospitality Cloud

Benefits:

- Personalized offers and promotions
- Improved consumer retention
- Data-driven decision making

Challenges:

- Data privacy and GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) compliance
- Staff training and system management

4.3. Online Reviews, Social Media, and Digital Marketing

Online Reviews:

- Platforms like Google Reviews, TripAdvisor, and Yelp can make or break a business's reputation.
- Strategies: Encourage satisfied guests to review; respond professionally to negative feedback.

Social Media:

- Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are crucial for visual storytelling, menu promotion, and brand-building.
- Influencer marketing and user-generated content boost visibility.

Digital Marketing Tools:

- SEO (Search Engine Optimization) for restaurant websites
- Email newsletters, Google Ads, Facebook Ads
- Analytics tools (Google Analytics, Meta Business Suite)

Benefits:

- Wide-reaching and cost-effective

- Direct interaction with consumers
- Real-time feedback and engagement

Challenges:

- Managing reputation and negative content
- Content fatigue and algorithm changes
- Need for ongoing strategy and content planning

4.4. Automation and AI in Consumer Service

In the fast-paced world of hospitality and gastronomy, businesses are under constant pressure to deliver high-quality service while managing costs and meeting growing consumer expectations. Automation and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are increasingly being used to streamline operations, enhance consumer service, and drive efficiency in restaurants, hotels, and food service venues. Such as:

A. Chatbots for Reservations, FAQs, and Online Orders

Chatbots are AI-powered virtual assistants that handle routine consumer queries via websites, apps, and messaging platforms.

Key Functions:

- Managing online reservations
- Answering frequently asked questions (FAQs) about menus, opening hours, or dietary options
- Taking online food orders and processing delivery instructions

Example: A restaurant chatbot on Facebook Messenger can automatically confirm a table booking and suggest daily specials.

B. Voice Assistants (e.g., Alexa for Hotels)

Some hotels and dining establishments now use voice-activated AI systems to allow guests to make requests without human interaction.

Typical Tasks Include:

- Placing room service orders
- Requesting housekeeping or extra amenities
- Making dinner reservations
- Checking opening times for hotel restaurants

Example: A hotel guest can say, "Alexa, book me a table for two at the hotel restaurant at 7 PM."

C. Self-Service Kiosks and Smart Menus

In fast-casual dining and quick-service restaurants (QSRs), self-service kiosks and digital menus allow consumers to place their own orders and customize meals without staff assistance.

- Benefits:
- Faster order processing
- Reduced wait times
- Reduced need for front-of-house staff
- Example: Fast-food chains like McDonald's offer touchscreen kiosks where consumers can order and pay without interacting with a cashier.

D. AI-Powered Analytics for Predicting Consumer Behaviour

AI systems can analyse consumer data (purchase history, preferences, peak dining times) to predict future behaviour and personalize marketing or service offers.

Applications Include:

- Personalized promotions sent via apps or email
- Dynamic pricing and menu adjustments based on demand
- Inventory and staffing optimization based on predicted consumer flow

Example: A CRM system might send targeted discount offers to consumers who frequently order a specific dish.

Benefits of AI and Automation in Gastronomy

- **24/7 Service Availability:** AI systems and chatbots can handle consumer queries and bookings at any time, even outside business hours.
- **Faster Response Times:** Automated systems can provide instant answers to routine questions, reducing consumer waiting time.
- **Labor Cost Reduction:** Businesses can reduce staffing costs by automating repetitive, low-complexity tasks.
- **Consistency and Scalability:** AI delivers consistent service quality and can easily scale to handle high volumes during peak times.

Challenges and Considerations

- Impersonal Consumer Experiences: While automation speeds up processes, it can lack the emotional connection and personalization that human service provides.
- Technical Glitches and Downtime: AI systems are reliant on technology infrastructure. Software errors, system crashes, or chatbot malfunctions can frustrate consumers.
- Lack of Empathy: AI cannot truly understand consumer emotions, making it less effective in handling complaints or sensitive service situations.
- Dependence on Strong Internet Infrastructure: Reliable connectivity is essential for AI systems to function smoothly. Poor Wi-Fi or system outages can disrupt service.

4.5 Balancing Technology with Human Touch

While AI and automation offer clear advantages in efficiency and cost savings, they should complement – not replace – the human element. The most successful businesses use technology for routine tasks while reserving complex, emotional, or personalized interactions for well-trained human staff.

Example Strategy: A restaurant could use a chatbot to take bookings but rely on friendly, empathetic staff to greet guests, recommend dishes, and handle service recovery when issues arise.

Consequently, AI and automation are valuable tools for enhancing consumer service in the gastronomy industry, but their implementation must be balanced with human interaction to maintain warmth, empathy, and personal connection – key ingredients in creating memorable dining and hospitality experiences.

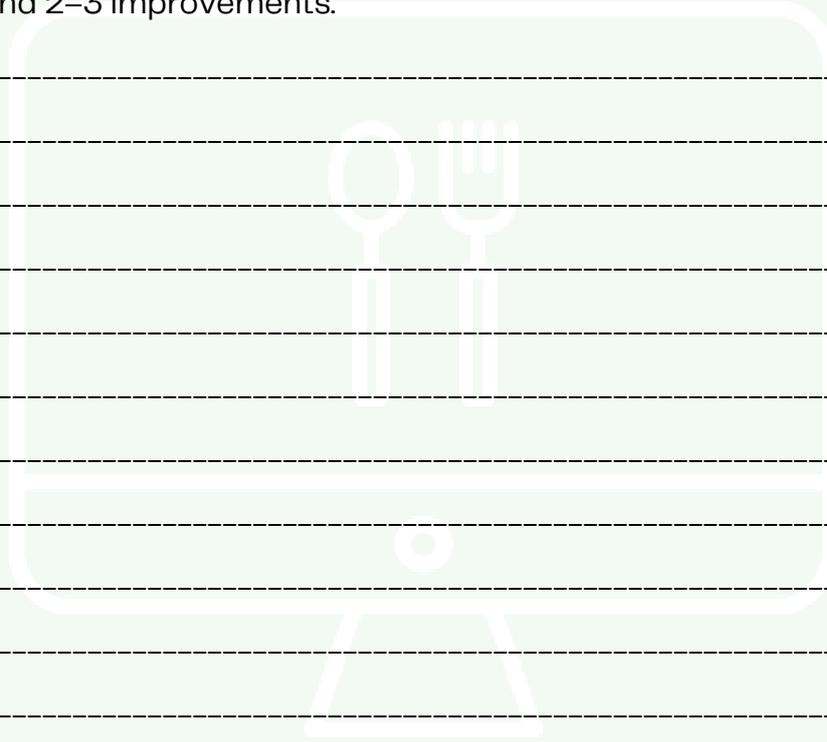
4.6 Current Industry Example: McDonald's

McDonald's has implemented:

- Self-ordering kiosks in many global locations
- Mobile app with personalization features and loyalty points
- AI in drive-thrus (acquired Dynamic Yield for real-time menu recommendations)
- Integration of voice recognition and robotics in pilot kitchens

Exercise

Use a "tech audit" worksheet (annex 1) and evaluate how a restaurant or café uses digital tools. Recommend 2–3 improvements.



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5. The Psychology of the Consumer

In the food industry, delivering exceptional service goes beyond meeting basic needs – it requires understanding the emotions, motivations, and expectations that influence consumer behaviour. This unit introduces students to the fundamentals of consumer psychology, exploring how factors like perception, emotion, memory, and decision-making shape guest experiences.

A key tool in this process is empathy mapping, which helps food professionals visualize and understand what consumers think, feel, see, hear, and do during their interaction with a business. By using empathy mapping, students will learn how to step into the consumer's shoes and anticipate needs more effectively. This insight allows for more personalized service, better communication, and the creation of emotionally engaging consumer experiences that drive satisfaction and loyalty.

Definition: Consumer psychology is the study of how consumers think, feel, reason, and select between different products and services. It explores the internal processes – including perception, motivation, emotions, memory, and social influence – that drive behaviour and decision-making.

5.1. Key Psychological Concepts in Consumer Behaviour

A. Perception

Consumers interpret visual, auditory, and environmental signals to form impressions.

Example: A visually appealing dish influences how tasty it's expected to be.

B. Motivation

The internal need or desire to fulfil something, like hunger, comfort, or social interaction.

C. Emotions

emotional experiences heavily impact consumer satisfaction and how they remember a service.

D. Memory and Association

Consumers retain emotionally charged experiences and form associations (e.g., background music linked to brand identity).

E. Social Influence

Peer behaviour, online reviews, influencers, and crowd behaviour shape choices.

F. Cognitive Biases

Mental shortcuts like:

- Halo Effect: One positive aspect (e.g., a well-dressed waiter) affects perception of the whole experience.
- Anchoring: Initial prices or reviews affect how value is judged.

5.2 Applications in the Gastronomy Industry

Understanding consumer psychology is essential in the food industry for both sales techniques and consumer service. By recognizing what motivates consumers – such as emotional triggers, perceived value, and sensory experiences – hospitality staff can tailor their sales approach to upsell menu items, suggest complementary dishes, or promote special offers in a way that feels natural and appealing. Similarly, in consumer service, applying psychological principles like active listening, positive reinforcement, and empathy helps staff respond effectively to consumer needs and emotions. This leads to stronger consumer relationships, higher satisfaction levels, and increased consumer loyalty, ultimately driving both sales and repeat business, through its application:

- Design sensory-rich experiences (lighting, music, aroma, decor).
- Train staff in emotional intelligence and empathy.
- Use branding and storytelling to build emotional connection.
- Reinforce positive memories with a warm, memorable send-off.
- Monitor and respond to reviews to shape perception.

5.3 Why It Matters?

In a competitive gastronomy market, businesses that can anticipate and respond to consumer needs and emotions are more likely to build trust, encourage repeat visits, and generate positive word-of-mouth. Applying psychological insights helps staff not only to sell more effectively but also to handle complaints, personalize service, and create memorable experiences that drive consumer satisfaction and business success.

Therefore, consumer psychology helps businesses:

- Predict preferences and trends

- Create memorable, emotion-driven experiences
- Improve consumer satisfaction and loyalty
- Handle complaints with empathy and insight
- Build a strong and consistent brand image

Suggested Activities

- Case Study: Analyse a popular restaurant's service style and consumer journey.
- Role Play: Practice service scenarios focusing on emotional cues and responses.
- Discussion: Share personal dining experiences and identify emotional drivers.
- Observation: Visit a hospitality venue and evaluate how psychological principles are used.

5.4 Empathy Map

In the gastronomy industry, understanding consumer psychology through tools like empathy mapping is essential for creating memorable dining experiences. By analysing what guests are thinking, feeling, and expecting at each stage of their visit – from booking a table to enjoying their meal and providing feedback – restaurants can tailor their service, menu design, ambiance, and communication strategies. This consumer-focused approach helps anticipate needs, reduce service gaps, and foster emotional connections that encourage repeat visits and positive word-of-mouth.

5.5 What is an Empathy Map?

An Empathy Map is a visual tool used to better understand a consumer's experience by exploring their thoughts, feelings, actions, and statements. It helps teams step into the consumer's shoes to uncover insights that might not be obvious through data alone.

A basic empathy map is divided into four quadrants, each representing a different aspect of the user's experience:

Says – What the user says out loud in interviews or usability tests.

E.g., "This feature is confusing."

Think – What the user is thinking but might not say.

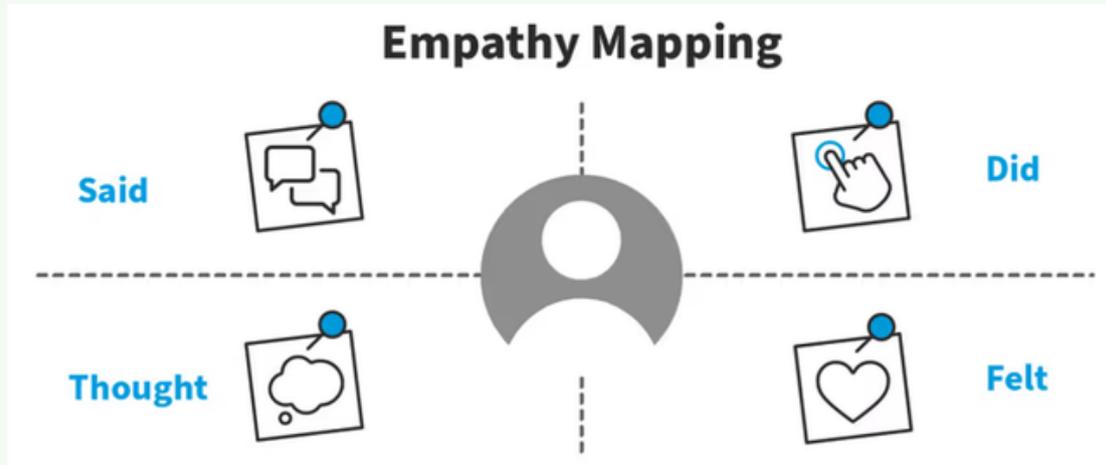
E.g., "I don't want to look incompetent."

Does – What actions and behaviours the user takes.

E.g., Refreshes the page several times, avoids a certain button

Feels – The user’s emotional state or attitude.

E.g., Frustrated, anxious, excited.

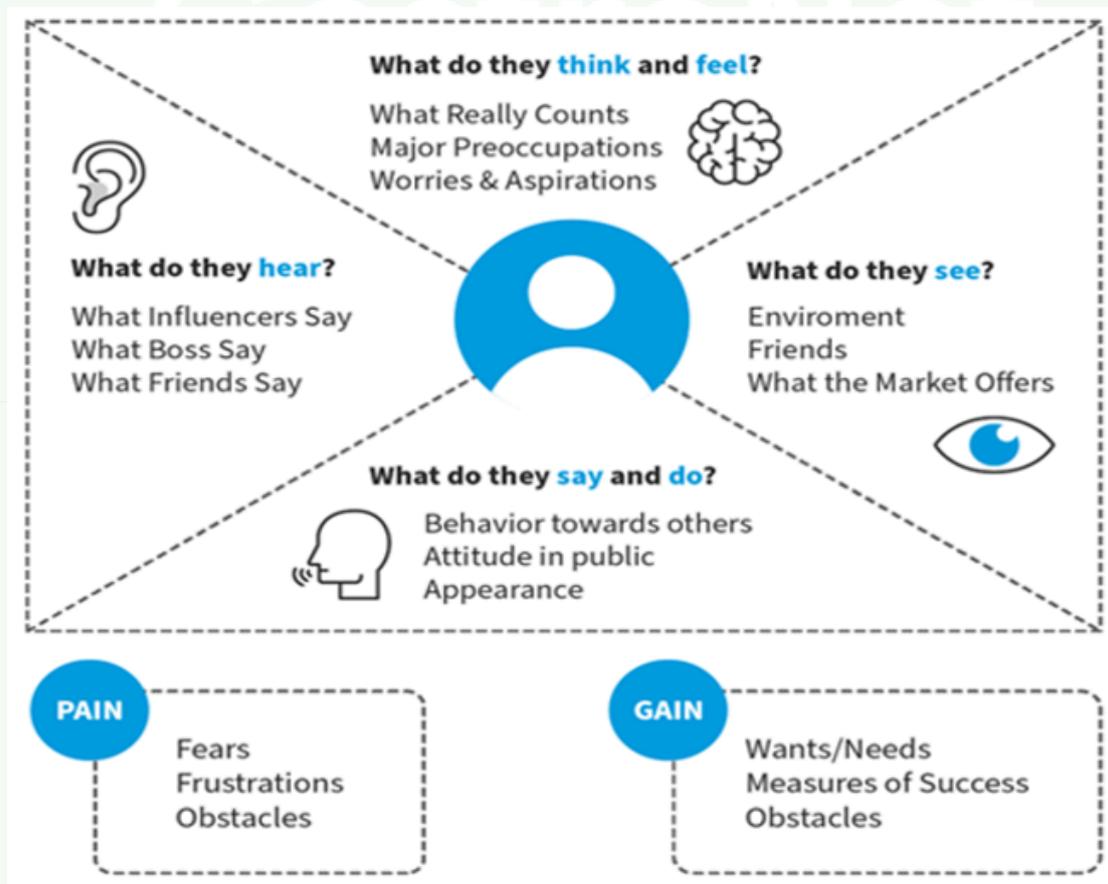


Source: Dam, R. F. and Teo, Y. S. (2025, February 12). Empathy Map – Why and How to Use It. Interaction Design Foundation – IxDF.

Some extended versions add:

Pains – What challenges or fears does the user face?

Gains – What goals or needs are they trying to achieve?



Source: Dam, R. F. and Teo, Y. S. (2025, February 12). Empathy Map – Why and How to Use It. Interaction Design Foundation – IxDF.

Feels – The user’s emotional state or attitude.

E.g., Frustrated, anxious, excited.

5.6 How Are Empathy Maps Linked to Consumer Psychology?

Consumer psychology focuses on understanding the thoughts, emotions, motivations, perceptions, and behaviours that influence how consumers make decisions and interact with businesses. It explores why consumers behave the way they do, what influences their satisfaction, and how they form opinions about service quality.

Empathy mapping is a practical tool that helps translate these psychological insights into a visual, structured understanding of the consumer experience. It allows hospitality professionals to step into the consumer’s shoes and analyse what consumers are thinking, feeling, seeing, hearing, saying, and doing at each touchpoint of their journey.

Psychological Concept	Empathy Map Element
Emotions (e.g., fear, joy, frustration)	Feels
Thoughts, beliefs, cognitive biases	Thinks
Verbal expression, social behaviour	Says
Habits, decision-making actions	Does
Pain avoidance, goal-seeking	Pains & Gains

How They Work Together	
Consumer Psychology	Empathy Mapping
Studies consumer needs, emotions, perceptions, and behaviours	Provides a framework to capture and visualize these psychological insights
Focuses on cognitive processes (how people think and decide) and emotional triggers (how people feel)	Turns these insights into actionable service design improvements
Helps explain why a consumer feels dissatisfied or delighted	Helps teams identify and communicate consumer pain points and opportunities
Informs service strategies, marketing messages, and consumer interactions	Helps hospitality teams collaboratively brainstorm consumer-focused solutions

5.7 Empathy Mapping: Step by step

1. Define the user persona – Who are you mapping for? Choose a specific user or segment.
2. Gather data – Use interviews, observations, surveys, or user testing to inform the map.
3. Fill in the quadrants – Based on the data, collaboratively populate the map.
4. Identify insights – Look for patterns or contradictions (e.g., “Says it’s easy, but does something complex”).
5. Use insights – Apply what you’ve learned to improve design decisions, messaging, or product features.

5.8 Applications in the Gastronomy Industry

Empathy maps can be powerful tools in the gastronomical sector, particularly in understanding diners' experiences, employee perspectives, and market preferences. Restaurants, food service providers, and culinary entrepreneurs can use empathy maps to craft experiences that truly resonate with consumers.

A. Menu Development

- Why: Understand what consumers are craving, their dietary restrictions, and emotional drivers behind food choices.
- How: Use empathy maps to identify what guests say about food trends (“I want something plant-based”), what they feel (“I want comfort food”), and what they do (frequently order the same dish or avoid certain items).

B. Consumer Experience Design

- Why: Tailor the ambiance, service style, and dining flow to align with consumers' expectations and emotional needs.
- How: Map consumer feelings and behaviours from reservation to payment. For example, a diner might say they love quick service but feel rushed if the food comes out too fast.

C. Marketing and Branding

- Why: Craft messages that emotionally connect with diners.

- How: Use empathy maps to guide tone and content—e.g., a user who thinks “I deserve a treat” may respond better to indulgent messaging, while one who feels “guilty after eating out” might value healthy, transparent ingredients.

D. Restaurant Layout & Design

- Why: Create spaces that feel comfortable and functional to diners.
- How: If empathy mapping reveals that consumers feel overwhelmed in loud or crowded spaces, it can inform decisions around seating arrangements, lighting, and noise control.

E. Employee Training & Service Style

- Why: Ensure staff interactions align with consumer expectations.
- How: Understand what guests expect from waitstaff (e.g., friendliness, discretion, knowledge) and how they feel when service doesn't meet those expectations.

F. Take-away & Delivery Optimization

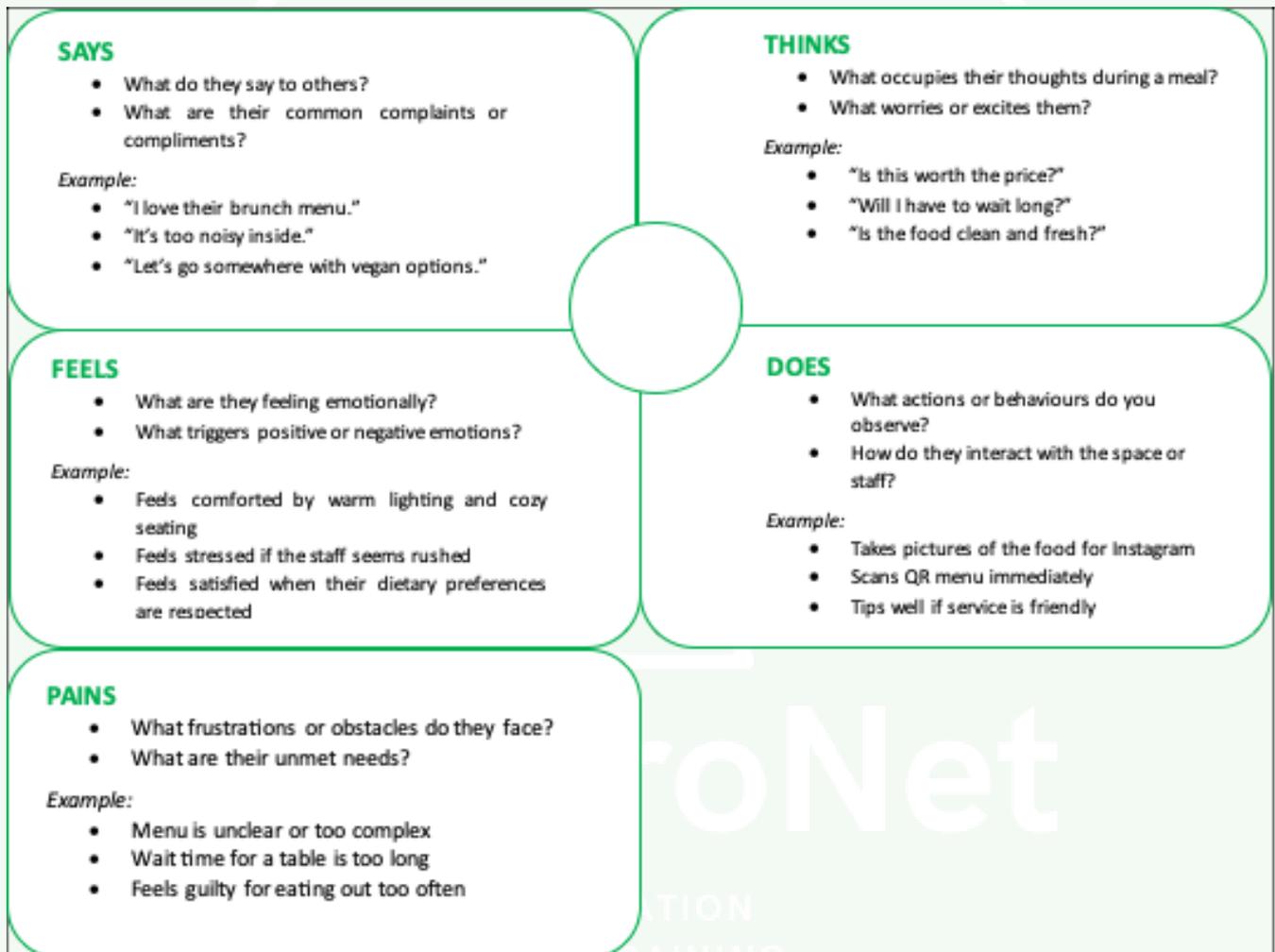
- Why: Improve off-site consumer experience.
- How: If consumers say the food arrives cold or do leave poor reviews about packaging, the business can prioritize delivery insulation, packaging redesign, or clearer expectations.

G. Tourism and Culinary Experiences

- Why: Tailor food experiences to travellers or cultural foodies.
- How: Use empathy maps to tap into what these consumers value—authenticity, storytelling, local ingredients—and how they feel about immersive food experiences.

Example:

Target Consumer: "Young urban professional, 25–35, values convenience, quality ingredients, and a relaxed but aesthetic environment."



Case Study 1: Enhancing the Dine-In Experience Using Empathy Mapping – "The Urban Bistro"

Background: The Urban Bistro, a mid-sized restaurant in a busy city centre, noticed a decline in repeat consumers and mixed online reviews mentioning slow service and lack of personalization.

Application of Empathy Mapping: The management team created an empathy map focusing on their typical lunch consumer. They considered:

- What consumers see: Long queues, busy staff, consumers waiting.
- What consumers hear: Stressful conversations from staff, background noise.
- What consumers think and feel: "I don't have much time for lunch" and "I want quick, friendly service."
- What consumers do: Check their phones impatiently, ask repeatedly about order status.

Outcome: Using insights from the empathy map, The Urban Bistro redesigned its lunch service by introducing a pre-order app, faster lunch menus, and more proactive table service. This led to shorter wait times, better consumer satisfaction, and a 20% increase in lunchtime repeat visits within three months.

Case Study 2: Personalizing Online Ordering – "Taste2Go"

Background: Taste2Go, a casual dining restaurant with a growing online delivery service, noticed high cart abandonment rates on their website and app.

Consumer Psychology Insight: Using empathy mapping, the team identified key emotional and psychological barriers for online consumers:

- What consumers see: Too many menu options, confusing interface.
- What consumers hear (internally): "This is taking too long... I'll just order from somewhere else."
- What consumers feel: Frustration, decision fatigue.
- What consumers do: Abandon their order midway.

Outcome: Taste2Go simplified its online menu, highlighted best-sellers and personalized recommendations (e.g., "Top 3 Dishes for Quick Lunches"), and improved checkout speed. After these changes, the restaurant saw a 35% reduction in cart abandonment and increased overall online sales.

Empathy Map Activity: The purpose of this activity is to have you practice being empathic by analysing what a character may be thinking, feeling, doing, or saying in a sample scenario.

Inquiry Prompts

- Why should you care how other people feel?
- How can empathy change someone's behaviour?
- How can not having empathy make a situation worse?

Prompts

1. First-time consumer at a new restaurant

- What are they thinking when they walk in? Nervous, excited, unsure?

- What do they say when ordering? Do they ask many questions?
 - What actions do they take? Scan the menu carefully, ask for recommendations?
 - How do they feel about the atmosphere and service?
2. A guest with dietary restrictions (e.g., gluten-free, vegan, allergies)
- What worries or thoughts run through their mind when dining out?
 - What do they express to the waiter or chef about their needs?
 - How do they behave when scanning the menu or asking about ingredients?
 - What feelings do they experience if the restaurant meets or fails their needs?
3. A regular consumer who knows the menu well
- What do they think about changes or specials offered?
 - What do they say about their favourite dishes?
 - What behaviours show their loyalty or preferences?
 - How do they feel about the consistency and quality over time?
4. A family dining out with kids
- What thoughts and concerns do parents have about the menu and environment?
 - What do they say when ordering kid-friendly meals?
 - What actions do kids and parents take (e.g., sharing dishes, requesting modifications)?
 - What feelings arise from managing kids' preferences and needs?
5. A consumer on a special occasion (birthday, anniversary)
- What do they think about the importance of the meal and setting?
 - What do they say to staff to create a memorable experience?
 - What actions do they take to celebrate (e.g., ordering special dishes, taking photos)?
 - How do they feel about the ambiance and personal touches?
6. Someone ordering takeout or delivery
- What concerns or thoughts do they have about packaging and food quality?
 - What do they say when placing the order (specific requests or preferences)?
 - What behaviours do they show when receiving and unpacking the food?
 - What feelings do they experience if the order is accurate and fresh?

Instructions

Arrange yourselves in small groups and pick a prompt from the list above (Each person in a group should pick a different prompt).

Use the diagram to help you fill out the empathy map (Annex 2), describing what the person may be experiencing in the scenario.

Message for students: Understanding how someone else feels takes practice.

The more you try it, the better you'll be at it!

Draw and write about what's happening in your prompt

How does the person feel?

What is the person thinking?

What is the person saying?

What is the person doing?

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7. Annex 1

Tech Audit Worksheet: Evaluating Digital Tools in Restaurants & Cafés

Name:	Date:
Restaurant/ Café Name:	Location (City/ Online):

Section 1: General Information

Type of Establishment:

- Fast Food Casual Dining Café Fine Dining Delivery-Only Other:

Observation Type:

- In-person Visit Online Research Personal Experience Interview with Staff

Section 2: Digital Tools Evaluation

For each area below, tick the options the restaurant uses and add short comments or examples.

1. Ordering & Payment Systems

- Online ordering via website
- Mobile app for ordering
- QR code menus
- In-store self-ordering kiosks
- Table-side tablets or devices
- Contactless/digital payment (Apple Pay, Google Pay, etc.)
- Integration with delivery platforms (Uber Eats, Deliveroo, etc.)

Comment:

What seems efficient or could be improved?

2. Consumer Relationship Management (CRM)

- Digital loyalty program
- Email newsletters
- SMS or app notifications
- Personalized promotions
- Consumer feedback system
- Reservation system with consumer tracking (e.g., OpenTable)

Comment:

How does the business keep regular consumers engaged?

3. Online Reviews & Reputation Management

- Active on Google/TripAdvisor/Yelp
- Monitors/responds to reviews
- Encourages consumers to leave reviews
- Displays star rating or reviews on-site/website

Comment:

What do the reviews say? How does the business respond?

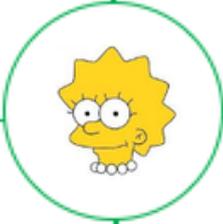
4. Social Media Presence

- Active Instagram or Facebook page
- Posts food photos/updates regularly
- Uses influencers or partnerships
- Engages with consumers in comments or DMs
- Paid digital ads (Google, Meta, etc.)

Annex 2

Empathy Map – Worksheet

Persona Name/Type:

SAYS	THINKS
FEELS	DOES
 PAINS	

CHAPTER 4



**Training Script:
Enhancing VET
Students'
Competencies in
Gastronomy
Sector
GastroNet –
Vocational
Education and
Training**

By Cnipa Puglia, Italy

Marketing

Enhancing VET Students' Competencies in Gastronomy Sector.



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I. INTRODUCTION

In an era where the gastronomic experience extends far beyond the dish served at the table, marketing represents one of the most powerful tools for building, communicating, and differentiating the identity of a business in the food sector. The GastroNet project, aimed at students and trainers in Vocational Education and Training, aims to develop advanced skills in sales and promotion techniques, with a strong orientation towards digitalization.

This first module, "Marketing Fundamentals for Gastronomy," serves as the starting point for systematically and consciously exploring the strategic role of marketing in a constantly transforming sector, where consumption habits, sales channels, and customer expectations evolve rapidly.

According to Philip Kotler, one of the world's leading experts in the field, "marketing is the process through which companies create value for customers and establish strong relationships with them in order to obtain value in return" (Kotler & Armstrong, Principles of Marketing, 2021). In the gastronomic context, this value is not limited to food quality, but includes atmosphere, service, brand storytelling, and the ability to engage customers in a complete sensory and relational experience. Marketing, therefore, is not an accessory function, but an identity-forming and strategic component of the restaurant business.

The module introduces fundamental concepts through the classic 4Ps of marketing – product, price, promotion, and distribution – with a strongly applied approach to the gastronomic sector. Understanding how to define a coherent and attractive offer, how to correctly position prices, which communication channels to activate, and how to effectively distribute one's products (from traditional dining to food delivery) is essential for meeting the needs of contemporary customers.

Particular attention is given to the peculiarities of gastronomic marketing, where the product is inherently ephemeral and multisensory, and reputation is built – or destroyed – in real time, often through reviews and social media.

In this sense, digital marketing is no longer an option, but a competitive necessity. According to Statista's 2023 report, over 60% of global consumers consult digital content before choosing a restaurant or gastronomic service.

Digital platforms enable reaching audiences comprehensively, building communities, collecting valuable data, and precisely measuring the impact of marketing actions. Even small businesses can now access professional tools to position themselves effectively and creatively in the market, leveraging SEO, social media campaigns, email marketing, and visual storytelling.

The integration between theory and practice, between strategy and operations, between tradition and innovation promotes a vision of marketing as entrepreneurial culture, capable of giving voice to what makes each gastronomic project unique: authenticity, connection to territory, artisanal quality, but also the ability to innovate, listen to the market, and anticipate trends. Marketing thus becomes not only a tool for selling more, but an identity engine that helps businesses express their vision and transform it into concrete value for customers. Concepts such as brand experience, sensory marketing, attention economy, and customer journey are progressively entering the professional language of the restaurant industry as well. Learning to design memorable experiences, to transform customers into brand ambassadors, to build loyalty through listening and service personalization, means doing evolved marketing today.

This first chapter does not limit itself to providing definitions, but stimulates a new mentality: learning marketing means training oneself to think strategically, to read context, and to create authentic connections with customers. It is a transversal competency, indispensable not only for those intending to manage a business, but also for those aspiring to enter the working world with awareness and entrepreneurial spirit. The module is designed to offer a solid, accessible, and stimulating foundation, opening the path to subsequent in-depth studies: market and customer segment analysis, competitive positioning, sales techniques, and the construction of measurable digital campaigns.

In a context where innovation and tradition must dialogue to generate value, GastroNet proposes practical, updated, and future-oriented training, capable of combining the roots of gastronomic culture with the most evolved tools of contemporary marketing. This chapter inaugurates a journey that does not limit itself to transmitting skills, but aspires to train a new generation of aware, creative, and digitally prepared professionals, ready to contribute actively and innovatively to the revival and enhancement of the sector.

2. Fundamentals of Marketing for Gastronomy

Module 1, titled "Fundamentals of Marketing for Gastronomy," is designed to provide a clear and accessible foundation for vocational training students, with a maximum of 5 pages. It focuses on basic marketing concepts, particularly the 4Ps, and applies them to the gastronomy sector, highlighting its peculiarities and the importance of digital marketing.

• Learning Objectives:

- Understand basic marketing concepts (4Ps: product, price, promotion, distribution).
- Identify the peculiarities of marketing in the gastronomy sector.
- Recognize the role of digital marketing for restaurants and gastronomic businesses.

Module Contents

- Introduction to Marketing: Defines marketing as the set of activities for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers, with an emphasis on the gastronomy sector.
- The 4Ps of Marketing: Explains Product (menu, experience), Price (pricing strategies), Promotion (channels like social media), and Distribution (physical location and online). Examples include a restaurant offering vegan dishes to differentiate itself.
- Specifics of the Gastronomy Sector: Highlights the importance of the customer experience, sensory marketing (taste, smell, sight), managing perishable inventory, and menu seasonality. Online reviews are crucial for reputation.
- Digital Trends: Covers social media (e.g., Instagram for showcasing dishes), online bookings (e.g., TheFork), app-based delivery, and review management. Examples include Shake Shack reposting customer photos to increase engagement.

1. Introduction to Marketing

- Marketing is defined as "the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (source: American Marketing Association). In the gastronomy sector, marketing is crucial for attracting customers, differentiating from competitors, and adapting to market needs.

- Example: A restaurant must communicate not only its menu but also the overall experience, like the atmosphere and service, to build customer loyalty.

The value of customer experience in the restaurant industry is universally recognized. According to a global report by Sprout Social, 72% of consumers believe that the experience at a restaurant is just as important as the food itself. This underscores the importance for food service businesses to consider marketing not only as a promotional tool, but as a means to design and communicate an overall experience. (Source: Sprout Social, "The Future of Hospitality Report").

2. The 4Ps of Marketing

- The 4Ps include Product, Price, Promotion, and Distribution (Place). Each element is explained with specific examples for the gastronomy sector:
 - Product: Includes food, beverages, but also the customer experience, like the venue's ambiance. Example: A restaurant offering vegan dishes to attract a health-conscious audience.
 - Price: Determines what customers pay, with strategies like premium pricing for luxury restaurants or low prices for fast food. Example: A bar offering happy hour to increase foot traffic during off-peak times.
 - Promotion: Concerns communication activities, such as social media advertising, flyers, or collaborations with influencers. Example: A restaurant using Instagram to showcase its dishes and interact with followers.

Social media promotion strategies are not limited to a single platform. While Instagram is ideal for visual content, TikTok is becoming increasingly important, especially for reaching younger customers. Globally, the "TouchBistro 2025 State of Restaurants Report" indicates that 48% of restaurant operators use TikTok, nearly doubling from the previous year. This demonstrates the importance of adapting promotional strategy to different channels and target audiences.

- Distribution (Place): Indicates where and how customers access the product, including the physical location and online channels like delivery apps. Example: A restaurant offering delivery service via Deliveroo.

Online distribution is not limited to reservations. Home delivery represents a growing slice of the global restaurant market.

According to Statista, the worldwide food delivery market is expected to exceed \$200 billion by 2025. Platforms like DoorDash (USA), Uber Eats (global) and Glovo (Europe, Africa, Latin America) have become essential distribution channels, allowing restaurants to expand their "place" well beyond the physical boundaries of the establishment. (Source: Statista, "Food Delivery - Worldwide").



3. Specifics of the Gastronomy Sector

- The gastronomy sector has unique peculiarities, such as the emphasis on the customer experience, which goes beyond simply consuming food. Other aspects include:
 - Sensory Marketing: The visual appearance of dishes, aromas, and flavors are central, often enhanced in photos on social media.
 - Inventory Management: Food products are perishable, requiring strategies to minimize waste, such as daily specials or special offers.
 - Seasonality: Menus can vary based on seasons, influencing marketing strategies, like promoting summer or winter dishes.

- Practical example: A restaurant that handles negative reviews professionally to maintain customer trust.

Online reputation management is crucial on a global level. Google Reviews has become the primary evaluation tool for consumers worldwide. A BrightLocal analysis revealed that 87% of consumers read online reviews for local businesses, and an average rating below 4 stars can significantly influence frequency decisions. Monitoring and responding professionally to all reviews, on Google and on national platforms like Yelp (USA) or TripAdvisor, is therefore a fundamental practice. (Source: BrightLocal, "Local Consumer Review Survey").

4. Sustainability and Ethical Practices

In 2025, sustainability has now become a fundamental pillar of marketing in the world of gastronomy.

Today's consumers are much more conscious of the impact of their food choices: approximately 60% are trying to do something concrete for the environment (Specialty Food Magazine, 2025), while 32% stay away from ingredients they consider unhealthy or harmful (Innova Market Insights, 2025).

This is reflected in the growing demand for products with clear labels and local ingredients. For restaurants, it's no longer enough to serve dishes with algae, sea moss, or water lentils: they must also authentically tell the story of how they work. Highlighting ethical sourcing, perhaps using quality meat with green certifications, is a way to win over those who care about the planet.

In short, focusing on these practices not only responds to what people want, but also makes the brand emerge as a protagonist of a more responsible future.

5. Overview of Digital Trends

In 2025, European restaurants find themselves at the center of an unprecedented technological transformation, driven by increasingly connected, aware consumers who are attentive to sustainability, privacy, and authenticity. In this scenario, emerging technologies offer concrete opportunities to innovate the sector without compromising its cultural roots.

Artificial intelligence, for example, not only optimizes operations such as reservations, inventory management, or demand forecasting, but also enables deep personalization of the gastronomic experience, while simultaneously enhancing customer relationships.

Self-ordering and contactless payment systems, already widely adopted in cities like Berlin or London, reduce waiting times and improve efficiency, while technological sustainability solutions – from using AI to reduce food waste to employing blockchain to trace supply chains – respond to Europe's growing demand for transparency and eco-compatibility.

Immersive experiences, enhanced by augmented reality, transform the dining moment into a cultural and sensory journey, capable of telling local culinary traditions through a modern lens. At the same time, omnichannel integration and predictive analytics enable fluid, responsive, and interconnected management that embraces the entire customer journey, both online and offline.

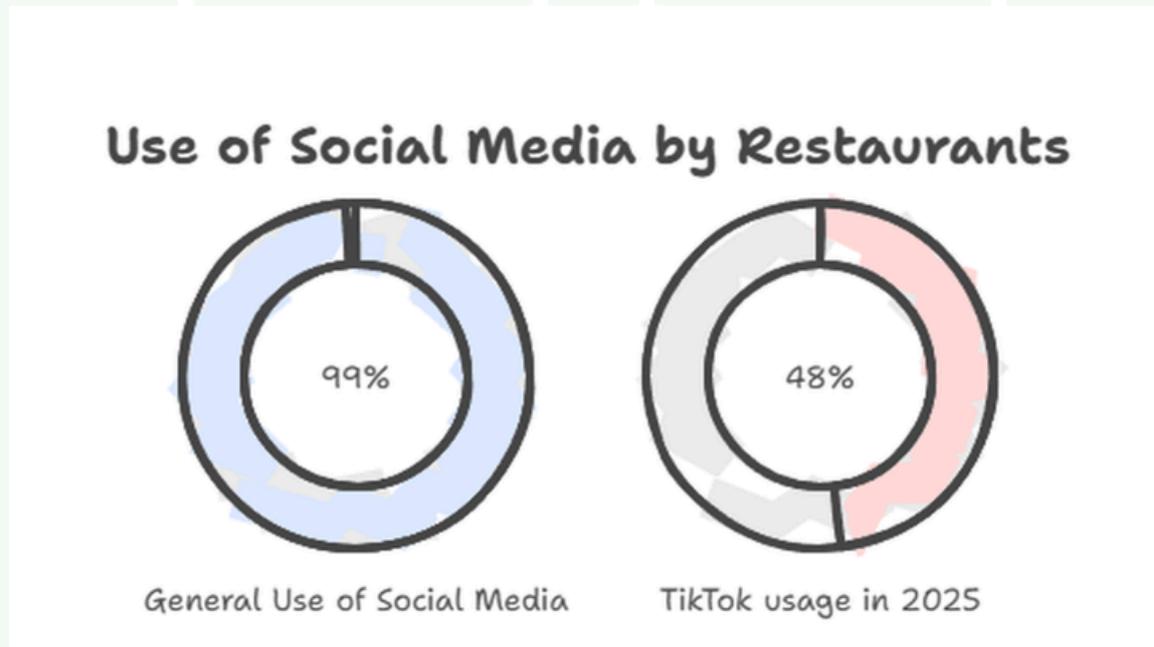
In this context, technology does not replace humans, but empowers them: tools such as intelligent chatbots, predictive dashboards, and mobile solutions become daily allies for restaurateurs who wish to combine innovation, efficiency, and identity. Europe, with its advanced regulations and unique gastronomic heritage, thus offers the ideal ground for a smart, sustainable, and profoundly human restaurant model.

Digital marketing is essential for modern restaurants, especially by 2025, with increasing reliance on online tools. Let's see some trends that include:

- Social media marketing: Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok are ideal for showing dishes, sharing behind-the-scenes content, and interacting with customers. Example: Shake Shack reposted a photo from a satisfied customer, generating thousands of likes and increasing engagement (Source: Nextre Digital).
- Online bookings: Tools like TheFork facilitate booking management and attract new customers with personalized promotions. Example: An Italian restaurant uses TheFork Manager to optimize bookings and reduce no-shows (Source: TheFork Manager).
- Delivery and e-commerce: Collaborations with apps like Deliveroo or Uber Eats expand reach, allowing restaurants to serve customers at home.
- Review management: Monitoring and responding to reviews on Google, TripAdvisor, or Yelp is fundamental for maintaining a good online reputation.
- It is emphasized that the digital landscape evolves rapidly, encouraging restaurants to stay updated with new technologies.

- It is emphasized that the digital landscape evolves rapidly, encouraging restaurants to stay updated with new technologies.

Social Media: 99% of restaurant operators use at least one social media platform, with TikTok usage nearly doubling to 48% in 2025. (Source: TouchBistro 2025 State of Restaurants Report)



Automation: Automation in restaurants is revolutionizing the industry globally, with a significant impact on commercial performance. According to the TouchBistro 2025 State of Restaurants Report, a growing number of food service establishments are recording sales increases between 25–45% thanks to the implementation of automated solutions.

The phenomenon is also confirmed by other authoritative studies: McKinsey & Company highlights that the adoption of digital technologies in food service can increase operational margins by 15–20%, while Restaurant Technology News reports that 73% of restaurants that have invested in automation have seen operational efficiency improve.

The most widespread technologies include self-service kiosks, mobile ordering apps, and automated management systems, which allow for reduced waiting times, minimized errors, and optimized customer experience. This trend is particularly pronounced in European markets such as Germany and the United Kingdom, where automation is becoming an industry standard.

Which automation technology should you implement to maximize sales?



Kiosk Self-Service

Increase sales and reduce waiting times



Mobile Ordering App

Improve customer convenience and reach

Artificial Intelligence: "89% of restaurant operators have a positive opinion on the use of AI in restaurants." (Source: TouchBistro 2025 State of Restaurants Report)

Interest in Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the F&B sector goes beyond simple curiosity. According to CGA Strategy's "State of Restaurant Technology 2024," 65% of operators are actively evaluating or have already implemented AI-based solutions to optimize inventory, personalize offerings, and improve customer service. This global interest reflects AI's potential to address common challenges such as food waste and experience personalization. (Source: CGA Strategy, "State of Restaurant Technology 2024").

Artificial Intelligence Trends in Restaurants

Social Media Marketing

Using AI to Improve Social Media Marketing Strategies

Data Analysis

Data analysis to gain meaningful insights

Sales Forecast

Predict sales trends for better planning



Process Automation

Automating restaurant operations to improve efficiency

Personalized Customer Service

Delivering personalized customer experiences

Case Study: GianPà Pizzeria Napoletana

GianPà Pizzeria Napoletana, located in Cassino, Italy, has successfully used Instagram to attract customers by leveraging trend marketing

For example, they created a meme inspired by Cattelan's banana artwork, which generated significant engagement on their posts. By capitalizing on viral trends while maintaining their brand identity, they managed to attract new customers and increase their online presence.

Source: MRKTGRAM – Case Study of Success on Instagram

Exercise 01: Application of the 4Ps and Digital Strategies

Objective: Reflect on the practical application of marketing concepts in a real context, stimulating critical analysis and creativity.

Instructions:

Think of a restaurant, pizzeria, bar, or any gastronomic business you know well (e.g., a place you frequent or have read about online). Write a paragraph (5-7 sentences) answering the following questions:

How does it apply the 4Ps of marketing (Product, Price, Promotion, Distribution)? Give a specific example for each.

What digital strategies does it use to attract and retain customers? Consider social media, online reviews, delivery apps, or digital bookings.

If possible, identify an area for improvement for one of the 4Ps or for its digital strategies.

Example Answer:

The restaurant "La Bella Vita" applies the 4Ps effectively. For Product, it offers a menu of Italian dishes with gluten-free options, creating a cozy experience with rustic decor. The Price is competitive, with a fixed-price lunch menu to attract employees. For Promotion, it uses Instagram to post photos of dishes and preparation videos, engaging followers with polls. Distribution includes the physical location and delivery service via Uber Eats. Digitally, the restaurant is active on Google Reviews, responding to every review, but could improve loyalty by creating a loyalty program via a dedicated app.

Exercise 02: Analysis of a Real Menu

Objective: Develop critical analysis skills by evaluating a real menu from a marketing perspective, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.

Instructions:

Choose a real menu from a restaurant, bar, or pizzeria (e.g., a place you frequent, an online menu, or one provided by the instructor). Analyze the menu considering the following aspects:

1. **Clarity:** Is the menu easy to read and understand? A logical structure with well-defined sections, readable fonts, clear descriptions of ingredients and highlighted allergens allow customers to order with confidence and speed. Clarity reduces choice anxiety and improves the overall experience, especially for customers with specific dietary needs or unfamiliarity with the menu.

2. **Visual appeal:** Is the design (colors, images, layout) attractive and inviting to order? Immediate visual impact stimulates appetite and creates a sensory experience that positively influences dish selection. Food photos, while effective in some formats like fast casual or delivery-focused establishments, are not always appropriate: fine dining or traditional restaurants may prefer evocative descriptions that leave room for imagination, maintaining a more sophisticated approach. The restaurant's context, target clientele, and brand concept determine the applicability of this visual element.

3. **Pricing strategy:** Are prices clear? Do they use techniques like psychological pricing (e.g., €9.90)? Price clarity avoids surprises and builds trust, while psychological pricing techniques influence value perception. Charm pricing (€9.90 instead of €10.00) exploits the brain's tendency to focus on the leftmost digit, making the price appear significantly lower. Anchored pricing presents a more expensive option to make the chosen one appear more affordable. These strategies, when applied consistently, can increase sales without necessarily modifying the product's perceived value.

4. **Upselling opportunities:** Are there suggestions for pairings (e.g., desserts, beverages)? Strategic upselling guides customers toward complementary choices that increase order value: suggesting a wine paired with the main course, proposing a dessert after the meal, or promoting premium beverages creates commercial synergies. In digital menus and self-service kiosks, these suggestions can be personalized in real-time based on guest choices, maximizing proposal effectiveness and significantly increasing average ticket.

5. **Highlighting specialties:** Are specialties or distinctive dishes emphasized? Highlighting distinctive dishes (signature dishes) clearly conveys the establishment's culinary style and philosophy, creating expectations of superior quality that support higher prices. When customers perceive the uniqueness and excellence of a signature dish, they are willing to pay more because they associate the cost with distinctive value and the exclusive experience offered.

6. Branding: Does the menu reflect the establishment's identity (e.g., logo, style, story)? The menu is a brand communication tool that must consistently convey the restaurant's values, style, and soul. Elements like typography consistent with the décor, narrative tone of descriptions, logo presence, and color consistency contribute to creating a recognizable and memorable experience that reinforces the establishment's positioning in the customer's mind.

Write a brief report (5–7 sentences) that summarizes:

- A strength of the menu.
- A weakness or area for improvement.
- A practical suggestion for optimizing it.

Example Answer:

The menu of the restaurant "Sapori di Casa" is clear and well-organized, with distinct sections for appetizers, main courses, and desserts, making selection easy (strength). However, the visual appeal is limited: it lacks photos of the dishes, which could attract customers (weakness). Specialties, like the homemade lasagna, are highlighted with an icon, but prices seem standard without psychological pricing techniques. For upselling, there are no wine-food pairing suggestions. I suggest adding appealing photos of main dishes and indicating recommended pairings, like "Try our tiramisu with an artisanal coffee," to increase sales.

Sources and Verification

To ensure accuracy, resources such as TheFork Manager for marketing strategies in Italy, Nextre Digital for social media marketing examples, and the definition of marketing from the American Marketing Association were consulted. Practical examples, like Shake Shack and Piada Italian Street Food, were drawn from recent articles, ensuring relevance for 2025.

Summary Table of Digital Strategies

Strategy	Description	Practical Example
Social Media Marketing	Showcase dishes, interact with clients	Shake Shack reposts customer photos, thousands of likes
Online Bookings	Manage bookings, reduce no-shows	TheFork Manager for personalized promotions
Delivery & E-commerce	Reach customers at home	Collaboration with Deliveroo for online orders
Review Management	Monitor and respond to online reviews	Respond to reviews on TripAdvisor to improve

This table summarizes digital strategies, facilitating understanding for students.

Module 1 Conclusions – Marketing Fundamentals for Gastronomy

This first module has provided a solid and clear foundation, essential for those approaching marketing in the gastronomic sector. We have explored the fundamental concepts of the 4Ps – product, price, promotion, and place – and reinterpreted them in light of the unique characteristics of the restaurant industry and gastronomic enterprises.

Particular attention has been devoted to digital marketing, now a key element for attracting and retaining customers, even for small-scale businesses. The simple yet concrete approach of this module allows students to acquire a practical and immediately applicable perspective, laying the groundwork to tackle subsequent modules with greater strategic awareness.

Key Citations – Module 1

- Complete guide to restaurant marketing in Italy | TheFork Manager [<https://www.theforkmanager.com/it-it/blog/gestione-del-ristorante/guida-completa-al-marketing-ristoranti-italia>]
- Social media marketing for restaurants in 2025: strategies and tips – Nextre Digital [<https://www.nextredigital.it/social-media-marketing-ristoranti/>]

- MRKTGRAM – Case Study of Success on Instagram [<https://mrktgram.it/case-study-di-successo-su-instagram/>]
- TouchBistro 2025 State of Restaurants Report [<https://www.touchbistro.com/blog/state-of-restaurants-report/>]
- Nextre Digital: For the Social Media Marketing strategy example with Shake Shack. Link cited in the text: <https://www.nextredigital.it/social-media-marketing-ristoranti/>
- McKinsey & Company: For data on the impact of automation on operating margins. Note: Cited in the text as "other authoritative studies." The text does not provide a specific link. (General source: <https://www.mckinsey.com/>)

Additionally, the text references specific platforms and companies such as Deliveroo, Uber Eats, TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, Yelp, Shake Shack, Statista, CGA Strategy, Restaurant Technology News, Hootsuite, Sprout Social, BrightLocal, DoorDash, Glovo, OpenTable, Piada Italian Street Food, and National Restaurant Association, which represent informational sources or practical examples, although direct links are not always provided in the original document.

3. Market Analysis and Customer Segmentation in the Gastronomic Sector

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

With Module 1: Marketing Fundamentals for Gastronomy, we explored the basic concepts of marketing. Now we delve into two crucial aspects for the success of any business in the restaurant sector: market analysis in which one operates and customer segmentation, that is, the identification of different groups of people being targeted.

Understanding who the competitors are, what the trends are, and, above all, who your customers are and what they want, is fundamental for making effective strategic decisions (Kotler & Armstrong, 2021).

This module will provide you with practical tools to analyze the competitive environment and to better identify, understand, and serve your customer segments.

Learning Objectives

By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Conduct a basic market analysis, using tools such as SWOT analysis, to identify

opportunities and threats for a gastronomic business.

- Identify different customer segments based on demographic, geographic, behavioral, and psychographic criteria, understanding their specific needs.
- Apply segmentation techniques to develop more targeted and effective marketing strategies and offers in the gastronomic context.

(Note for the Educator): This module introduces fundamental concepts of strategic marketing. It is important to adapt the depth and examples to the specific cultural contexts of Italy, Poland, and Portugal, encouraging students to find local parallels. The cited sources can serve as further reading.

1. Understanding the Playing Field: Market Analysis

Before defining a menu, launching a promotion, or even choosing the decor, it is essential to "look around." Market analysis is the systematic process of collecting and interpreting information about one's industry, competitors, and trends, in order to make informed decisions (American Marketing Association, n.d.). It helps to:

- Identify direct and indirect competitors and understand their strategies.
- Understand industry trends (e.g., growth of delivery, demand for healthy/sustainable options, preference for immersive experiences).
- Discover unexploited opportunities in the local market.
- Recognize potential external threats (new regulations, economic crises, demographic changes).

Main Methods:

- Market Research: Targeted collection of primary data (surveys, interviews, focus groups) or secondary data (analysis of existing data: industry reports, official statistics, online reviews, social media data). We will delve deeper into surveys later.
- SWOT Analysis: A widely used strategic tool for systematically evaluating internal and external factors that influence an organization (Humphrey, c. 1960–1970, attributed; see e.g., Grant, 2019).

2. SWOT Analysis: One Eye Inside and One Outside

SWOT analysis is a framework that helps organize the strategic assessment of a business, examining four key areas:

- S – Strengths: Internal attributes of the organization that give it a competitive advantage. These are factors that the business controls.
 - Gastronomic Example: Excellent location, chef with great reputation, experienced and loyal staff, exclusive recipes, strong local brand, loyal customer base.
- W – Weaknesses: Internal attributes of the organization that place it at a disadvantage compared to competitors. These are factors that the business controls and can work on.
 - Gastronomic Example: Limited space, obsolete equipment, high staff turnover, poor online visibility, limited menu, difficulty maintaining quality consistency.
- O – Opportunities: External factors to the organization, present in the market environment, that the business could exploit to its advantage. These are factors that the business does not directly control but can react to.
 - Gastronomic Example: Increased tourist flow in the area, growing demand for specific types of cuisine (e.g., vegan, ethnic), possibility of partnerships with local companies, tax breaks for new hires, availability of new delivery technologies.
- T – Threats: External factors to the organization that could put its success or profitability at risk. These are factors that the business does not control directly but must defend against or adapt to.
 - Gastronomic Example: Opening of new aggressive competitors, significant increase in raw material or energy costs, change in health regulations, viral negative reviews, economic crisis reducing consumer spending.

Example of SWOT Table (for an Illustrative Café/Bistro "Caffè Aurora")

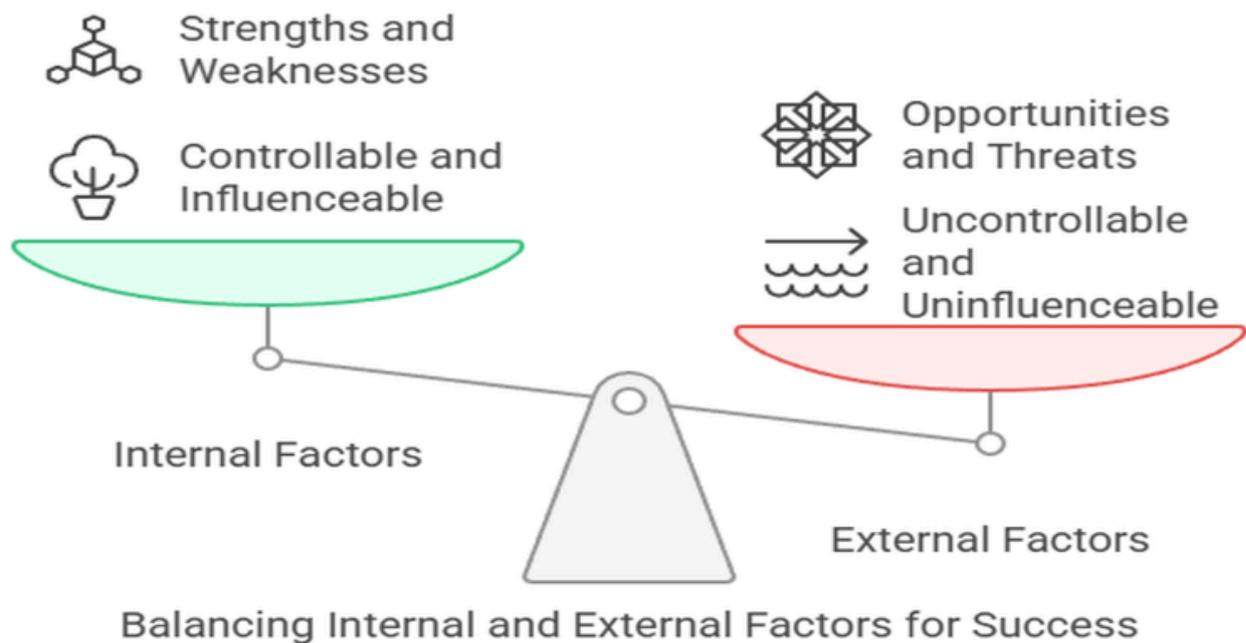
Internal Factors (Controllable)	External Factors (Not Controllable)
Strengths (S)	Opportunities (O)
- Location on pedestrian street	- Cultural events in the neighborhood
- High quality coffee (specialty)	- "Smart working" trend (day-time customers)[1]
- Relaxing atmosphere and refined design	- Growing demand for brunch/breakfasts
- Good online reviews	- Possibility of using delivery apps
Weaknesses (W)	Threats (T)
- Limited number of seats	- Strong competition from nearby chains
- Difficulty managing peak hours	- Increase in raw material costs (coffee)
- Absence of complete lunch menu	- Possible future restrictions (health)
- Little notoriety outside the neighborhood	- Difficulty finding qualified personnel

The situation of "Caffè Aurora" appears generally positive with good development potential. The strengths (location, coffee quality, atmosphere) are solid and well-aligned with market opportunities (smart working, delivery, brunch trend). However, there are critical issues to address: the limited number of seats and the absence of a complete lunch menu could limit revenue, especially during peak hours. Strong competition and rising costs represent concrete threats. Conclusions: Caffè Aurora has a good foundation for growth, but needs targeted strategies to optimize capacity, diversify the offering and consolidate its position in the local market.

[1] With the increase in remote work (smart working), many people work from home or outside the office and look for comfortable, welcoming places with Wi-Fi connection where they can spend part of their working day or leisure time. A café/bistro with a relaxing atmosphere and good service, like "Caffè Aurora," can attract these occasional workers who:

- Stop by for breakfast/lunch,
- Work on their computers for a couple of hours,
- Consume coffee, drinks and snacks throughout the day.

Therefore, the smart working trend represents an opportunity because it increases the potential number of daytime customers, especially during morning or afternoon hours, and encourages the café to become a "third place" (after home and office).



(Considerations for Tests): The distinction between internal/external and positive/negative is crucial but can generate confusion. Guiding students with concrete examples and group discussions is fundamental. The model provided is a useful simplification.

Exercise No. 03: Simulation – SWOT Analysis for a Local Bar

- Objective: Apply the SWOT framework to a real or realistic context.
- Instructions: Think of a bar/café you know well (or one typical of your local context in Italy, Poland, or Portugal). Working individually or in small groups, complete a SWOT table, identifying at least 2–3 specific elements for each quadrant.
- Discussion: Compare the analyses. What strategies could derive from this SWOT (e.g., using a strength to seize an opportunity, minimizing a weakness to avoid a threat)?

3. Know Your Customers: Market Segmentation

The market is not a single block; it is composed of individuals with different tastes, needs, budgets, and motivations. Market segmentation is the strategic process of dividing a broad and heterogeneous market into smaller, internally homogeneous subgroups (segments) for certain relevant characteristics (Wedel & Kamakura, 2000).

Why is segmentation fundamental in the gastronomic sector?

- **Effective Targeting:** Allows focusing resources (marketing, product, service) on the most attractive customer groups or those most in line with one's offer.
- **Personalized Communication:** Create messages and promotions that specifically resonate with the needs and desires of each segment (e.g., informal language for young people, focus on convenience for families).
- **Offer Optimization:** Adapt the menu, hours, atmosphere, services (e.g., play area, Wi-Fi, gluten-free options) to meet the specific needs of target segments.
- **Better Positioning:** Clearly define and communicate the unique identity and value of one's establishment compared to competitors, in the eyes of the chosen segments.

Common Bases for Segmentation (often combined with each other):

1. Demographic Segmentation: Divides the market based on variables such as:

- Age (e.g., Generation Z, Millennials, Baby Boomers)
- Gender
- Income (e.g., spending brackets)
- Occupation (e.g., students, employees, freelancers)
- Education level
- Family size and lifecycle (e.g., singles, young couples, families with young children/teenagers).
- Gastronomic Example: A fine-dining restaurant targets couples/professionals aged 35–60 with medium–high income; a sandwich shop near a school targets students (14–18 years) with limited budget.

2. Geographic Segmentation: Divides the market based on geographic location:

- Nation, Region (considering the cultural and culinary specificities of Poland, Italy, Portugal)
- City or center size
- Neighborhood (e.g., residential, commercial, tourist, university)
- Climate.
- Gastronomic Example: A restaurant in central Lisbon will have a high percentage of international tourists, while a trattoria in a town in Puglia will focus on residents and perhaps local food and wine tourism.

3. Behavioral Segmentation: Divides customers based on their knowledge, attitude, use, or response to the product/service:

- Usage Occasion: Business lunch, romantic dinner, aperitif with friends, birthday party, quick snack.
- Benefits Sought: Convenience, quality, speed, unique experience, status, health, low price.
- User Status: Non-user, ex-user, potential, new, regular.
- Usage Frequency: Occasional, medium, heavy user (loyal customer).
- Loyalty Level: Non-existent, medium, strong, absolute.
- Gastronomic Example: Loyal customers who come every week vs. customers who try the place only for a special occasion. Customers looking only for the lowest price vs. customers willing to pay more for organic ingredients.

4. Psychographic Segmentation: Divides customers based on lifestyle, personality, values, and interests:

- Lifestyle: Health-conscious, environmentalist, night owl, homebody, sporty, culturally active.
- Personality: Sociable, introverted, adventurous, traditionalist.
- Values: Attention to sustainability, pursuit of luxury, importance of tradition.
- Gastronomic Example: A place specializing in craft beers attracts enthusiasts and connoisseurs; a literary café attracts people interested in culture and tranquility.

(Note for the Educator): Emphasize that the most effective segmentation often combines different bases (e.g., "Young urban professionals (demo/geo), health-conscious (psycho), looking for a quick but quality lunch (behavioral)").

Example of Illustrated Segmentation for a Pizzeria

- Segment 1: Local Families
 - Characteristics: Residents in the neighborhood, young/school-age children, middle income.
 - Key Needs: Children's menu, affordable prices/family offers, informal and noise-tolerant environment, quick service, availability of high chairs/changing tables.

Segment 2: University Students

- Characteristics: 18–25 years old, limited budget, live near campus (if applicable), active on social media.
- Key Needs: Special offers/student discounts, abundant portions, evening/night opening hours, free Wi-Fi, informal environment for groups.

Segment 3: Couples for Informal Dinner

- Characteristics: 25–45 years old, residents or workers in the area, looking for a pleasant but not too formal/expensive evening.
- Key Needs: Welcoming atmosphere, good quality pizza (also with gourmet options), selection of drinks (beer/wine), attentive but not intrusive service, possibility to book.

Segment 4: Workers for Lunch Break

- Characteristics: Employees/professionals working nearby.
- Key Needs: Extremely quick service, fixed-price lunch menu or quick options (pizza by the slice), convenience.

CUSTOMER PERSONALIZATION CYCLE

The personalization process starts from segment identification through behavioral signals (timing, company, table choice).

Phase 1: Recognition – Staff identifies the customer type from the first contact

Phase 2: Adaptation – Targeted proposals (specific menus, promotions, services)

Phase 3: Personalized Experience – Customized ambiance, timing and services

Phase 4: Feedback and Loyalty – Collecting preferences for future visits

STRATEGY: A PIZZERIA FOR EVERYONE!

The key to success is adapting the offer in real time: digital menus with segmented proposals, recognizing needs, flexible ambiance and loyalty system that remembers individual preferences.



(Note): This is a generic example. Each pizzeria will have to identify its own most relevant segments based on the specific context.

Personalization is the watchword in gastronomic marketing for 2025, and everything revolves around data. With engaging loyalty programs and well-crafted surveys, restaurants collect information to offer something unique: tailored discounts or recommendations that reflect individual tastes. This not only makes customers happier, but drives them to return and spend more (Specialty Food Magazine, 2025). There's also a growing passion for foods that are good for you and textures that surprise: collagen drinks or light snacks under 100 calories are trending (Innova Market Insights, 2025), and the mix of crunchy and creamy adds that extra touch that appeals.

Leveraging these ideas helps restaurants stand out and create a special relationship with those who choose them.

Illustrative Case Study: Starbucks – Adapting offerings based on segmentation

Starbucks is an excellent example of how a company in the food & beverage sector uses segmentation to adapt its offerings and meet the needs of different customer groups.

1. Segmentation used: Starbucks does not target an undifferentiated market, but divides it using criteria:

- Demographic: Age (students, young professionals, adults), Income (offering both standard products and premium options).
- Geographic: Adapting store formats (small and quick in commuter areas, large and comfortable in residential neighborhoods or near universities).
- Psychographic: Lifestyle (busy people seeking convenience, people looking for a "third place" between home and work to relax or work).
- Behavioral: Usage occasion (quick morning coffee, afternoon break, business meeting), Loyalty level (rewarded through the app and Rewards program).

2. Adaptation of offerings (consequence of segmentation):

- Diversified products: Wide range of beverages (from basic coffee to elaborate seasonal creations like the Pumpkin Spice Latte), various food options (sweet, savory, healthy) to satisfy different tastes and consumption moments.
- Variable store formats: Small stores for takeaway (segment: commuters/hurried customers), large stores with Wi-Fi and seating (segment: students/workers/socializers), up to "Reserve Roastery" for a premium experience (segment: enthusiasts/high spenders).
- Personalized experience: The mobile app allows advance orders (convenience) and offers targeted promotions based on purchasing habits (loyalty).

This case demonstrates that thoroughly understanding your customer segments (who they are, what they want, how they behave) is the fundamental first step to then define an offering (products, services, experience) that is truly relevant and effective for each target group. Even a small food business can apply this principle by identifying its 2–3 key segments and considering small targeted adaptations to serve them best.

This version focuses on how Starbucks uses segmentation (Module 2 theme) to inform its decisions about offerings, setting the stage for Module 3 where positioning and sales strategies derived from these choices will be discussed in more depth.

Illustrative case study: Offer adaptation based on segmentation

(Note: This case is purely illustrative for educational purposes)

- Scenario: A traditional "Piekarnia-Cukiernia" (Bakery-Pastry Shop) in a Polish city notices a diverse clientele.
- Informal Analysis: By observing and talking with customers, they notice:
 - a. Elderly neighborhood residents: Morning customers, loyal, who buy fresh bread and traditional sweets. They seek quality and familiarity.
 - b. Workers: Pass by quickly before going to the office, seeking coffee and a quick sweet/savory product (drożdżówka, pączek, sandwich). They seek speed and convenience.
 - c. Young People/Students: Come in the afternoon, often in groups, looking for beverages (coffee, tea, juices) and more "modern" or "Instagrammable" sweets. They seek a place to sit, Wi-Fi, pleasant atmosphere.
- **Segmentation and Actions:**
 - Elderly segment: Maintaining the quality of traditional products, reliable morning opening hours, courteous and patient staff.
 - Worker segment: Creation of "breakfast combos" (coffee + sweet/savory) at a fixed price, optimization of the cash flow to reduce waiting times.
 - Young segment: Introduction of some more modern sweets (cupcakes, cheesecake), improvement of the lounge area with electrical outlets and free Wi-Fi, promotion on local social media (Instagram).

Trying to satisfy elderly people, workers and young people is possible, but requires a good balance. Elderly customers want continuity and reliable hours: they are loyal clients but with limited spending. Workers are the most profitable segment, but require speed and impeccable organization, otherwise they easily move elsewhere. Young people bring visibility and "trendiness," but are less loyal and more price-conscious, so the investment to attract them must be well-considered. Targeting all three groups together can dilute the venue's identity and make it difficult to excel at something.

It's better to choose a main target – for example workers, if the busy time is morning – and adapt to the others with small adjustments: tradition and courtesy for the elderly, some modern pastries and Wi-Fi for young people, without disrupting the organization.

- Illustrative result: Maintenance of traditional clientele, increase in average morning receipts, creation of a new customer flow in the afternoon, improving the utilization of the venue's capacity throughout the day.

This case demonstrates how any traditional business (not just bakeries) can thrive by adapting their offering to different types of customers. The key is observing and listening to customers to understand their specific needs based on timing, habits and preferences.

Lessons applicable everywhere:

- You don't need to change everything – just adapt parts of the offering
- Each segment has different needs – timing, products, services
- Investing in personalized experiences increases loyalty
- Technology (Wi-Fi, social media) helps attract young people
- Simple solutions (combos, common areas) can double the business

Success lies in balancing tradition and innovation to satisfy everyone!

(Considerations for Tests): Students must grasp how identifying the different needs of each group leads to different and targeted actions.

Exercise 04 – Segmentation Map for a Pizzeria

What you need to do: imagine (or choose) a pizzeria in your area. Think about who frequents it and divide customers into at least 3 different groups (segments).

How to do it: for each group, write:

1. Who they are – age, where they live, what job they do, lifestyle (demographic, geographic, behavioral, psychological criteria).
2. What they really want from a pizzeria – type of pizza/products, what price they're willing to pay, what type of service and atmosphere they prefer.

How to present it: you can make a well-organized list or, if you want to make it more visual, a mind map^[1] with branches for each segment.

[1] A mind map is a drawing that organizes ideas visually: in the center there's the main topic (e.g. the pizzeria) and around it branches extend for various themes or groups (e.g. families, young people, workers), with sub-branches that explain details like preferences, price or atmosphere. It's useful because it makes everything clear and immediate to understand.

Digital suggestion: you can use simple tools like Canva, Miro, MindMeister or even just PowerPoint or Word, using arrows and different colors for each segment.

Practical example (to help you understand):

Pizzeria "Bella Napoli"

1. Families with children segment

- Who they are: parents 30–45 years old, live near the pizzeria, looking for a quiet place.
- What they want: classic pizza, children's menu, affordable prices, comfortable space and fast service.

2. Young people and students segment

- Who they are: 16–25 years old, love going out in the evening, use social media a lot.
- What they want: special or large pizzas, promotions (e.g. 2x1), Wi-Fi and lively atmosphere for socializing.

3. Workers on lunch break segment

- Who they are: 25–50 years old, work in offices or nearby.
- What they want: quick slices or pizza by the slice, pizza+drink combos, fast service and punctual hours.

4. Collecting Primary Information: Listening to the Market

SWOT analysis and segmentation are more effective if based on real data, not just insights. Here are simple methods to collect information directly from the market (primary data):

- Brief and Targeted Surveys: Versatile tool for collecting opinions, preferences, demographic data. Can be paper (at the table, at the cash register) or digital (link via QR code, email, social media).
 - Recommended Digital Tool: Google Forms (forms.google.com) – Free, easy to use to create surveys, distribute them, and analyze results.
- Informal Interviews: Ask wait staff to exchange a few words with regular or new customers to collect spontaneous feedback.

- **Structured Analysis of Online Reviews:** Regularly read reviews on platforms such as Google Maps, TripAdvisor, TheFork, Pyszne.pl (Poland), Zomato (Portugal), etc., categorizing positive and negative comments to identify recurring themes.
- **Internal Data Analysis:** Examine point-of-sale (POS) system data to understand which dishes/beverages sell the most, peak hours, average receipt by customer type (if traceable).
- **Participant Observation:** Actively watch what happens in the establishment: who enters, at what time, what they order, how long they stay, how they interact.

(Note for the Educator): Reiterate the importance of respecting privacy (GDPR) in collecting and managing customer data. Explain how to formulate neutral and clear questions in surveys.

Exercise No. 5: Design a Brief Customer Survey

- **Objective:** Learn to formulate relevant questions for collecting data useful for segmentation and SWOT analysis.
- **Instructions:** Imagine having to better understand the customers of a restaurant of your choice (e.g., Italian trattoria, Portuguese fish restaurant, Polish milk bar). Using Google Forms (or writing on a document), create a survey of maximum 5–6 questions. Include questions that help understand:
 - Who they are (e.g., age range, visit frequency).
 - Why they choose that place (e.g., main reason for the visit).
 - What they appreciate most and least (for SWOT).
 - How they became aware of it (for marketing).
- **Sharing:** Present your survey to your peers/teacher. Are the questions clear? Do they allow collecting the desired information?

Digital Integration and Useful Tools

- **Google Forms:** For creating, distributing, and analyzing surveys (Source: Google).
- **Google Trends:** (trends.google.com) (Suggested Video Tutorial for the Online Platform) To explore search interest for specific terms (e.g., "restauracja wegańska Warszawa", "pizzeria senza glutine Roma", "marisqueira Lisboa") over time and by geographic area, useful for identifying market trends (Source: Google).

- Mental Mapping/Online Collaboration Tools: (e.g., Miro, Mural, Coggle) Useful for SWOT and segmentation brainstorming exercises.

Assessable Learning Outcomes

- Ability to complete a relevant and detailed SWOT matrix for a given case.
- Ability to identify and describe at least three distinct customer segments for a gastronomic business, justifying the choice of segmentation criteria.
- Ability to design a brief customer survey with clear questions aimed at collecting relevant data.

Final Considerations and Guidelines for Educators

- Cultural Adaptation: It is essential that examples, case studies (even if illustrative), and discussions reflect the specificities of the Polish, Italian, and Portuguese gastronomic markets.
- Data Interpretation: Provide guided examples on how to interpret the results of a simple survey or a SWOT analysis. Use simplified models if necessary.
- Alternative Approaches: For complex concepts, use techniques such as "think-pair-share" or work on mini-cases in small groups.
- Feedback: Integrate moments of self-assessment and peer feedback on exercises. Use online forums for asynchronous questions and answers.
- Flexibility: Ensure that activities are feasible both in the classroom (direct interaction) and online (digital tools, asynchronous discussions).

Module Conclusion

Understanding your market and your customers is the foundation on which to build every successful strategy in the gastronomic sector. SWOT analysis and segmentation are not theoretical exercises, but practical tools for making better decisions every day. The skills acquired in this module will allow you to make your future marketing actions more effective, especially digital ones.

Key Sources (for further reading) – module 2

- American Marketing Association (AMA). (n.d.). Definitions of Marketing. <https://www.ama.org/the-definition-of-marketing/>

- Grant, R. M. (2019). Contemporary Strategy Analysis (10th ed.). Wiley. (Reference text for strategic analysis, includes SWOT).
- Google. (n.d.). Google Forms: Online Form Creator. <https://www.google.com/forms/about/>
- Google. (n.d.). Google Trends. <https://trends.google.com/>
- Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2021). Principles of Marketing (18th ed.). Pearson. (Fundamental marketing text covering market analysis and segmentation).
- Wedel, M., & Kamakura, W. A. (2000). Market Segmentation: Conceptual and Methodological Foundations (2nd ed.). Kluwer Academic Publishers. (Advanced text on segmentation).

(Note: Specific sources on the local restaurant industry (Poland, Italy, Portugal) can be integrated by the educator or researched by students as part of additional activities).

Section 4: Positioning and Sales Strategies

Learning Objectives:

By the end of this module, students will be able to:

- Define the positioning of a gastronomic business (uniqueness, perceived value).
- Develop sales strategies (upselling, cross-selling, promotions) based on positioning.
- Apply digital marketing techniques (SEO, advertising, storytelling) to improve positioning.

1. The Concept of Positioning: Finding Your Space

- Definition: Positioning is the art of creating a distinctive and desirable image of your business in the minds of target customers, relative to competitors. It's the perception you build.
- Key Elements:
 - Uniqueness (USP – Unique Selling Proposition): What makes the offer special and different? (E.g., organic ingredients, secret recipe, unique atmosphere, personalized service).
 - Perceived Value: The balance between benefits received and cost incurred, as interpreted by the customer. Positioning strongly influences this value.

- Importance: Differentiation in crowded markets, attracting the right target, price justification, guiding business decisions (menu, design, communication).

2. The Concept of Positioning: Defining Your Strategic Space

- Definition: Positioning is the strategic process aimed at defining and communicating how you want your business (product, service, brand) to be perceived by your specific target audience, clearly distinguishing it from competitors in the market. It's not what you do to the product, but what you do to the mind of the potential customer.
- Key Elements:
 - Unique Value Proposition (USP – Unique Selling Proposition): It's the distinctive and relevant competitive advantage for the customer that only you can offer or that you offer in a superior way. It answers the question: "Why should a customer choose you instead of someone else?" Examples: proprietary technology, exceptional customer service, innovative business model (e.g., certified sustainability), unparalleled user experience.
 - Visual/Digital Support:
 - Venn Diagram: One circle represents "What customers want," another "What competitors offer," a third "What you offer." The area of overlap between "What customers want" and "What you offer," excluding "What competitors offer," highlights the potential USP.

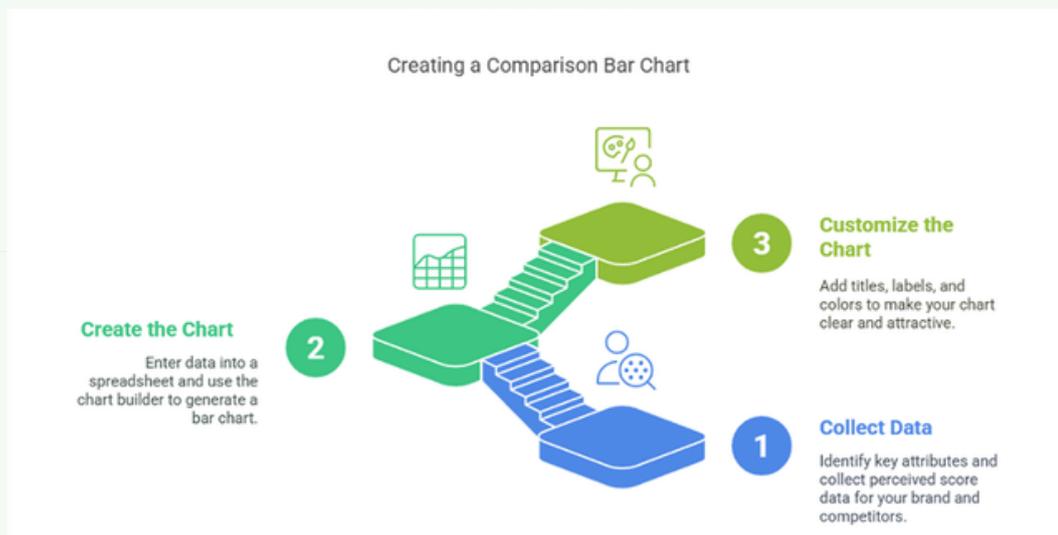


- Features/Benefits Comparison Table: Compare your key features and customer benefits against main competitors. (Can be created in Google Sheets, Excel, table in Slides/Docs).



- Perceived Value: It's the customer's overall judgment of the relationship between benefits received (quality, service, image, results) and costs incurred (price, time, effort). Strong positioning positively influences this perception, even justifying a premium price.
- Visual/Digital Support:

Comparative Graph: Shows your perceived "score" on different key attributes (e.g., quality, innovation, service)



- compared to competitors. (Can be created in Excel, Sheets, Slides).
- Customer Journey Map: Highlights touchpoints where value is perceived (or eroded) by the customer, connecting them to positioning levers.

A customer's journey in a restaurant: everything starts with online booking, where a simple and professional procedure immediately conveys an image of innovation. When they arrive, the welcome is fundamental: a smile or poorly managed waiting time can make a difference. At the table, recommending a wine with expertise is not just selling, but a way to position yourself as taste experts. At the end, saying goodbye with care and professionalism leaves a positive memory. Each step is linked to strategic levers such as service, quality, and customer care: if well managed, they create value; if neglected, they erode it. In short, every detail counts to create an unforgettable experience!



- Strategic Importance: It's crucial for:
 - Differentiation: Standing out in saturated markets.
 - Focus: Attracting and retaining the most profitable customer segment.
 - Pricing Power: Maintaining prices in line with the value offered.
 - Coherence: Guiding operational decisions (marketing, product, sales, communication) toward a common goal.

3. Analysis and Selection of Strategic Positioning

- Competitive Analysis: Systematic mapping of competitors (direct, indirect, potential entrants). Analysis of their:
 - Declared and perceived positioning.

- Strengths and weaknesses (SWOT Analysis).
- Pricing strategies and target reference.
- Market shares and performance.

To achieve a truly effective competitive analysis, it's essential to start with an accurate mapping of competitors and study them under various strategic aspects. Below I'll explain the main steps, including the explanation of the concept of market share and its use to evaluate a company's strength in the market.

1. Identify and map competitors The first step consists of dividing competitors into categories:

- Direct competitors: offer products or services similar to yours and target the same audience.
- Indirect competitors: propose different solutions but that satisfy the same customer needs.
- Potential competitors: companies that could enter the market, such as innovative startups or businesses from related sectors. Knowing who they are and how they operate is the foundation for any competitive strategy.

2. Analyze competitors in detail Once identified, it's useful to analyze them on different levels:

Positioning: declared vs perceived

- Declared: the image they officially communicate (advertising messages, branding, storytelling).
- Perceived: the actual reputation they have in customers' eyes (reviews, feedback, quality/price perception).

Strengths and weaknesses (SWOT Analysis)

- Strengths: economic resources, brand recognition, distribution channels, capacity to innovate.
- Weaknesses: operational problems, low perceived quality, poor visibility.
- Opportunities: favorable market trends, still unexplored niches.
- Threats: new entrants, regulatory changes, economic instability.

Competitor SWOT Matrix: A matrix for each key competitor.



Pricing strategies and target

Understanding whether they focus on premium prices, low-cost or value-for-money and knowing their target (age, income, lifestyle, purchasing habits) helps understand how to position yourself competitively.

Market shares and performance

Market share is the percentage of a company's sales compared to the total market. It's a key indicator of its strength and penetration capacity.

- How is it calculated? If the market is worth 1 billion euros and a company generates 100 million in revenue, its share is 10%.
- Why is it important? It indicates the real weight of a company compared to competitors and helps understand who dominates the sector.
- Types of share:
 - By volume (units sold).
 - By value (revenue).
 - Relative (compared to the market leader).

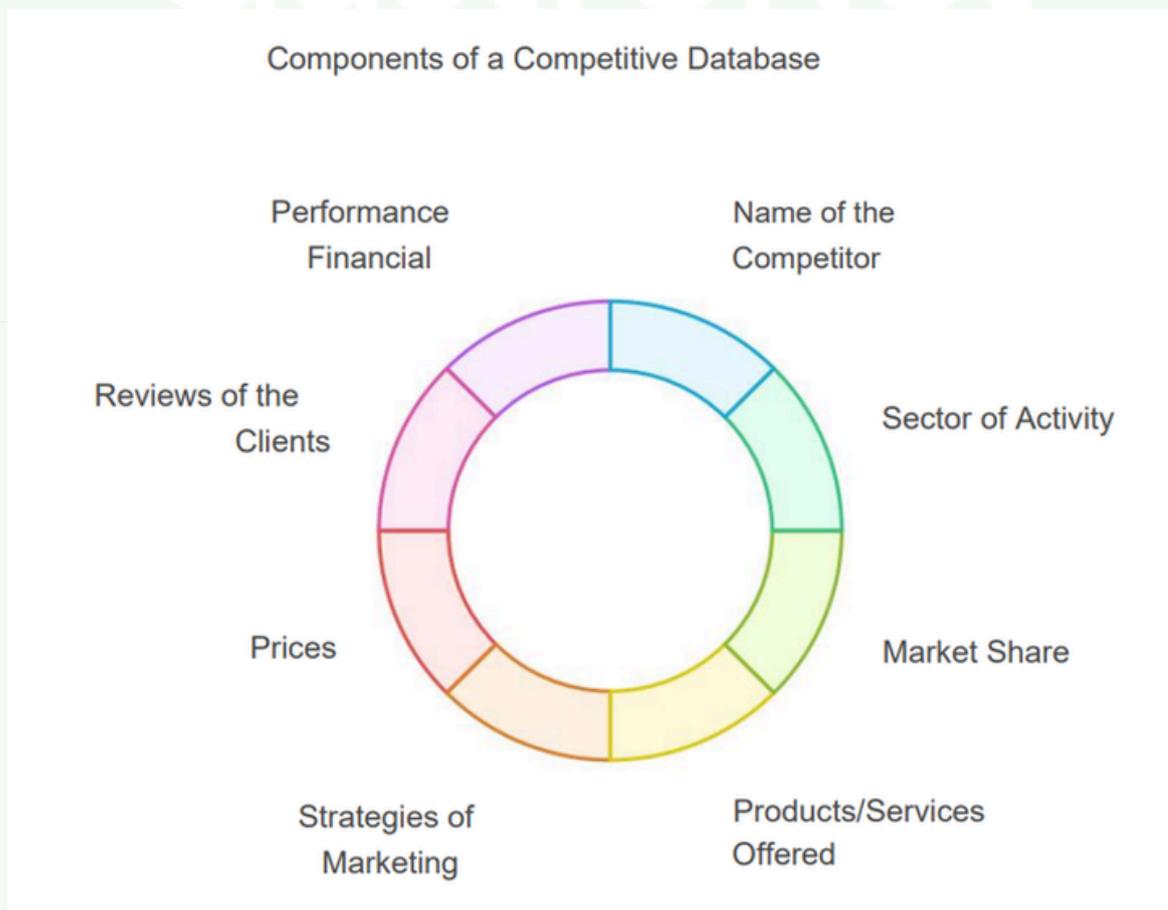
Practical example

Company	Turnover (€)	Market share
Total market	1,000,000,000	100%
Company A	150,000,000	15%
Company B	100,000,000	10%
Company C	75,000,000	7,50%

Market share, together with other indicators such as growth, profitability and brand loyalty, helps to precisely define a company's competitive position. By analyzing this data systematically, you obtain a complete picture that guides strategic decisions.

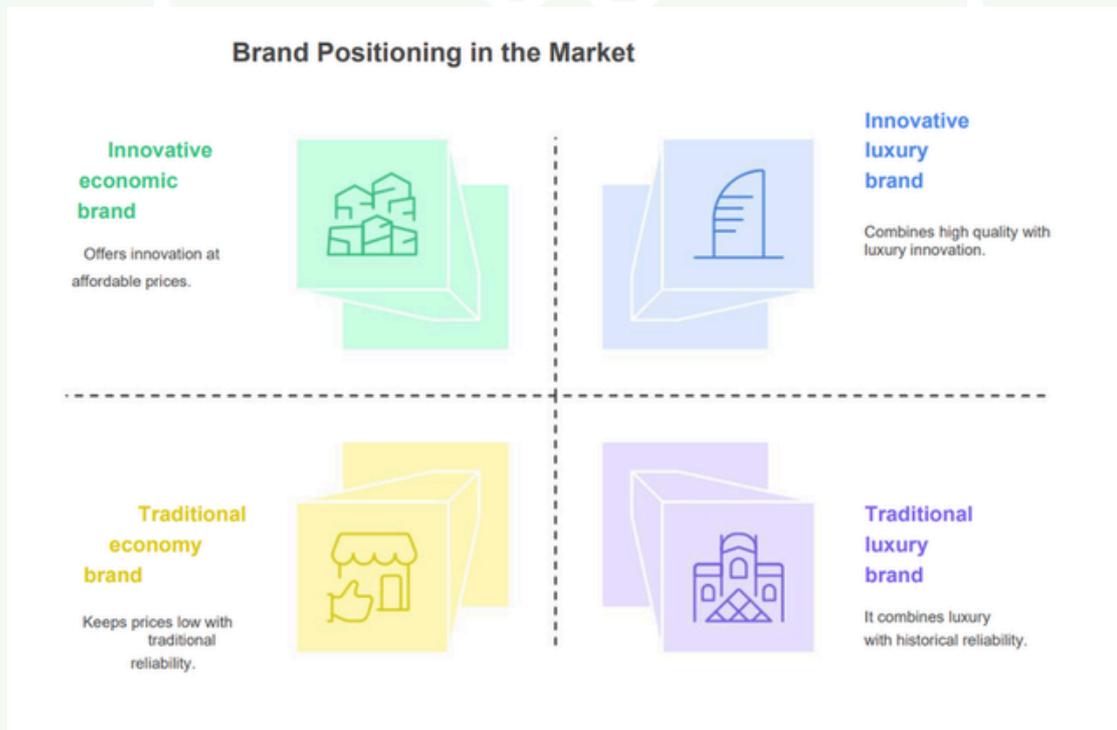
Competitor Database: A structured spreadsheet to collect and compare key data on competitors in a systematic way.

Competitor Database: A structured spreadsheet to systematically collect and compare key data on competitors.



• Key Tool: Perceptual Positioning Map

- What it is: A Cartesian diagram that visualizes the perception of brands/products in the market along two axes representing key attributes for the customer (e.g., Price vs. Quality; Innovation vs. Tradition; Performance vs. Ease of use; Niche vs. Mass Market).

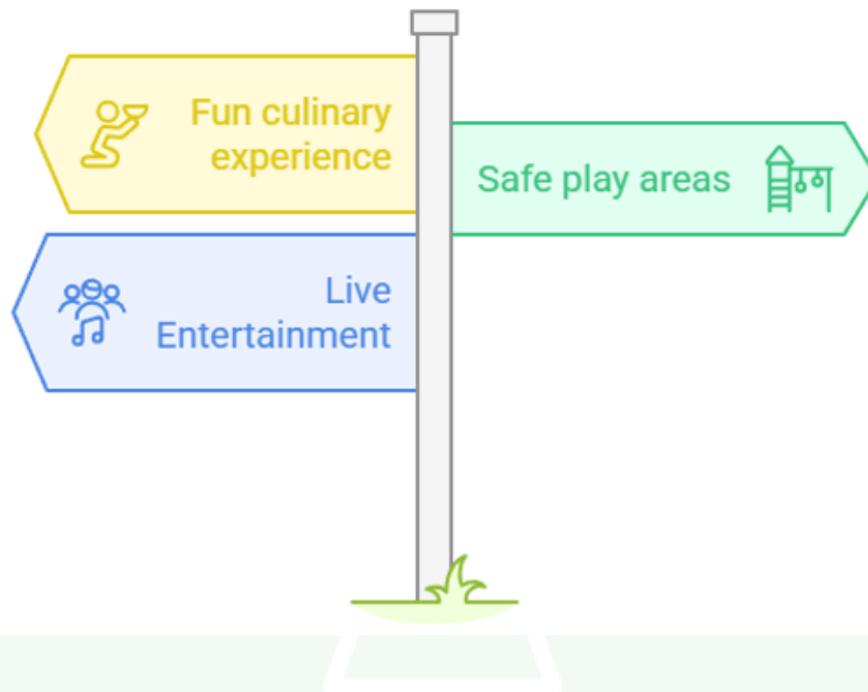


- Objective: Identify competitive clusters, free market spaces ("blue oceans"), areas of overlap, and opportunities to reposition or differentiate.

Defining Your Positioning Identity

1. Target Audience: Clearly identify your ideal customer, creating one or more personas.
2. USP (Unique Selling Proposition): Choose your distinctive element based on what makes you unique compared to competitors and what is relevant to the target.
3. Positioning Statement: Internal formula that guides all strategies. Example: For [target], [brand/product] is [category] that offers [key benefit] thanks to [credible reason].

Should we have dinner at the "happy Family " Restaurant?



Case Study Summary: "Mar Sustentável"

- Positioning Objective: To be recognized as the reference restaurant in Lisbon for a high-quality, authentic, and demonstrably sustainable seafood culinary experience, aimed at a conscious audience willing to pay a premium price.

Key Strategic Levers:

- Exclusive sourcing from certified sustainable fishing.
- Dynamic menu based on seasonality and local availability.
- Active food waste reduction programs.
- Use of eco-compatible materials in the premises.
- Transparent communication (storytelling about the supply chain, partnerships with NGOs).

Expected Results (Related to Positioning): Creation of a strong distinctive brand identity, attraction of the specific target, justification of the premium price, loyalty based on shared values.

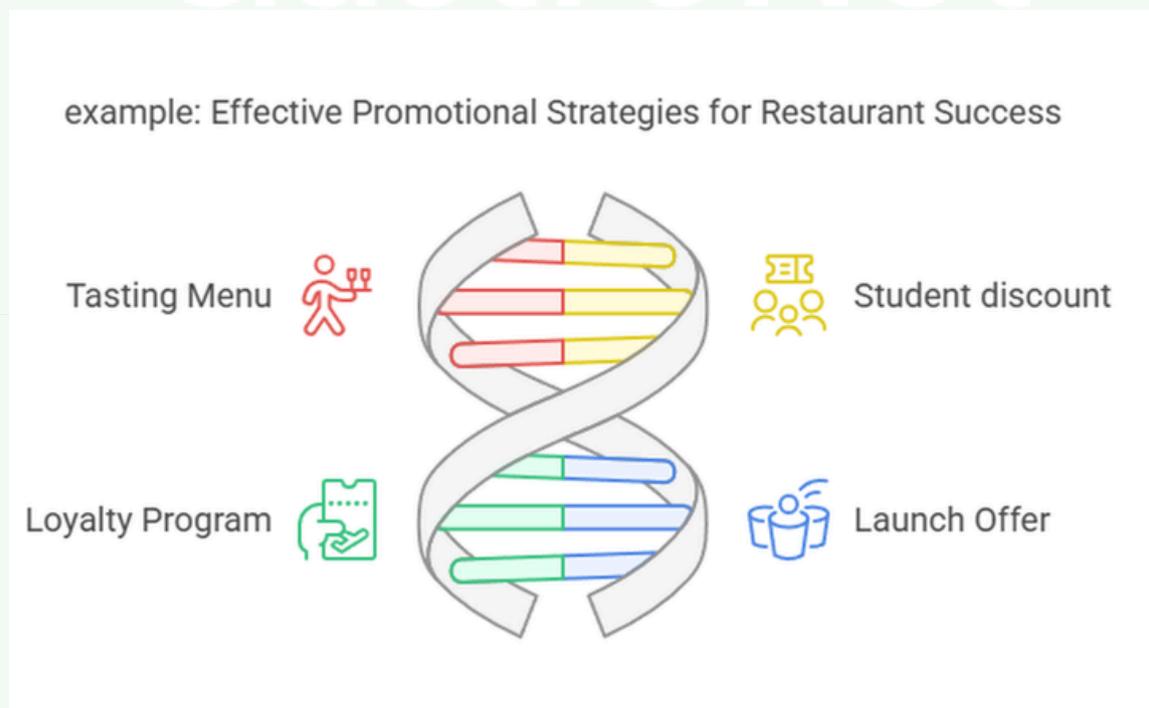
Visual/Digital Support:

- One-Page Strategy Summary (Slide/PDF): A document summarizing Target, USP, Positioning Statement, Key Levers, and expected KPIs.

Infographic (Canva, Piktochart): Visualize the impact of sustainability (e.g., kg of plastic saved, support for local fishermen) to communicate the "Reason Why."

4. From Theory to Practice: Coherent Sales Strategies

- Fundamental Connection: Every sales action must reinforce the chosen positioning. Style, proposals, promotions must be consistent with the image you want to project (luxury vs. convenience; tradition vs. innovation).
- Key Sales Techniques:
 - Upselling: Proposing a higher value option. Gastro Example: Suggesting the "Reserve" wine or the "premium" ingredient.
 - Cross-selling: Offering complementary products. Gastro Example: Recommending a specific side dish, a dessert paired with coffee, an aperitif.
 - Targeted Promotions: Special offers aligned with positioning and target. Gastro Examples: Tasting menu (Gourmet positioning), Student discount (Convenience positioning/Target), Loyalty program (Community positioning), New dish launch offer (Novelty positioning).



[Educator Guidelines]: Use role-playing to simulate up-selling (proposing a superior product) and cross-selling (suggesting complementary products) in a manner appropriate to the cultural context and positioning of the establishment.

5. Enhancing Positioning with Digital Marketing

Digital tools are essential for communicating uniqueness, reaching the target, and supporting sales.

- Local SEO (Search Engine Optimization): Being found on Google/Maps.
 - Actions: Keywords relevant to positioning (on the website, Google Business Profile, online menu), review management, updated information.
- Targeted Online Ads (E.g., Meta Ads – Facebook/Instagram):
 - Actions: Define the target (interests, demographics, geography), create visually appealing ads consistent with the brand, use clear messages with CTA (call to action).
 - [Digital Integration]: Video tutorial on creating basic Meta Ads campaign for restaurants.
- Digital Storytelling: Creating emotional connection.
 - Actions: Tell the story/values (website, social), show "behind the scenes," present staff/suppliers, explain the origin of dishes.

Integrated Practical Exercises

- **Exercise no. 5: Create a Promotional Campaign for a New Menu**
 - Task: Define objective, target, offer, communication channels for a new menu (e.g., autumn menu), ensuring consistency with an assigned positioning (e.g., "Traditional Trattoria").
 - Mode: Group (in-person/online).
- **Exercise no. 6: Creation of a Sponsored Post (Social Media)**
 - Task: Develop text and visual concept for a sponsored post (FB/IG) related to the previous promotion, specifying the ad target.
 - Mode: Individual/Pairs.
 - [Test Considerations]: Evaluate consistency between positioning, advertising message, target, and proposed visual.
- **Exercise no. 7: Putting It All Together**
 - Simulation: Design Special Offer for Specific Segment

- Scenario: Given a restaurant profile (e.g., "Aperitif bar with local products") and a target segment to attract (e.g., "Foodie tourists").
- Task:
 - 1.Reaffirm the establishment's positioning.
 - 2.Create a targeted special offer (e.g., "Territorial Tasting Aperitif").
 - 3.Outline a sales strategy with at least two techniques (e.g., cross-sell local products, "bring a friend" promo).
 - 4.Describe communication through at least one digital tool (e.g., geo-located IG post, FB story).
- Mode: Group with presentation.
- [Digital Integration]: Option to use online simulator (if available) or guided spreadsheet to test impact of strategies.

Module Conclusions

Correctly defining the positioning of a gastronomic enterprise is the foundation upon which to build every effective sales strategy. As Kotler and Keller emphasize in Marketing Management and Ries and Trout in the classic Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind, the ability to be perceived as unique in the customer's mind represents the true competitive advantage. For a restaurant or gastronomic enterprise, this means clarifying one's distinctive value, communicating it in a coherent and recognizable way.

Once positioning is defined, sales strategies – from upselling to cross-selling, up to targeted promotions – become tools to enhance the customer experience and strengthen the relationship with them. The objective is not only to increase revenue, but to build trust and continuity over time.

Digital marketing offers extraordinary opportunities to amplify positioning: courses and resources like those from HubSpot Academy or Google Digital Training allow for deepening SEO, social media marketing and content strategy, indispensable skills for those operating in the sector. For those working with strong territorial roots, knowledge of tools like Google Business Profile, supported by specialized guides like those from Moz Local and SEMrush, is fundamental for improving local visibility and intercepting new customers.

Social media also play a strategic role: the guidelines of Meta Business Suite and its official tutorials show how to structure effective campaigns on Facebook and Instagram, essential for reaching a targeted audience.

Finally, sustainable success is not measured only in terms of sales, but also in the ability to align with shared trends and values. In this sense, examples and studies from realities like Food for Soul or initiatives linked to Slow Food offer valuable insights for those who wish to build an enterprise that combines gastronomic quality, social responsibility and environmental attention.

Integrating these elements, supporting oneself with reliable market data (for example FIPE reports, ISTAT statistics or analyses from Deloitte and Nielsen), means not only strengthening positioning, but also making strategic decisions based on solid information. In summary, those who can combine clear positioning, coherent sales strategies and intelligent use of digital marketing, supported by authentic data and values, will not only improve their commercial performance, but will become a reference point in the contemporary gastronomic landscape.

Sources and Citations (Examples and Recommended Resources)- module 3

- **Fundamental Marketing and Positioning Concepts:**

- Kotler, P., & Keller, K. L. (Recent editions). Marketing Management. Pearson. (Consult the most updated edition available).
- Ries, A., & Trout, J. (Recent editions). Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind. McGraw-Hill.

- **Digital Marketing and Practical Resources:**

- HubSpot Academy: Free courses and blog on Inbound Marketing, Social Media Marketing, Content Marketing. (<https://academy.hubspot.com/>)
- Google Digital Training (formerly Google Garage): Courses on digital marketing, SEO, SEM. (<https://learndigital.withgoogle.com/digitaltraining>)

- **Local SEO:**

- Official guide to Google Business Profile (formerly Google My Business): (<https://support.google.com/business/>)
- Blogs and guides from specialized resources such as Moz Local (<https://moz.com/learn/local>) or SEMrush Blog (<https://www.semrush.com/blog/category/local-seo/>).

- Social Media Marketing (Meta Ads):
 - Meta Business Suite and Business Help Center: Official guides, tutorials, and best practices for Facebook and Instagram Ads. (<https://www.facebook.com/business/>)
- Sustainable Restoration (Inspiration for Case Study):
 - Articles and reports from industry associations (e.g., Food for Soul, Slow Food) or specialized publications on sustainable restaurants (consult academic databases or updated industry magazines).
- Market Data and Research:
 - Specific industry reports for partner countries (Italy, Poland, Portugal) from sources such as trade associations (e.g., FIPE in Italy), national statistical institutes (e.g., ISTAT), consulting firms (e.g., Deloitte, Nielsen).

Section 5: Digital Marketing Advanced and Results Measurement

Learning Objectives

Let's learn how to design a complete digital marketing campaign, use tools to measure the effectiveness of our actions, and adapt strategies based on feedback and collected data. The goal is to enable you to make the most of digital potential to promote gastronomic products and services effectively and measurably.

Contents

1. Creating Digital Campaigns

Digital marketing isn't simply a sum of social media posts or promotional emails: it's a strategic ecosystem where creativity, planning, and data analysis work together to generate value. For the gastronomic sector, digital channels become powerful narrative and commercial tools capable of attracting, engaging, and retaining customers.

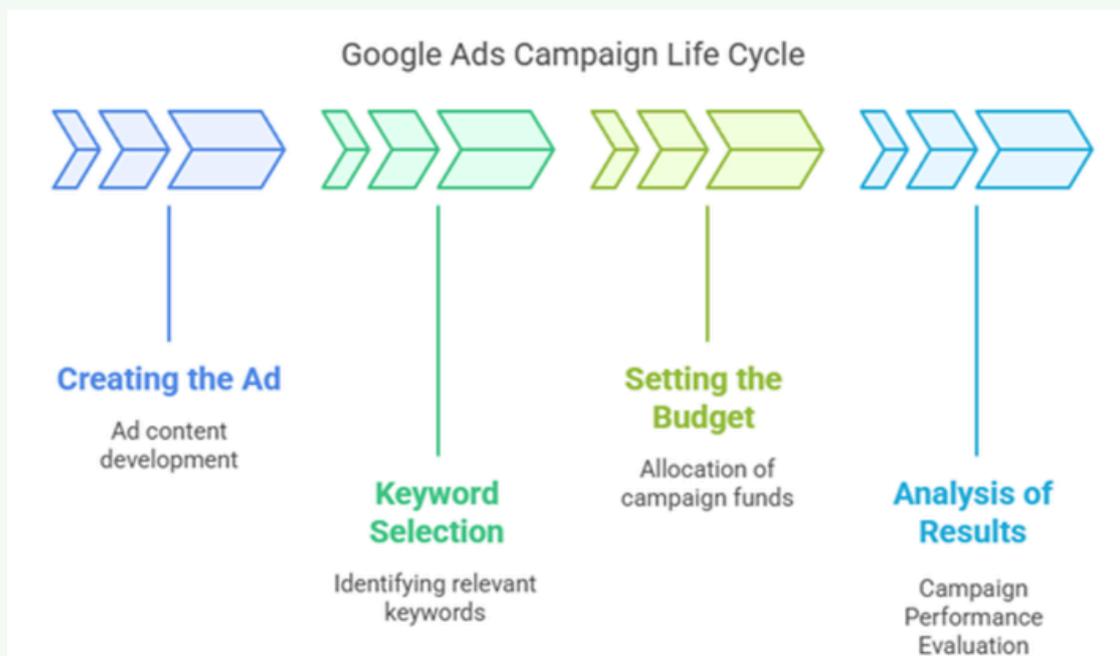
- Social Media: Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok offer an ideal visual stage to communicate the identity of an establishment. It's not just about photos, but shared experiences: short videos, live streams from the kitchen, interactive quizzes, and user-generated content can strengthen relationships with the community. Tools like Instagram Reels or collaborations with local food influencers represent high-impact engagement levers.

- Email Marketing: Modern newsletters are no longer generic, but intelligent. Thanks to automation and segmentation, it's possible to send tailored content based on interests, visit frequency, or customer purchasing behavior. Personalized, timely, and well-designed communication can transform into a long-term loyalty tool. [<https://mailchimp.com/it/resources/email-marketing-field-guide/>]



In the context of advanced digital marketing, email marketing proves to be one of the most effective tools in terms of ROI (Return on Investment). According to recent industry studies, such as those published by the Data & Marketing Association (DMA) in 2019, each euro invested in email campaigns can generate up to 42 euros in economic return. This channel, if well designed, allows direct, personalized, and measurable communication with customers, transforming simple readers into loyal customers and brand ambassadors.

Google Ads and geolocated advertising: Campaigns on Google – but also on YouTube or Google Maps – allow you to intercept local demand in real time. With smart strategies like retargeting or promoting seasonal menus in the vicinity, it's possible to reach the right customer at the right time.



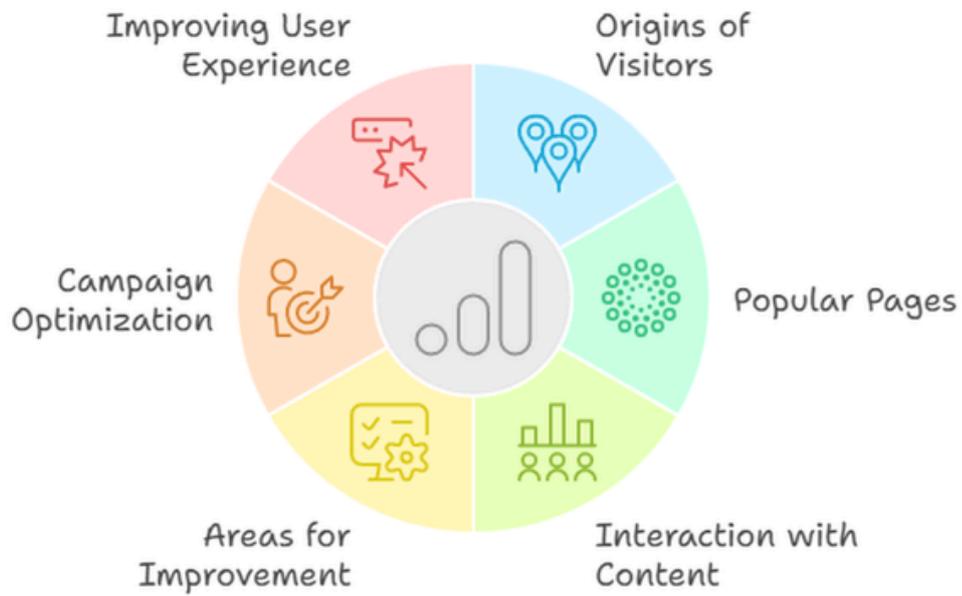
The graph above illustrates the lifecycle of a Google Ads campaign. It begins with ad creation, follows with keyword selection, budget setting, and ends with results analysis. Each phase is crucial for optimizing performance and maximizing return on investment.

2. Analysis Tools

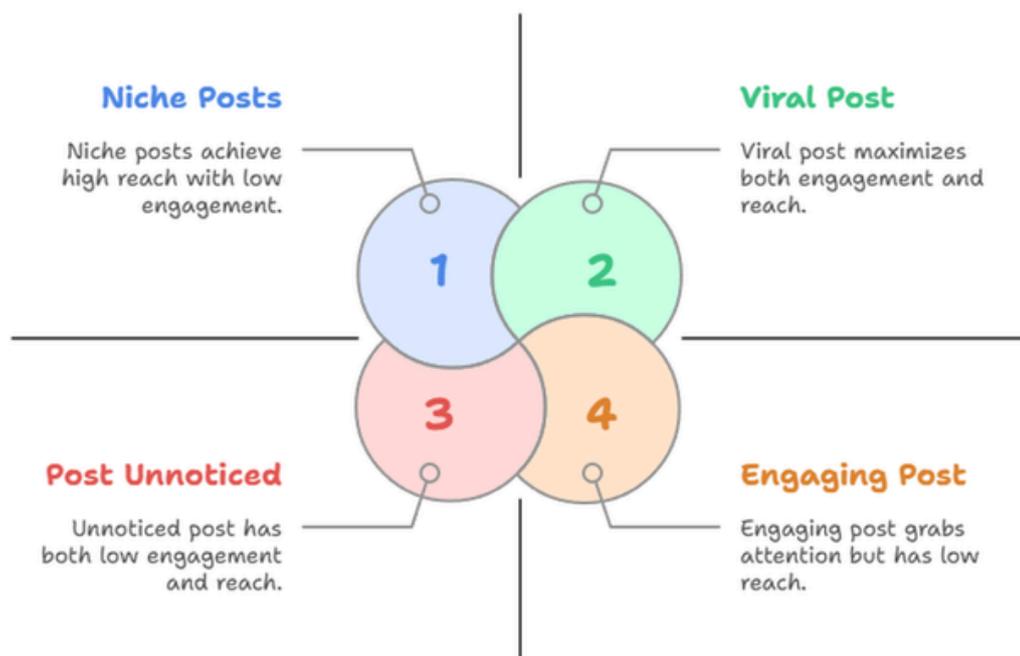
To understand if your campaigns are working, you need data. Here are two fundamental tools:

1. **Google Analytics:** This is a free tool that allows you to monitor traffic on your website. With this tool, you can discover where your visitors come from, which pages attract their interest most, and how they interact with your content. The information provided by Google Analytics is valuable for identifying areas that work well and those that need improvement. Using this data, you can optimize your campaigns and improve the user experience on your site.
2. **Social Media Insights:** Each social media platform offers internal analytics tools, such as Instagram Insights and Facebook Analytics, which provide detailed data on your posts' performance. These tools show you how many users have viewed your content, how many have interacted with it, and which types of posts have been most successful. By analyzing this data, you can better understand your audience's behavior and adapt your content strategies to maximize engagement and reach.

Unlocking the Potential of Google Analytics



Social Media Post Performance Analysis



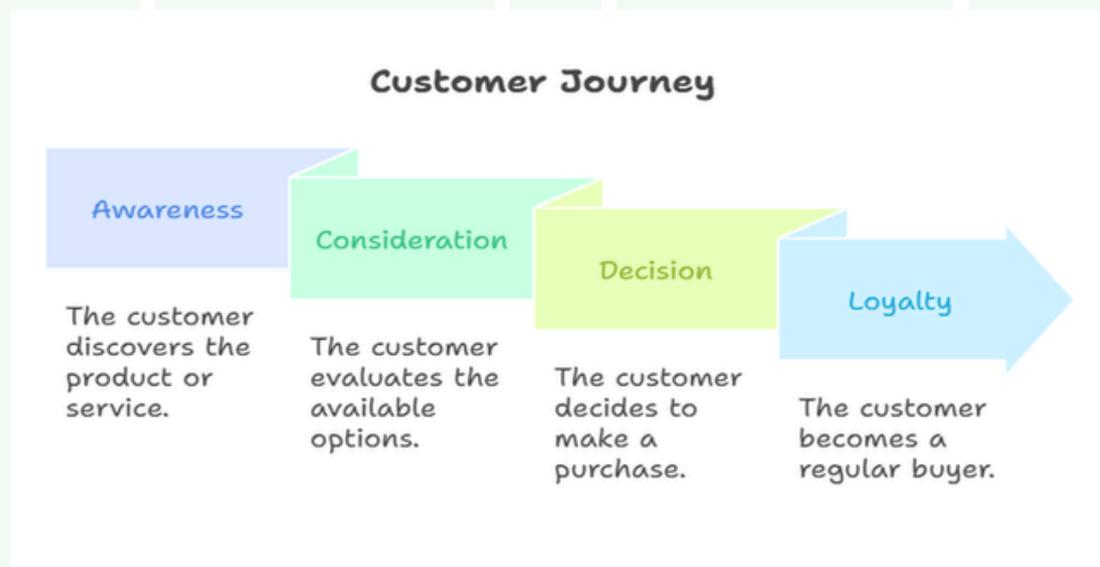
Strategy Optimization

Data is valuable, but only if you use it to improve. For example, if you notice that video posts get more likes than static images, focus more on videos.

Or, if a particular email offer has led to many bookings, repeat it in the future.

The customer journey, from first contact to conversion. The main phases include:

- 1.Awareness: The customer discovers the product or service.
- 2.Consideration: The customer evaluates available options.
- 3.Decision: The customer decides to make a purchase.
- 4.Loyalty: The customer becomes a regular buyer.



Practical Examples

- Guided Case Study: "Gelateria Dolce Sogno" and Email Marketing
 - Situation: A small Italian artisanal ice cream shop with a good product but seasonal sales and little customer loyalty.
 - Action: They began collecting customer email addresses in-store (offering a small discount on the next purchase in exchange for newsletter subscription). They sent a simple but curated weekly newsletter: presentation of the "flavor of the week," a brief story about an ingredient's origin, and an exclusive promotion for subscribers (e.g., "Bring this email and get a €3 cone for the price of a €2.50 one").
 - Result: Within 6 months, they built a list of over 800 loyal contacts. Email promotions led to a significant increase in weekday visits and, thanks to targeted family-format offers, almost tripled takeaway tub sales compared to the previous year.
 - Measurement: They tracked how many customers used the email discount code and monitored the increase in tub sales.

• Exercise No. 8: Creating a Social Campaign for an Event

- Objective: Promote a "Paella & Sangria Evening" at a restaurant (goal: 40 reservations).
- Steps (to do together or as an individual exercise):
 - i. Target: Who do we want to reach? (E.g., Adults 25–55 years, interested in Spanish cuisine, residents/workers within 15km).
 - ii. Message & Creativity: What do we write? What photos/videos do we use? (E.g., Text: "Craving Spain? Join us Thursday evening for our Paella & Sangria Night! Fixed menu at €25. Book your table!" + Inviting photo of paella and sangria).
 - iii. Call to Action: What do we want them to do? (E.g., "Book Now" button that leads to the online booking form or phone number).
 - iv. Channel and Budget (Hypothesis): Campaign on Facebook and Instagram Ads, with a budget of €50 for 5 days, showing the ad to the defined target.
 - v. Measurement (What we would look at afterward): Number of clicks on the link, cost per click, number of generated reservations tracked (asking by phone or in the online form "How did you find us?").
- **Exercise No. 9:** Creating a Newsletter for a Restaurant Write a newsletter for an imaginary restaurant promoting a seasonal menu. Remember to include an attractive subject line, clean design, and a clear call-to-action (e.g., "Book now!").

Notes on Case Studies

Restaurant "La Trattoria del Sole" An Italian restaurant in Berlin increased reservations by 40% thanks to an Instagram campaign based on stories and reels. They collaborated with local influencers and created content that showed not only the food but also the atmosphere of the place.

Food Truck "Street Pasta" A fresh pasta food truck used Google Ads to attract customers during city events. Investing only €200 per month, they achieved an ROI of 500%.

Analysis of data consistency in the two case studies

The performance trend obtained by "La Trattoria del Sole" appears entirely consistent with the strategies adopted.

The 40% increase in reservations, attributed to an Instagram campaign based on Stories and Reels, is plausible when considering the high visual power of this channel for the restaurant sector. Content that combines well-presented dishes and glimpses of the local atmosphere perfectly exploits the mechanism of emotional storytelling, while collaboration with local influencers guarantees a very high level of credibility and engagement, especially in dynamic and international cities like Berlin.

The data from the food truck "Street Pasta" also appears convincing. A return on investment (ROI) of 500% which means a profit of €1,000 on an investment of €200 per month in Google Ads is realistic for this type of activity, especially during city events that concentrate a large number of potential customers in a restricted area. The use of geo-targeting, in fact, allows intercepting the audience precisely when they are most inclined to purchase, keeping promotion costs to a minimum, an essential characteristic for small mobile realities like food trucks.

Overall, both cases demonstrate strategic, numerical and operational consistency: the chosen channels are perfectly aligned with the objectives, the reported performance falls within realistic scenarios and the tactics used are appropriate for the type of activity.

This module has provided a comprehensive and targeted overview of the skills necessary to design and manage digital campaigns in the gastronomic sector. We have seen not only how to build effective strategies, but also how to measure results and adapt them based on data, transforming every action into a concrete growth opportunity.

The concepts covered – from the advanced use of Google Ads and Analytics (Google Skillshop) to Facebook and Instagram Ads strategies (Meta Blueprint), up to email and content marketing techniques (HubSpot Academy) – have been selected specifically to respond to the needs of those operating in this market. Integration with resources like Think with Google and specialized blogs also ensures an updated and practical perspective, indispensable for staying competitive.

In summary, what has been learned in this module represents a solid and complete foundation for the advanced level, because it combines strategic vision and analytical capability: two elements that are now essential for transforming digital marketing into a true instrument of success.

Sources and Useful Resources – Section 4

For those who want to delve deeper, here are reliable resources (often in English, but essential):

1. Google Skillshop: Official free courses on Google Ads and Google Analytics.
 - Link: <https://skillshop.withgoogle.com/>
2. Meta Blueprint: Official free courses on marketing and advertising on Facebook and Instagram.
 - Link: <https://www.facebook.com/business/learn>
3. HubSpot Academy: Free courses on Email Marketing, Social Media, Content Marketing. Very practical.
 - Link: <https://academy.hubspot.com/>
4. Think with Google Italy Blog: Google data and insights on the Italian market.
 - Link: <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/it-it/>
5. Specific blogs for restaurants (to search for): E.g., TheFork Manager Blog, blogs of management systems for restaurants (they often have marketing sections).
6. Google Analytics Official Guide – <https://analytics.google.com>

Disclaimer

The activities, products and information presented in this analysis reflect the author's views only. The European Commission is not responsible for any use that may be made of the information contained therein.

Artificial intelligence tools were used in the drafting process to support content elaboration, synthesis, and structuring, in line with standards of accuracy, inclusiveness, and up-to-date information.

6. Bibliography

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3. HubSpot Academy: Free courses on Email Marketing, Social Media, Content Marketing. Very practical.
 - Link: <https://academy.hubspot.com/>
4. Think with Google Italy Blog: Google data and insights on the Italian market.
 - Link: <https://www.thinkwithgoogle.com/intl/it-it/>
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CHAPTER 5



Social Media in Gastronomy

**Training Script:
Enhancing VET
Students'
Competencies in
Gastronomy
Sector
GastroNet –
Vocational
Education and
Training**

By Zakład Doskonalenia Zawodowego w Kielcach, Poland

Social Media in Gastronomy



Enhancing VET Students' Competencies in Gastronomy Sector.

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Description.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide students studying for a vocational education in the restaurant industry with practical knowledge and skills in utilizing social media. It demonstrates how platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok can support restaurant promotion, customer communication, brand building, and sales growth. Students will learn about the specifics of the Polish, Italian, and Portuguese markets, which will allow them to understand cultural differences and consumer preferences. The skills they acquire will enable future food service professionals to create engaging content, plan marketing campaigns, analyze the effects of online activities, and effectively communicate with customers in a dynamic digital environment.

The chapter contains four main thematic areas that support the development of students' competences:

1. The importance of social media in gastronomy and communication strategies – the role of digital channels in promoting venues, building brands, engaging customers and creating visual content and storytelling.
2. Characteristics of marketing platforms and tools– the specifics of Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok, running advertising campaigns, analyzing results and the effectiveness of online activities.
3. National, European markets and cultural perspectives– practical examples of using social media in Poland, Italy and Portugal, taking into account cultural differences and consumer preferences.
4. Practical application of knowledge and case studies– implementing educational content through real-life examples from the catering industry, developing students' practical competences and building experience in the digital environment.

The unit has been designed with flexible learning in mind, supporting both in-person and digital learning. Particular emphasis is placed on active learning methods, collaboration, and an open and accessible approach that reflects the multicultural and interdisciplinary nature of contemporary gastronomy.

1. Introduction.

Social media is currently one of the most important communication channels for the restaurant industry. Thanks to them, establishments can not only promote their menus and special offers, but also build relationships with customers, shape the brand image and respond to feedback.

In times when consumers often make culinary choices based on recommendations online, presence on social media becomes crucial for success.

In Poland, Italy, and Portugal, social media platforms play a significant role in shaping culinary trends and promoting local gastronomy. Each country has its own unique characteristics – in Poland, dynamic advertising dominates, in Italy, tradition and authenticity are emphasized, and in Portugal, gastronomy is combined with tourism and lifestyle.

For the restaurant industry, social media is primarily a visual tool. Customers "eat with their eyes," so good photos, short videos, and dish preparation videos have a huge impact on purchasing decisions. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok allow you to reach both local guests and tourists, and thanks to the ability to target ads, they can also go specific age groups or interests.

Food service professionals' knowledge and skills regarding the role of media are crucial, as media—both traditional and digital—have a significant impact on how the food service industry is perceived, how services are promoted, and how relationships with customers are fostered. Here are some key areas where food service professionals should possess knowledge and skills:

1. Understanding the role of the media in promoting gastronomy.

- Traditional media (TV, radio, press): Food service workers should know how these media can promote the restaurant, for example through advertisements, press articles or interviews.
- Digital media (social media, blogs, websites): Knowledge of social media platforms (Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn) and the ability to create engaging visual and textual content are essential. This includes not only promotion but also interaction with clients.

- Influencer marketing: Understanding collaboration with influencers and bloggers who can impact consumer purchasing decisions.

2. Online image management

- Building a positive image: Good social media management, appropriate response to comments and reviews, online reputation management (including portals such as TripAdvisor or Google Reviews).
- Crisis situations in the media: How to respond to crises, e.g. negative reviews, misunderstandings with customers in the media, use of crisis communication.

3. Communication with customers

- Direct Marketing: Ability to communicate effectively with customers via newsletters, emails or text messages.
- Customer feedback management: Using the media to obtain opinions about catering services and responding to customer suggestions.

4. Using media for training and development

- E-learning and online courses: Food service workers can take advantage of online courses and educational materials that allow them to develop culinary skills, restaurant management, and customer service.
- Video and tutorial materials: Employees should know how to create or use instructional videos to improve the quality of services provided.

5. Multimedia content management

- Photography and video: The ability to take professional photos and videos that will be used to promote the restaurant online. Good photos of the food and interior of the restaurant.
- or the process of preparing dishes can significantly attract the attention of potential guests.
- Live streaming and online broadcasts: Using live streams (e.g. live cooking, cooking demonstrations, special restaurant events).

6. Understanding culinary trends in the media

- Following trends: Knowing what foods, diets, or cooking styles are becoming popular (e.g., veganism, plant-based cuisine, gluten-free options) and how these trends are affecting to customer demand and expectations.

- Media and public opinion analysis: Following food blogs, TV shows, and food magazines to stay up to date with what's happening in the industry

7. Broadly understood ethics in the media

- Transparency and honesty: Using media in a transparent and compliant manner within the law (e.g. avoiding false advertising, honestly presenting products).
- Sustainable development: Promoting pro-ecological activities in gastronomy, such as using local products, minimizing waste, and ensuring ethical sourcing of ingredients.

8. Ability to analyze and interpret media data

- Analysis of advertising campaign results: Ability to use analytical tools (e.g. Google Analytics, Facebook Insights) to evaluate the effectiveness of marketing activities in the media.
- Customizing your communication strategy: Based on data analysis, the ability to adapt promotion strategies and communication with guests.

Having these competencies for food service employees, especially in the age of digital media, can help increase the attractiveness of a restaurant, bring more customers, and build loyalty and a positive brand image. It's also beneficial for employees to participate in media and marketing training to stay up-to-date with the dynamic changes in the industry.

2. Social platforms and catering strategies.

Modern restaurants can't function without a social media presence. Each platform plays a different role and requires a tailored strategy to effectively support restaurant promotion, brand building, and customer communication.

1. Facebook

Facebook is the perfect tool for keeping in touch with your local community and promoting events. Restaurants can use it for:

- Organizing special events such as themed evenings, tastings or seasonal promotions.
- Creating loyalty groups and communicating with customers in an interactive way.

- Posting news and information about menu changes.
- Targeting ads to specific audiences, e.g. by location, age or interests.

Facebook also allows you to analyze statistics, which further allows to assess the effectiveness of campaigns and better tailor communication with your audience.

2. Instagram

Instagram emphasizes aesthetics and visual communication. For restaurants, it's the perfect platform to present dishes in an engaging way. Possible activities include:

- Posting professional photos of the food and interior of the venue.
- Creating stories showing the preparation of dishes, restaurant life and the atmosphere of the place.
- Collaboration with culinary influencers and bloggers who can increase the reach of your promotion.
- Using hashtags, geotags, and the "Explore" feature to reach new audiences.

Instagram also allows to sell through features like "Shop" and promote products directly from the platform.

3. YouTube

YouTube is an educational and storytelling platform that is perfect for publishing longer videos. Restaurants can:

- Share instructional videos and recipes, which helps building the authority of the chef and the establishment.
- Create materials that showcase the restaurant's history, mission, and uniqueness.
- Post interviews with employees, chefs, and customers that increase audience engagement.
- Use YouTube as a content base for further promotion on other social media platforms.

Longer videos can also help educate customers about ingredients, food preparation methods, and the culinary culture of a given region.

4. TikTok.

TikTok is a dynamic platform that focuses on short, engaging videos. It's particularly effective in reaching younger audiences (Generation Z and younger Millennials).

Restaurants can:

- Present the process of preparing dishes in the form of short, interesting videos.
- Use trends, music, and popular hashtags to increase your organic reach.
- Show authentic customer responses – which builds trust and engages with the community.
- Combine culinary arts with lifestyle and local attractions, creating attractive promotional materials.

TikTok is also becoming a place where users look for gastronomic recommendations, which increases the platform's importance as an informal culinary search engine.

2. Multi-platform strategy

Skillfully combining all platforms allows restaurants to maximize their potential:

- Facebook allows you to communicate with the local community and organize events.
- Instagram focuses on the visual presentation of products and brand image.
- YouTube allows you to tell stories and educate customers through longer-form content.
- TikTok engages younger audiences through short and creative videos.

An effective social media strategy requires tailoring content to the specifics of each platform, regular publication, consistent visual aesthetics, and monitoring campaign results to optimize activities and increase audience engagement.

Platform	Main function	Advantages for gastronomy	Content types	Target group
Facebook	Communication and local promotion	Building communities, organizing events, targeting ads	News, events, promotional posts, photos, videos	Local customers, 25–50 years old

Platform	Main function	Advantages for gastronomy	Content types	Target group
Instagram	Visual brand presentation	Aesthetic presentation of dishes, image building, cooperation with influencers	Food photos, stories, reels, behind-the-scenes reports	Young adults, 18-35 years old
YouTube	Education and storytelling	Creating valuable content, showing the history of the restaurant and the culinary process	Instructional videos, interviews, stories about the venue	Customers looking for knowledge and inspiration, 18+
TikTok	Short, dynamic video	Quickly engage younger audiences, capitalize on trends	Videos of dish preparation, culinary trends, customer reactions	Younger generations, 16-30 years old

3. Social media advertising.

Modern platforms offer a wide range of advertising tools, allowing even small businesses to reach specific audiences and effectively compete with larger chains.

1. Facebook Ads and Instagram Ads on Facebook and Instagram – These are essential platforms for running advertising campaigns in the restaurant industry. They can be used to promote new menus, seasonal dish introductions, or special events. Restaurants in Poland often use these tools to promote lunch specials and weekend offers. In Italy, they are used to showcase new pizza or pasta options, and in Portugal, they invite people to fado evenings combined with dinner.

2. TikTok Ads – currently one of the fastest growing social media platforms globally, especially popular among younger users (Generation Z and younger Millennials). In the restaurant industry, TikTok is gaining importance as a visual and creative promotion tool. Short videos can be used to attract potential customers, showcase products, and build a modern and dynamic brand image.

In practice, TikTok has become not only a place for entertainment but also a culinary search engine – young people are more likely to check for restaurant recommendations there than on traditional review sites. Users eagerly share their restaurant experiences, which becomes an informal channel for recommendations. This allows the restaurant industry to build community and amplify the "word of mouth" effect in a modern way.

Advantages of using TikTok Ads in gastronomy.

TikTok offers unique marketing tools that may be particularly attractive to the restaurant industry:

- Dynamic range – videos can quickly go viral and reach hundreds of thousands of viewers.
- Authenticity – users value spontaneous and natural content, which favors gastronomy, where taste, appearance and emotions matter.
- Advertising formats – TikTok offers various types of ads: In-Feed Ads (in the content stream), TopView (displayed immediately after opening the app), Branded Content and Hashtag Challenges.
- Precise targeting – ability to reach users by age, location, interests.
- Low entry threshold – even small venues can create creative materials on their own, without a large budget.

In Poland, Italy, and Portugal, TikTok is used to showcase food preparation, authentic food experiences, and local food culture. Regularity of posting and video aesthetics and adapting to trends increase the effectiveness of marketing activities.

Examples of TikTok Ads use in gastronomy.

- Poland: Food trucks and small restaurants are happy to show the process of preparing dishes, for example, creating burgers or regional pierogi. By using popular hashtags (#foodtok, #polishfood), they increase their recognition and attract new customers.
- Italy: Pizzerias and gelaterias create videos showing original dough-making techniques or ice cream, often combined with trendy music. Authenticity and emotions associated with eating Italian specialties attract millions of views.

- Portugal: Seaside restaurants and tapas bars use TikTok to showcase the atmosphere of their destinations – sunsets, community gatherings, and the preparation of fresh fish and seafood. In this way, they combine gastronomy with tourism and lifestyle.

TikTok Ads Summary.

TikTok Ads is becoming a crucial tool for the restaurant industry, especially in countries where young consumers eagerly discover new flavors and places through social media. Poland, Italy, and Portugal utilize this channel in different ways, but the common denominator is building an emotional connection with the audience through dynamic, authentic video content.

4.The influence of media on profits in the catering industry.

The impact of media on profits in the restaurant industry is enormous, and a well-planned and effective media strategy can significantly impact the financial performance of restaurants, cafes, bars, and other foodservice establishments. Media, both traditional (television, print) and digital (social media, blogs, influencers), offer extensive opportunities to reach potential customers and can significantly influence their purchasing decisions.

1. Building brand awareness and recognition

- Promotion in traditional media: Advertising on television, radio, or print allow to reach a wide audience, including those who may not use digital media. This can lead to an increase in new customers.
- Social media: Platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TikTok help to quickly reach younger consumers who often seek culinary inspiration online. Great food photos, live coverage, and Stories activity can attract new diners.

2.Influence on consumer purchasing decisions

- Reviews and recommendations: Media reviews (e.g., TripAdvisor, Google Reviews, Facebook) have a significant impact on consumer decisions.

- Positive reviews attract new guests, and negative ones can be off-putting. Customers often look for online reviews before deciding on a restaurant.
- Collaboration with influencers: Collaboration with culinary influencers who recommend the place on their social media can significantly increase the number of guests and consequently, increase profits. So-called "food bloggers" have great power to generate interest and attract customers.

3. Increase attendance with promotions and special offers

- Advertising campaigns: Media (especially social media) is an excellent platform to promote special offers such as daily specials, happy hours, food discounts or "2 for 1" offers. These types of campaigns can quickly increase customer numbers during periods that would normally be less crowded.
- Competitions and challenges on social media: Organizing competitions or challenges (e.g. "post a photo of our dish and win a free meal") can attract users' attention, engage them and encourage them to visit.

4. Targeting specific customer groups

- Local campaigns: Digital media, especially Google Ads and Facebook Ads, allow you to precisely target ads to specific demographic groups, such as residents of a specific city, people of a specific age, interests, or lifestyle. These types of campaigns allow for increased promotional effectiveness and reduced advertising costs.
- Personalized marketing: The use of data analysis tools (e.g. Google Analytics) allows you to better understand customer preferences and thus better tailor offers and promotions to their expectations. This enables ads to reach those who may be more likely to visit the establishment.

5. Increased loyalty and repeat visits

- Communication with customers: Regular presence on social media, communicating new menu items, special events, as well as interacting with customers (e.g. responding to comments, organizing quizzes or puzzles) help build relationships with guests. This makes customers more likely to return, which translates into a stable flow of revenue.
- Loyalty programs: Using digital media to promote loyalty programs, such as mobile apps that reward customers for frequent visits, can also help increase revenue by encouraging return visits.

6. Cooperation with the media and exclusivity

- Exclusive events and promotions: Media is an excellent tool for promoting special events like themed dinners, tastings, chef meet-and-greets, and VIP invitations. Such events can command higher ticket prices, which translates into higher revenue.
- Reports in the press and television: Appearance in local newspapers, television programs or culinary blogs can contribute to increasing the prestige of the establishment and thus influence the willingness of more affluent customers to visit.

7. Cost-effectiveness of marketing activities

- Low-cost social media promotion: One of the key advantages of digital media is that it allows for promotion without the high costs associated with traditional television or radio advertising. Proper social media content management allows for effective restaurant promotion at a relatively low cost.
- Optimization of advertising campaigns: Thanks to analytical tools, digital media allow you to precisely track the results of advertising campaigns, allowing you to optimize your advertising spend and maximize your return on investment (ROI).

8. Viral marketing (word of mouth)

- User-driven content spread: Good content like funny videos, food preparation tutorials, unique food photos, or creative challenges can go viral on social media, attracting mass attention and generating massive traffic to the establishment. This is the so-called viral effect, which can significantly increase revenue in no time.

In summary, media have a huge impact on profits in the restaurant industry, as it enables reaching a wide audience, helps building brand awareness, influences customer purchasing decisions, and enables effective management of marketing campaigns at a relatively low cost. A well-thought-out media strategy encompassing various communication channels can significantly improve a restaurant's financial performance.

5. Using the media to generate profits in the catering industry in Poland.

In Poland, as in other European countries, the media, including social media and traditional media, are having an increasingly greater impact on the financial results of catering companies.

Although specific, comprehensive research on the use of media in the catering industry in Poland is limited, there are many reports and analyses available on general trends in media, marketing, and consumer behavior that can help understand this impact. Below, we present the most relevant data and trends from recent years in Poland, which illustrate, how media are used in the restaurant industry and what impact they have on profits.

1. Using social media in gastronomy

- **Social Media in Poland:** According to the "Social Media Trends 2023" report published by Brand24, 82% of Poles use social media, with the most popular platforms being Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. For the restaurant industry, these platforms are a fundamental tool for promotion, customer engagement, and building loyalty.
- **Instagram and TikTok:** Image- and video-based social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok have become key to restaurant promotion. Restaurants often use Instagram to post food photos, promote events, and advertise. TikTok, on the other hand, is a platform that is gaining popularity, especially among younger consumers. According to the Global Web Index data, as many as 60% of people in Poland aged 18–34 use TikTok, which creates huge opportunities to reach this group with creative content.

2. Online Advertising and Google

- **Google Ads:** Research shows that over 75% of Polish consumers use Google search to find restaurants or information about food services. Report "E-commerce in Poland 2023" shows that advertising in the Google search engine is one of the most effective tools for acquiring new customers by catering establishments, and properly targeted Google Ads can generate a high return on investment (ROI).
- **SEO optimization:** Restaurants in Poland are increasingly investing in SEO (Search Engine Optimization) to improve their visibility in search results, which translates into increased restaurant traffic. Searching for information about restaurants, menus, opening hours, and locations has become a daily occurrence for Polish consumers.

3. The influence of media on purchasing decisions

- Online reviews: Data from "Trustpilot" and "ReviewTrackers" shows that 85% of Polish consumers use online reviews when deciding on a restaurant. Reviews on platforms like Google Reviews, TripAdvisor, and Facebook directly influence restaurant selection and, consequently, its financial performance.
- Food influencer marketing: The role of influencers, especially those specializing in culinary arts, is growing in Poland. According to a report by "Influencer Marketing Hub," as many as 63% of Polish restaurants use influencers to promote their services. Culinary influencers with significant reach on Instagram and YouTube can significantly increase guest numbers and restaurant revenue.

4. The role of promotions and discounts on social media

- Promotions on social media: According to the "E-commerce in Poland 2023" report, approximately 50% of Poles use social media to learn about promotions and discounts offered by companies. Restaurants regularly run social media promotions, such as happy hours, discounts for followers, and special group offers. Such promotions can significantly increase attendance, especially during off-peak periods.
- Loyalty programs: Reports show that 70% of Polish consumers are willing to use loyalty programs in exchange for access to special offers. Restaurants that promote such programs via social media increase customer engagement and loyalty, leading to more frequent visits and higher profits.

5. Distribution of marketing budgets

- Digital Marketing Spending: The report "Digital Marketing in Poland 2023" shows that in Poland 60% of catering companies spend a significant part of their marketing budget on social media activities, while 25% invest in Google ads. Only 15% of restaurants invest in traditional media (press, radio, television).
- Effectiveness of advertising in digital media: According to the "AdSpend Report" data, companies that actively invest in social media and online advertising achieve on average 25–30% higher revenues compared to those that do not use these tools.

6. The Food Delivery Phenomenon

- Food delivery services: Food delivery services (e.g., UberEats, Pyszne.pl, Bolt Food) are becoming increasingly popular in Poland.

- The "Poland E-commerce 2023" report shows that 55% of Poles use online food delivery services, which has a direct impact on the financial results of restaurants that offer such services. Restaurants promoting their delivery services via social media and online applications can count on increase of the number of orders.

7. Consumer trends

- Sustainability and media: In recent years, interest in ecological and sustainable cuisine in Poland. Data from "Food Trends 2023" shows that 40% of Polish consumers prefer restaurants that promote organic, local, or plant-based food. Restaurants that skillfully communicate their pro-ecological values in the media can attract customers from this group, increasing their revenue.

Summary:

Media, especially digital media, have a significant impact on the financial performance of restaurants in Poland. Using social media for promotion, online advertising, and collaboration with influencers and activity on review platforms have a direct impact on the number of customers and profits of catering establishments. In Poland, there is a growing tendency to invest in digital marketing, especially in social media, which is a key tool in building brand recognition and attracting customers.

6. Research aspect.

Social media is full of photos of food from around the world. It's no wonder, as research shows that as many as one in five Poles order a meal with the intention of posting a photo of it on social media. Furthermore, 41% of respondents choose a dish based on a photo in a restaurant. The influence of culinary photography on creating a gastronomic reality was examined by the food ordering website Pyszne.pl.

Data at a glance:

- 41% of Pyszne.pl survey participants are guided by the photo when choosing a dish in a restaurant,
- 70% of respondents check the restaurant's offer on social media before placing an order,

- Every fifth Pole orders food with the intention of publishing its photo on social media,
- 16% of respondents aged 18–24 post photos of food on social media several times a month,
- For 63% of study participants, food served nicer tastes better.

The appearance of a dish has never been more important than in the age of widespread social media. We first see food, and only then do we perceive it through other senses—smell or taste.

We brag about food.

A shared meal in a unique setting, a unique flavor, or the pride of a prepared dish. There are many reasons to share culinary masterpieces on social media.

This is confirmed by research commissioned by Pyszne.pl*. Poles not only follow social media in search of delicious dishes, but also eagerly share them.

According to research, as many as one in five Poles orders food with the intention of posting a photo of it on social media.

The term "eating with your eyes" is truly gaining importance today. Social media support culinary fads and short-lived popularity phenomena of certain dishes, stimulating the search for new things, but also providing a sense of connection with people who virtually share culinary experiences.

Culinary Instagram is still in fashion.

Despite the growing popularity of video content – including culinary content, such as recipes or video reviews of restaurants and dishes – food photos on the internet are still doing well, their "boom" in videos, which gained importance thanks to the popularity of the TikTok application – even in the youngest age group in which this platform is most popular.

Pyszne.pl research shows that among the most active age group on social media (18–24 years old), as many as 16% of Poles post photos of food even several times in a month.

The popularity of food photos on the internet is a global phenomenon – the hashtag #food is one of the most extensive tags on Instagram. With over 500 million posts, it is among the 30 largest in the history of the platform.

People brag about food on social media, but not only that – they also look for culinary inspiration.

We like to see what we are ordering.

Food photos undoubtedly inspire the search for new flavors – they're how people discover previously unfamiliar dishes, whether on the profiles of restaurants, influencers, or friends. Delicious-looking dishes motivate people to recreate them in their own kitchen or order from a restaurant.

Restaurateurs in particular should be aware of the relationship between food photos and the emotions or motivations they evoke in us.

According to Pyszne.pl research, as many as 41% of respondents are guided by a photo when choosing a dish they intend to order. What's more, up to 70% of respondents check the restaurant's offer via social media before deciding to use its offer. However, it's important to maintain the aesthetics of the photos during order fulfillment. It's worth ensuring attractive service, and in the case of delivery orders, for example, aesthetically pleasing

and eco-friendly packaging. Why?

According to as many as 63% of respondents to the Pyszne.pl survey, food that is presented nicer... tastes better!

* The study was commissioned by Pyszne.pl and carried out by the analytical agency K+Research in 2024.

The impact of media on the restaurant industry has been the subject of numerous academic studies, particularly in the context of marketing and communications. Media, both traditional and digital, play a key role in shaping consumer opinion, building a restaurant's image, and attracting new customers.

1.The influence of social media on consumer purchasing decisions

Research shows that social media has a direct impact on consumer purchasing decisions, including restaurant and food service choices. Several key aspects:

- Reviews and opinions: Social media users are eager to share their opinions about the food, service, and atmosphere of restaurants. Research shows that positive reviews on platforms like Instagram, Facebook, and TripAdvisor can attract new customers, while negative reviews can discourage potential diners.
- Visuality and aesthetics: Posting aesthetically pleasing food photos on Instagram that "inspire" appetite increases interest in a given restaurant. Many studies show that restaurants with attractive photos have a better chance of attracting guests.

- Hashtags and geolocation: Hashtags (e.g., #foodie, #restaurantname) and tagging locations are methods that extend the reach of posts and help restaurants reach a wider audience. Social media allow restaurants to build community and engage with local customers.

2. Influencer Marketing in Gastronomy

Influencer marketing has become one of the most powerful tools in the restaurant industry. Research indicates that influencers have a significant impact on consumer perceptions of restaurants:

- Trust in influencers: Customers who follow food influencers often rely on their recommendations when choosing restaurants. Research shows that people who regularly follow influencers on social media are more likely to visit restaurants recommended by their favorite influencers.
- Marketing with micro-influencers: Marketing with the participation of micro-influencers, who have a smaller but more engaged audience, is becoming increasingly popular. In gastronomy, it can be effective to cooperate with people who have a narrow, but a loyal group of recipients.
- Micro-influencer – is building a community genuinely interested in his work. More important than gaining a large following is strengthening relationships with those already there and reaching out to others who are equally engaged.
- These people are followed to gain certain benefits—for example, to be inspired to adopt a healthier lifestyle, learn what gear is best for mountain expeditions, or discover the secrets of vegan cooking. Unlike macro-influencers, whom we often follow out of curiosity or because "everyone's doing it."
- Micro doesn't necessarily mean inferior. On the contrary, if we find an influencer with a smaller following but who perfectly meets our needs, we're likely to receive our ideal client. Their followers share similar experiences, approaches to life, and interests. Therefore, it will be easier to reach people likely to order our product or use our service.
- It's worth mentioning the ER (Engagement Rate) factor, which helps evaluate a user's profile. This metric shows the ratio of comments and likes to the number of followers.

- The higher the ER, the greater the follower engagement. Comparing the results of micro- and macro-influencers, one can conclude that as interest in a given account increases, engagement decreases.
- Prior. On the contrary, if we find an influencer with a smaller following but who perfectly meets our needs, we're likely to receive our ideal client. Their followers share similar experiences, approaches to life, and interests. Therefore, it will be easier to reach people likely to order our product or use our service.
- It's worth mentioning the ER (Engagement Rate) factor, which helps evaluate a user's profile. This metric shows the ratio of comments and likes to the number of followers.
- The higher the ER, the greater the follower engagement. Comparing the results of micro- and macro-influencers, one can conclude that as interest in a given account increases, engagement decreases.

5.The evolution of food advertising: from traditional media to digitalization

Research indicates that traditional forms of advertising, such as television, radio, and print, are becoming less effective in attracting younger consumers who prefer digital media. Online advertising, including platforms like Google, Facebook, and YouTube, is significantly more effective.

- Advertising campaigns on Google and Facebook Ads: Restaurants can target ads to specific demographic groups, locations, or interests. Research on online advertising has found that personalizing campaigns and targeting users based on their culinary preferences increases the effectiveness of advertising activities.

6. Film and video marketing

Research on the impact of video marketing on gastronomy shows that short culinary films or presentations of the food preparation process have the potential to attract more visitors. Video allows for a more authentic presentation of the restaurant's offerings, which increases consumer confidence.

- YouTube and TikTok campaigns: Cooking videos are becoming increasingly popular on YouTube and TikTok. Data analysis show that videos that incorporate humorous or educational elements can generate higher engagement among users and attract the attention of media and influencers.

7. The role of food ordering apps

Research on platforms such as Uber Eats, Glovo, and Pyszne.pl has revealed that mobile apps have become a key sales channel in the restaurant industry. Consumers are increasingly using these apps, allowing them to conveniently order food at home.

- Growth in online orders: Research shows that especially in times of crisis (e.g. COVID-19 pandemic) food ordering apps have gained importance.
- One of the main reasons are convenience and a wide range of restaurants available at your fingertips.
- Ratings and opinions: On platforms like Uber Eats, customers can rate restaurants, which influences their popularity. High restaurant ratings on these platforms contribute to an increase in the number of orders.

8. The "food porn" phenomenon and its impact on gastronomy

The phenomenon of "food porn," or the posting of visually appealing food photos online, has become one of the most important aspects of food promotion in the media. Research shows that attractive food photos have a huge impact on consumer decisions. Customers are more likely to choose a restaurant, in which food looks appetizing on social media.

9. Online Reviews and Their Impact on a Restaurant's Reputation

Analysis of online review data (e.g., Google Reviews, TripAdvisor) indicates that customer reviews have a significant impact on a restaurant's reputation. Studies have found that restaurants with high ratings have higher visits and orders, both offline and online. Negative reviews can lead to a decline in diners.

Summary:

Media, especially digital media, has a significant impact on the success of a restaurant business, influencing purchasing decisions, building a brand, and acquiring new customers. In the age of social media and the growing role of influencers, restaurants must adapt their marketing strategies

to modern tools to effectively reach their target audience. It's also worth investing in professional photography, positive online reviews, and creative video campaigns.

7. Tests

Research on the impact of media on gastronomy in Poland is becoming increasingly common as media, especially digital media, gains importance in Poles' daily lives. Poles are increasingly interested in using social media, mobile food ordering apps, and food-related services. There is also a significant demand for reviews and opinions, which influence decisions about choosing restaurants, establishments, and food services.

1. Social media and Poles' gastronomic choices

According to research, social media has become one of the main sources of information about restaurants and catering establishments in Poland. Research conducted by various marketing agencies shows that:

- Instagram and Facebook: these are the most popular platforms where Poles look for information about restaurants and dishes. Many people look for culinary inspiration by checking out photos and reviews on these platforms.
- Influencer recommendations: The importance of culinary influencers is growing in Poland. 42% of Poles say they are willing to visit restaurants recommended by influencers, especially on Instagram. This phenomenon is particularly noticeable among younger age groups (ages 18–35).
- Online reviews: Poles willingly use portals such as Google Reviews, TripAdvisor, or Yelp to check other users' opinions about restaurants. Over 50% of people in Poland admit that a positive online review has a significant impact on their decision about choosing a restaurant.

2. Online shopping and food ordering in Poland

Ordering food online has become very popular in Poland, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, when many people began to prefer home delivery. Research indicates several key trends:

- Mobile applications: Apps like Pyszne.pl, Glovo, Uber Eats, and Bolt Food are widely used in Poland. Over 40% of Poles use such apps regularly, and around 30% order takeout at least once a month.

- **Shipping Preferences:** Poles prefer food delivery from restaurants that offer quick turnaround times, convenient payment options, and high-quality food. Numerous studies show that delivery time and food quality are key factors in the decision-making process.

3. The importance of reviews and opinions in choosing a restaurant

In Poland, online reviews and opinions are becoming increasingly important when choosing a restaurant. Poles are increasingly consulting reviews before making a choice, and negative reviews can lead to a decline in customer numbers.

- **High quality of services and opinions:** Research shows that restaurants that consistently respond to the opinions and comments of their guests, have a higher rate of customer loyalty. Poles value restaurants that care about communicating with customers and respond quickly to negative reviews.
- **What Stars and Ratings Mean:** Restaurants with higher ratings (4–5 stars) have a chance of attracting more diners. At the same time, negative reviews can significantly damage a restaurant's reputation.

4. The impact of influencers on consumer decisions

In Poland, the role of culinary influencers is growing, impacting Poles' gastronomic preferences. Research shows that:

- **Younger generations (ages 18–34)** are more likely to visit restaurants recommended by influencers. Older generations (35+) are less likely to rely on influencer recommendations, but they still use social media to check opinions about premises.
- **Influencer campaigns:** Research shows that collaborating with influencers who have high credibility among their audiences (e.g., famous culinary figures or local food bloggers) can significantly increase the number of visits to restaurants.

5. Consumer preferences regarding catering advertising

Food service advertising in Poland has undergone a transformation. Data show that:

- **Internet advertising:** has a much greater reach and effectiveness than traditional television or radio advertising. Poles are increasingly choosing restaurants that appear in Google search results, Facebook Ads, or Instagram Ads.

- Video content: Video ads, especially on YouTube and Instagram, have a greater impact on restaurant choices than traditional text ads. Poles are more likely to respond to dynamic and visually appealing content.

6. Consumption trends and healthy eating

In Poland, there is a growing interest in healthy eating and specialized diets. Research indicates that:

- Plant-based and vegan diets: The rise in vegetarian and vegan dining is driving the growth of restaurants offering these options. Many people are looking for restaurants that cater to their dietary needs, as research data confirms.
- Sustainable development and ecology: Poles are increasingly paying attention to how products are sourced and their carbon footprint. Restaurants that prioritize organic and local products are more valued by consumers, especially younger generations.

7. The "food porn" phenomenon in Poland

Poles are also increasingly sharing food photos on social media, part of the global "food porn" trend. Research shows that:

- Instagram: is a platform where Poles post the most food photos, especially visually appealing dishes. Restaurants that offer aesthetically pleasing dishes are gaining popularity.
- The increasing influence of visuality: Attractive food photos and well-presented dishes attract the attention of potential customers. It's worth noting that so-called "food porn" has a strong influence on purchasing decisions, especially among younger consumers.

Summary:

Research among Poles shows that media, especially digital media, have a huge impact on Polish dining choices. Social media, mobile food ordering apps, online reviews, and influencers are becoming key tools in food service marketing in Poland. Restaurants that effectively utilize these communication channels gain a competitive advantage in the market.

The growing interest in healthy eating, specialized diets, and ecology is also influencing the direction of development of the food service industry in Poland.

8. Comparative analysis.

The influence of media on gastronomy in Poland, Italy and Portugal, based on several key indicators:

1.Instagram: Percentage of people who choose a restaurant based on its Instagram profile.

2.Online reviews: The percentage of people who use reviews on platforms like Google Reviews and TripAdvisor.

3.Influencers: Percentage of people who visit restaurants recommended by influencers.

4.Food ordering apps: Percentage of people ordering food through apps such as Uber Eats, Glovo, Pyszne.pl, etc.

Comparative statistics:

Country	Instagram	Online Reviews	Influencers	Mobile Applications
Poland	45%	50%	42%	60%
Italy	55%	48%	50%	58%
Portugal	40%	45%	38%	55%

Based on this data, we can see that:

- Instagram has the greatest influence in Italy (55%) and the least in Portugal (40%).
- Online reviews are crucial in Poland (50%), while the least influential in Italy (48%).
- Influencers have the greatest impact in Italy (50%) and are relatively less in Poland (42%).
- Mobile applications are most popular in Poland (60%), which may indicate the important role of applications such as Pyszne.pl or Glovo.

Conclusions:

Based on the results of the statistical analysis, we can conclude that Italy has a greater influence of social media on gastronomy than Poland and Portugal, and Poland clearly stands out in terms of the use of mobile applications for ordering food.

9.Chapter summary.

Social media is an essential part of running a restaurant business today. From Facebook and Instagram, to YouTube, to TikTok, each channel offers unique opportunities for promotion, brand building, and establishing and maintaining relationships with customers.

Social media in Poland.

In Poland, the popularity of social media in the restaurant industry is constantly growing. Restaurateurs eagerly use Facebook, which allows them to organize events and promote special occasions, and Instagram, which allows them to showcase aesthetically pleasing photos of their dishes. Customer reviews and testimonials are also particularly popular, as they build a restaurant's reputation.

TikTok has also been growing rapidly in recent years, with younger users eagerly watching short videos showcasing the process of preparing meals, culinary curiosities, and customer reactions. Polish food trucks and restaurants are taking advantage of this platform to reach a younger target group for whom authenticity and naturalness of content are particularly important.

Social media in Italy.

In Italy, social media serve as both a custodian of culinary tradition and a trendsetter. Italian pizzerias, trattorias, and cafes use Instagram to showcase beautiful shots of dishes and the excitement of shared feasting. Live streaming of pasta and pizza preparations is also popular.

YouTube, in turn, serves as an educational platform – Italian chefs share their recipes, techniques, and culinary secrets, which builds their authority and attracts international audiences. TikTok is becoming a platform for young creators who reinterpret classic recipes, creating short, entertaining content.

Social media in Portugal

In Portugal, gastronomy is inextricably linked with tourism. Restaurants eagerly use social media to showcase not only the food but also the atmosphere of a place. Photos of pastel de nata in Lisbon cafes and videos from Porto's fish markets are popular. Instagram is a key tool here, as it connects food with the aesthetics of travel.

Portuguese restaurants also use Facebook to promote local events, concerts, and wine tastings. TikTok, on the other hand, is used by younger restaurant entrepreneurs to combine cuisine with lifestyle—for example, by presenting dishes against the backdrop of an ocean sunset.

To sum up, Polish gastronomy focuses on the diversity of channels and a creative approach to marketing. Italy emphasizes culinary tradition and the emotions associated with food, while Portugal combines gastronomy with tourism and the experience of place. Although they use different tools and preferences, all three countries prove that an effective presence in social media is one of the pillars of success of modern gastronomy.

In practice, this means that VET students in the catering sector should not only understand the theoretical foundations but also be able to apply their knowledge effectively. The ability to create engaging content, build relationship with customers, and analyze the effects of advertising campaigns will allow them to build a professional image in the industry.

Additionally, by understanding the specific markets in Poland, Italy, and Portugal, students gain intercultural competencies essential in a globalized restaurant economy. This allows them to better understand the needs of customers from different countries and effectively adapt their communication strategy to their target audience.

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11. Exercises

1.Exercise 1: "Promotional campaign for a catering establishment."

Purpose of the exercise:

Developing skills in creating marketing content on social media for students of the catering industry and planning a promotion strategy for the premises.

Duration: 2–3 hours

Materials:

- Phone or camera for photos and video recording
- A computer with internet access
- Campaign planning sheet

Course of the exercise:

1.Division into teams:

Students are divided into teams of three or four. Each team selects or receives a fictional dining establishment (restaurant, café, food truck).

2. Analysis of the premises:

- Defining the target group (local residents, tourists, young social media users).
- Indication of the unique features of the premises (e.g. Italian cuisine, seasonal menu, regional specialties).

3. Campaign planning:

- Selection of social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube).
- Designing a strategy: what content to publish, in what form and on what schedule.

4. Content Creation:

- Taking photos or recording short videos presenting dishes, the food preparation process, or the atmosphere of the venue.
- Editing short descriptions, hashtags and promotional texts.

5. Campaign presentation:

- Each team presents their plan and sample content to the group.
- Discussion and feedback from the teacher and other teams.

Learning outcomes:

- Ability to plan a marketing strategy for a catering establishment.

- Creating visually appealing culinary content.
- Developing teamwork and communication skills.
- Learning the specifics of different social media platforms and ways to engage audiences.

Exercise 2: “Creating a short video promoting a national dish in TikTok style”

Purpose of the exercise:

- Developing skills to create engaging content on social media.
- Applying practical principles of visual marketing and storytelling in gastronomy.
- Improving teamwork and creativity in a group.
- Learning the specifics of visual promotion of short video forms aimed at a younger audience.

Duration: 90 minutes

Materials:

- Smartphones or cameras with video recording capabilities
- Tripods or stabilizers (optional)
- Natural lighting or studio lights
- A computer or tablet with a simple video editing program
- List of popular music trends and effects on TikTok
- Notes on the selected dish and target group

Course of the exercise:

1. Introduction

- The teacher presents the purpose of the exercise, brief TikTok rules, and practical tips on recording quality, lighting, music, and editing.

2. Division into groups and selection of dishes

- Students are divided into groups of 3–4 people.
- Each group chooses one national dish (e.g. pierogi, pizza, pastel de nata).

3. Planning the film

- Developing a script for a short film 15–30 sec.
- Include dynamic editing, humor or authenticity, popular music or effects, and relevant hashtags.

4. Recording and editing

- Recording scenes according to a prepared script.
- Video editing using effects, music and hashtags.
- Recording quality control (focus, lighting, aesthetics).

5. Presentation and discussion of films

- Each group presents its film to the other participants.
- Discussion on creativity, aesthetics, video dynamics and relevance to the target audience.
- Teacher tips on how to improve and use the material in a marketing campaign.

Learning outcomes:

- Students can create short, engaging promotional videos for social media.
- Students understand the importance of aesthetics, editing, music, and trends in promoting gastronomy.
- They develop teamwork skills, creativity and planning of marketing activities.
- They can select content, effects and hashtags appropriate to the target group.

GastroNet

EDUCATION
AND TRAINING

Conclusion

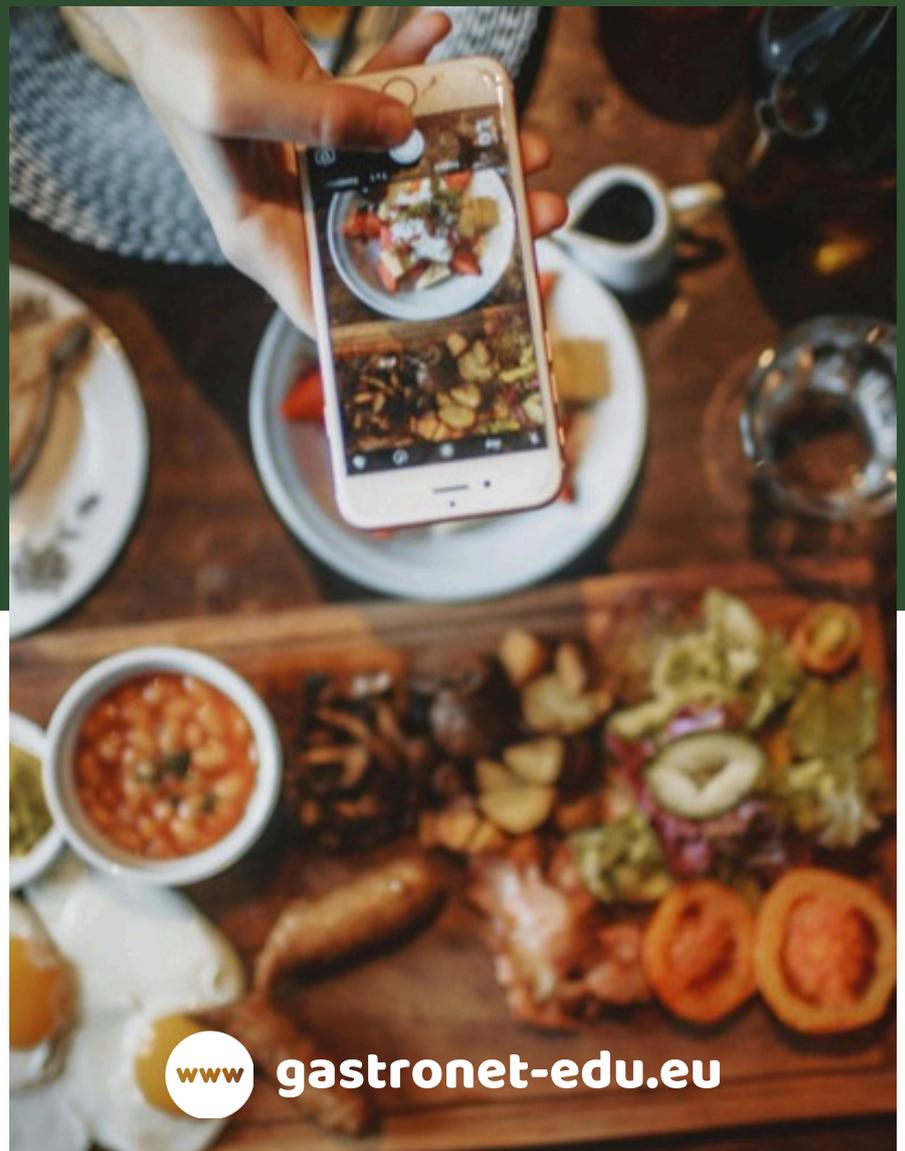


**Training Script:
Enhancing VET
Students'
Competencies in
Gastronomy
Sector
GastroNet –
Vocational
Education and
Training**

Conclusion



We believe that the broad range of topics covered in this handbook, together with the accompanying practical exercises, helps bridge the gap that often exists in VET education within the field of gastronomy. To conclude these training materials, we have included an additional summary of e-commerce developments and an overview of emerging trends in this area.



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The significance of e-commerce in gastronomy

E-commerce in gastronomy is no longer just a response to market needs – in many cases, it actively creates them. Customers, accustomed to instant access to products, convenient payment methods, and broad personalization options, increasingly perceive online gastronomy as a natural extension of their lifestyle. Ordering a favorite dish on the way home from work, planning a dinner with friends in advance, or subscribing to weekly meal deliveries has become routine rather than an exception.

In this context, a restaurant that does not engage in e-commerce appears to customers not only as less convenient but almost “invisible” in their daily landscape of consumer choices. This represents a profound shift from a decade ago, when success in gastronomy largely depended on physical location. Today, digital presence – being visible in the online spaces where customers actually “live” – is far more important.

This transformation means that investing in e-commerce is no longer a luxury but a necessity – one that should be treated with the same seriousness as choosing suppliers, ensuring ingredient quality, or maintaining service standards in the dining room.

The importance of the e-commerce model

Each element of e-commerce – from model selection and technical implementation to logistics and customer service – functions like a cog in a precise machine. If one cog malfunctions, the entire system loses fluidity. In gastronomy, this can have an immediate impact on the customer experience.

A minor error in integrating a POS system with a delivery module, failing to update the menu in the app, or neglecting real-time order tracking may seem trivial, but in practice, these details can make or break the customer’s perception of a business.

E-commerce in gastronomy therefore requires systemic thinking – not only about implementing solutions but also maintaining, testing, updating, and adapting them to changing conditions. It’s like managing a kitchen: buying modern equipment is not enough if it’s not regularly serviced, cleaned, and used properly. Similarly, even the most beautiful website, the best-designed app, or the most expensive CRM system will not deliver results without a team that knows how to use them effectively.

Moreover, these “cogs” do not operate in isolation. The website affects order volume, but its efficiency depends on logistics; logistics are effective only when aligned with order systems; and customer service works best when it has access to consistent information at every stage of the process. This interconnected network means that any change in one area affects all others.

Therefore, a restaurateur operating in e-commerce must be, simultaneously, a strategist, project manager, technologist, and trend observer – or must build a team capable of fulfilling these roles.

Technology as the heart of modern gastronomy

Today’s customers don’t order food just because they’re hungry – though that remains the starting point. The online dining experience is increasingly about comfort, emotion, and the feeling that the restaurant truly understands the customer. More and more people see ordering a meal as part of their lifestyle – they want it to be fast, convenient, and personalized.

Visual presentation also plays a role: attractive food photography on apps or social media, a clear and appealing menu, and even the tone of push notifications can influence purchasing decisions.

In this sense, e-commerce provides restaurateurs with immense opportunities but also clear expectations. Simply having an online ordering function is not enough – what happens around it matters most.

Is the ordering process intuitive? Can customers easily save their favorite dishes and reorder them with one click? Does the system anticipate their needs by offering timely promotions or complementary products?

A well-designed example might be a restaurant that knows its regular customer orders pizza on Friday nights – and sends a personalized discount or new flavor suggestion on Thursday. Such gestures not only boost sales but also create the impression that the brand genuinely values its relationship with the customer.

For many, this sense of care is just as important as food quality itself.

E-commerce in gastronomy should thus be viewed as a holistic experience – from the first social media post or online ad to the ordering process, delivery, and after-sales service. Each stage offers a chance to impress but also a risk of losing a customer if neglected. In a world where alternatives are just a click away, customer loyalty is hard-won but easily lost.

Logistics and customer service

Equally vital are logistics and customer service. Even the best marketing campaign and the most advanced ordering system will fail if the food arrives cold, late, or incomplete.

Gastronomy logistics encompass both customer deliveries and the restaurant's own supply chain – both must be well-coordinated to ensure seamless operation.

Customer service in the digital era goes far beyond answering phone calls. It involves an entire communication ecosystem – email, live chat, social media messaging, and app notifications. The speed, professionalism, and empathy of these interactions often determine whether a customer will return or switch to a competitor.

Trends and challenges

In the coming years, e-commerce in gastronomy will undergo even more dynamic transformation. The lines between offline and online will blur further, possibly disappearing altogether.

Technologies we currently view as novelties – voice commerce, augmented reality (AR) menu displays, and predictive ordering based on data analysis – may soon become standard.

As in other industries, artificial intelligence will play an increasingly vital role. Already capable of analyzing customer behavior, recommending products, and optimizing logistics, AI will soon handle even more – from real-time personalization to dynamic pricing based on demand, time of day, or ingredient availability.

Imagine a restaurant app that, based on weather, local events, and a customer's past orders, suggests the perfect dish before the customer even feels hungry.

Sustainability will also grow in importance. More customers are already paying attention to biodegradable packaging, food waste reduction, and transparent sustainability practices. In the future, these will not be advantages but basic expectations – key factors in customer retention.

To stay competitive, restaurateurs must be ready to adapt quickly, invest in innovation, and abandon outdated habits. The digital gastronomy world won't wait for late adopters – competitors' innovations rapidly become the new norm, and customers adapt even faster.

Success will belong to those who can anticipate customer needs – and meet them before they are voiced.

Recommendations for the future

1. Diversify sales channels – Don't rely on a single e-commerce model. Combine various approaches to reach a broader audience.
2. Invest in technology – Update systems regularly, ensure integration and security. Treat technology as an investment, not an expense.
3. Focus on customer experience – Every interaction shapes (or damages) your brand perception.
4. Track trends and adapt – Test new solutions and implement innovations, even on a small scale.
5. Educate your team – Invest in training on system use, online communication, and digital marketing.

Final summary

E-commerce in gastronomy is not a passing trend but a deep and lasting transformation of the entire industry. It can no longer be seen as an add-on; in today's market, online sales often determine whether a restaurant survives or disappears in the crowd of competitors.

Implementing e-commerce is not a one-time project to check off a list. It's a continuous process that requires constant monitoring, performance analysis, and innovation. Neglect leads to stagnation – and in such a fast-changing environment, stagnation equals decline.

E-commerce in gastronomy is not only technological but also strategic and cultural. It demands openness to change, willingness to invest, and awareness that today's innovations may be outdated tomorrow. This ongoing evolution is what separates market leaders from those content with mediocrity.

True leaders understand that competitive advantage in the digital world is never permanent – it must be earned and rebuilt continuously.

Moreover, effective gastronomic e-commerce goes beyond taking orders. It's about building customer relationships, maintaining consistent brand identity, integrating sales and communication channels, and creating added value through promotions, loyalty programs, and unique shopping experiences.

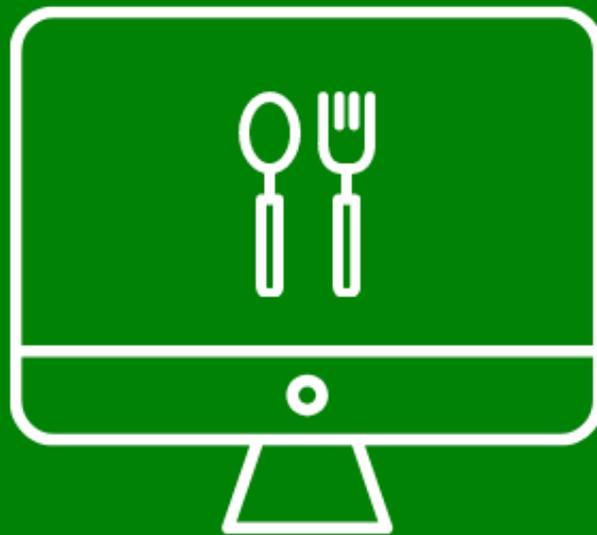
Ultimately, restaurateurs embracing e-commerce are part of a broader phenomenon – the global digital transformation – where data, technology, and customer experience form the foundation of business success. Those who can combine these elements cohesively will not only thrive but also set the standards others must follow.

We hope that with GastroNet a substantial, educational change can be possible and that the project will enhance the competences of VET learners graduating from gastronomic schools. The new gained sales techniques and customer acquisition through new technologies and the Internet will equip participants with knowledge that is crucial in the fast-changing world and in the dynamic labor market. This handbook, a simple, yet extensive guidance in current trends in online sales and creation of social media engagement will empower students to strengthen their qualifications.

Through GastroNet training, we want to help cultivate resilience among culinary students, guiding them how to navigate labor market challenges and respond effectively to market shifts. The partnership of five organizations that created the project brought together diverse perspectives, skills, and expertise. We hope that combined experience of employers' organizations, gastronomic, marketing, sales, and social media experts made these training materials as engaging and labor market-oriented as possible.



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