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**Синергія цифрових технологій та H2H-комунікацій у маркетинговій
політиці ресторанного бізнесу**

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Анотація. У статті розкрито особливості трансформації світового та вітчизняного ресторанного ринку в умовах цифровізації та сучасних глобальних викликів 2025-2026 років. Зазначено, що успішна адаптація підприємств залежить від комплексу внутрішніх ресурсів та зовнішніх чинників, що визначають їхню життєздатність. Обґрунтовано доцільність впровадження маркетингових стратегій, заснованих на



Н2Н-комунікаціях, емоційному сторітелінгу та предиктивній аналітиці, як інструментах подолання технологічної втоми й економічного тиску.

Мета: здійснити комплексний аналіз трансформації світового та вітчизняного ресторанного ринку в період 2025-2026 рр., систематизувати ключові галузеві тренди та визначити роль маркетингових стратегій як вирішального інструмента адаптації підприємств до фундаментальних викликів сучасного економічного та соціального середовища.

Матеріали: дослідження базується на аналізі звітів світового та вітчизняного ресторанних ринків за 2025-2026 роки, статистичних даних цифровізації галузі та аналітичних оглядах провідних консалтингових груп і галузевих експертів.

Методи: термінологічного та порівняльного аналізу при опрацюванні дефініцій «адаптивність ресторанного бізнесу» та «маркетингова стратегія трансформації», теоретичного узагальнення та систематизації для виокремлення ключових категорій ресторанних трендів 2025-2026 років та чинників впливу на готовність підприємств до інновацій, класифікації при групуванні сучасних цифрових інструментів та маркетингових рішень за їх функціональним призначенням, логічного моделювання для обґрунтування переходу від традиційних моделей управління до стратегій Н2Н-комунікацій та предиктивної аналітики, а також абстрактно-логічного методу для формування авторських висновків щодо ролі автентичності та сторітелінгу як засобів нівелювання технологічної втоми й економічного тиску.

Результати: систематизовано ключові тренди трансформації світового та вітчизняного ресторанного ринку на 2025-2026 роки, де акцентовано увагу на тому, що сучасні заклади мають розвиватися як складні екосистеми, що поєднують технологічний прогрес із глибокими змінами у споживчій психології. Визначено чинники адаптивності ресторанних підприємств, за яких вони здатні гнучко реагувати на ринкові та кризові виклики, балансуючи між внутрішнім ресурсним потенціалом та зовнішнім регуляторним тиском. Окреслено траєкторію розвитку



ресторанного бренду в умовах цифровізації шляхом впровадження H2H-комунікацій та емоційного сторітелінгу для збереження «людського обличчя» сервісу. Розглянуто можливості нівелювання економічного тиску та кризи креативу, що у поєднанні з акцентом на національну ідентичність та автентичність забезпечує формування унікального клієнтського досвіду й здатність бізнесу диференціюватися у конкурентному середовищі.

Зроблено **висновки** щодо можливостей стратегічної адаптації та методів маркетингової трансформації, які доцільно використовувати в діяльності сучасних ресторанних підприємств. Акцентовано увагу на тому, що власники бізнесу повинні збалансувати технологічний прогрес із концепцією H2H-комунікацій для подолання ризику «технологічної втоми» споживачів. Для глибокої організації маркетингової стратегії необхідно впроваджувати інструменти емоційного сторітелінгу та предиктивної аналітики, що дозволяє будувати довіру через прозорість процесів та персоналізацію сервісу. На нашу думку, найбільш ефективною є модель «прагматичної трансформації», яка поєднує операційну автоматизацію з автентичністю та національною ідентичністю, забезпечуючи життєздатність бренду в умовах економічного тиску та глобальної нестабільності.

Ключові слова: ресторанний ринок, адаптивність бізнесу, H2H-комунікації, цифрова трансформація, емоційний маркетинг, сторітелінг, автентичність, бізнес-екосистеми.

Synergy of digital technologies and H2H communications in the marketing policy of the restaurant business

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Abstract. The article reveals the peculiarities of the transformation of the global and domestic restaurant market in the context of digitalization and modern global challenges of 2025-2026. It is noted that the successful adaptation of enterprises depends on a complex of internal resources and external factors that determine their viability. The expediency of implementing marketing strategies based on H2H communications, emotional storytelling, and predictive analytics as tools for overcoming technological fatigue and economic pressure is substantiated.

Purpose: to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the transformation of the global and domestic restaurant market in the period 2025-2026, to systematize key industry trends, and to determine the role of marketing strategies as a decisive tool for adapting enterprises to the fundamental challenges of the modern economic and social environment.

Materials: the study is based on an analysis of global and domestic restaurant market reports for 2025-2026, statistical data on industry digitalization, and analytical reviews from leading consulting groups and industry experts.

Methods: terminological and comparative analysis in the processing of definitions "restaurant business adaptability" and "marketing transformation strategy"; theoretical generalization and systematization to identify key categories of restaurant trends for 2025-



2026 and factors influencing the readiness of enterprises for innovation; classification when grouping modern digital tools and marketing solutions by their functional purpose; logical modeling to justify the transition from traditional management models to H2H communications and predictive analytics strategies; as well as the abstract-logical method for forming author's conclusions regarding the role of authenticity and storytelling as means of leveling technological fatigue and economic pressure.

Results: the key trends in the transformation of the global and domestic restaurant market for 2025-2026 are systematized, emphasizing that modern establishments should develop as complex ecosystems that combine technological progress with deep changes in consumer psychology. The factors of adaptability of restaurant enterprises are determined, under which they are able to respond flexibly to market and crisis challenges, balancing internal resource potential and external regulatory pressure. The trajectory of a restaurant brand development in the digital environment is outlined through the implementation of H2H communications and emotional storytelling to maintain the "human face" of the service. The possibilities of leveling economic pressure and the creativity crisis are considered, which, combined with an emphasis on national identity and authenticity, ensures the formation of a unique customer experience and the business's ability to differentiate in a competitive environment.

Conclusions: conclusions are drawn regarding the possibilities of strategic adaptation and marketing transformation methods that are advisable to use in the activities of modern restaurant enterprises. Attention is focused on the fact that business owners must balance technological progress with the H2H communications concept to overcome the risk of consumers' "technological fatigue." For a profound organization of a marketing strategy, it is necessary to implement emotional storytelling and predictive analytics tools, which allows building trust through process transparency and service personalization. In our opinion, the most effective is the "pragmatic transformation" model, which combines operational automation with authenticity and national identity, ensuring brand viability in



conditions of economic pressure and global instability.

Keywords: restaurant market, business adaptability, H2H communications, digital transformation, emotional marketing, storytelling, authenticity, business ecosystems.

Problem statement. In the current environment of digital transformation and global instability, traditional restaurant management models focused on linear service delivery are losing their effectiveness. The core problem lies in the emergence of a "technological gap" and consumer "tech fatigue" caused by excessive process automation, which negates the emotional value of the visit and erodes the human connection between the establishment and the customer. For the restaurant market, the key challenge is finding a balance between implementing innovations and preserving the authenticity and "human face" of the service. Existing marketing approaches often focus on operational efficiency while ignoring the transformation of consumer psychology, where the priority is no longer just the product, but an ecosystem of experiences and ethical consumption. Consequently, there is a pressing need to integrate adaptive strategies (H2H communications, emotional storytelling, and predictive analytics) into business operations in a way that enhances business viability and differentiation under economic pressure.

Connection of the problem with scientific and practical tasks is multifaceted. From a scientific perspective, this research contributes to the development of adaptive marketing theory and the experience economy, allowing for a deeper understanding of the functional mechanisms of restaurant ecosystems in crisis conditions. In practical terms, addressing this problem provides restaurateurs with effective survival algorithms based on digital transformation and the personalization of the customer experience. The application of pragmatic transformation strategies enables establishments to increase audience loyalty and profitability, even amidst labor shortages and rising costs. Thus, resolving the outlined problem meets the industry's demand for sustainable development



tools and society's demand for authentic, safe, and technologically advanced consumption in times of uncertainty.

Analysis of recent research and publications. A review of scientific sources dedicated to the transformation of the restaurant market and marketing strategies allows for the structuring of existing approaches to business adaptability in the face of global challenges. Research on the technological basis and the role of information solutions in ensuring market stability is presented in the works of Zemlina Y. and Bukatov A. [1], who consider IT a fundamental factor of competitiveness in the domestic market. The issues of practical implementation of innovations and their impact on industry development are highlighted in the theses of Botin M. [8], while Zimina A. and Kavun O. [4] offer a broader perspective on the transformation of economic relations under the influence of total digitalization.

The specifics of forming the strategic potential of enterprises during crisis periods are thoroughly analyzed by Pyatnytska H. [5], who focuses on the survival of the restaurant business. Organizational aspects of management and the selection of effective management methods are researched by Svitlychna V. and Kravtsova S. [10], while the specificities of digital tools in promoting restaurant services are detailed by Bovsh L., Bosovska M., and Rasulova A. [2].

The humanistic vector of marketing and the transition to the "person-to-person" model became a central theme in the works of Mansoor H. [6], who laid the conceptual foundations for customer experience management through H2H thinking. This direction was further developed in the papers of Moroz O., Bilyk M., and Haikova T. [9] through the analysis of communicative aspects of interaction, as well as in the study by Zhovnir V. et al. [7], which substantiates the role of H2H strategies as a key filter for the digital transformation of HoReCa. The importance of emotional intelligence and the psychological connection with the audience under martial law in Ukraine is emphasized in the research by Horbal N. and Revutska O. [3].



A separate layer of relevant information consists of industry reviews and analytical reports from leading market operators and consulting groups (Ribas Hotels Group, Metro Blog, PayKit, Unit Group [13-17]), which focus on the practical implementation of innovations for 2025-2026. These sources detail the vectors of technological re-equipment in HoReCa — from payment automation and predictive inventory management to the implementation of "smart kitchen" and sustainability concepts. The scientific approach to systematizing these processes is complemented by the research of Turchyniak M. and Polotai B. [12], who analyze global trends through the prism of adaptation to new consumption models. This synthesis of empirical data with applied solutions allows for the identification of specific tools to increase operational efficiency and form competitive advantages in the digital environment.

Thus, the highlighted scientific approaches form the theoretical basis for understanding modern market realities; however, the dynamism of the restaurant sector in 2025-2026 requires a deeper adaptation of these concepts.

Formulation of previously unresolved parts of the general problem. Within the scope of this research, key trends in the transformation of the global and domestic restaurant markets for 2025-2026 are systematized, focusing on the evolution of establishments into complex business ecosystems that combine technological progress with profound shifts in consumer psychology through formats like soft clubbing, micro-cocktails, and the digitalization of operational processes. A comparative analysis of restaurant business adaptation in Ukraine and EU countries has been conducted, enabling the identification of the domestic experience as a unique case of crisis marketing, where innovations serve not only as a competitive tool but primarily as a mechanism for survival in unstable conditions.

Key factors of restaurant enterprise adaptability have been identified and structured, categorized into internal management resources and external regulatory and market factors, which collectively define the boundary between theoretical innovation and its



successful practical implementation. The necessity of implementing the H2H (Human-to-Human) communication concept as a strategic tool to overcome guest "technological fatigue" is substantiated, allowing the emotional value of service to be preserved amidst mass automation and the use of artificial intelligence.

A development trajectory for restaurant brands is proposed, based on the combination of predictive analytics with emotional storytelling and an emphasis on national identity. The possibilities of mitigating economic pressure through value-based marketing strategies and niche positioning are explored, ensuring the formation of a unique customer experience and the establishment's ability to differentiate itself from the mass market by transforming operational routines into meaningful interaction with the consumer.

Formulation of article goals (task setting). The purpose of the article is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the transformation processes in the global and domestic restaurant markets during the 2025-2026 period, systemize key industry trends, and substantiate the role of adaptive marketing strategies as a critical tool for ensuring business viability in an unstable environment.

To achieve this goal, two scientific hypotheses were put forward and tested. The first hypothesis suggests that the transformation of the Ukrainian restaurant market in 2025-2026 demonstrates an accelerated pace of adaptation compared to EU countries, as digitalization and changes in consumption formats are implemented not as a planned evolutionary step, but as a critical survival mechanism under security constraints and labor shortages. The second hypothesis is based on the assumption that the rapid automation of operational processes and the implementation of artificial intelligence lead to the emergence of consumer "technological fatigue," which can only be effectively mitigated by transitioning from classical promotion strategies to the concept of H2H communications and emotional storytelling.



The consideration and testing of these hypotheses make it possible to turn a descriptive market review into an in-depth analytical study that reveals the cause-and-effect relationships between external crises and internal business resilience. This allows for the formation of a clear strategic benchmark for restaurateurs: identifying where automation should be maximized to increase profitability and where it should be minimized to preserve authenticity and the human connection with the guest. Ultimately, this approach provides the scientific basis for building sustainable restaurant ecosystems capable of differentiating themselves from the mass market even under conditions of global uncertainty.

Presentation of the main material. The transformation of the global and domestic restaurant market in 2025-2026 is driven by the intersection of technological progress and profound changes in consumer psychology. Modern restaurant business is moving beyond the classic provision of food services, evolving into a complex ecosystem that combines digitalization, the experience economy, and sustainable development. For a systematic understanding of the industry's direction, we have systematized key trends, categorizing them by functional areas: from operational management to innovative gastronomic formats.

Table 1

Systematization of Restaurant Business Trends (2025-2026)

Category	Trend name	Description and manifestations
New consumption culture	Soft clubbing	daytime dj-culture (parties shift to daytime or early evening. opportunity to get club emotions without disrupting sleep patterns)
	Micro cocktails	"two-sip culture" (small portions of premium cocktails that prevent intoxication at an affordable price)
	Restaurant as a "space for the day"	functional transformation: coffee shop and coworking in the morning, business lunches in the afternoon, bar and social hub in the evening
	Happy Hour 2.0	new "prime time" (special offers shift from "dead hours" to peak times to stimulate table turnover)



	Restaurant as a "space of emotions"	"priority on experiences (storytelling, fictional brand characters, live music, stand-up, and interactive gastro-dinners).
Economics & operational management	"Volume over margin" strategy	reducing markups on popular items to attract mass guests. profit is generated through high traffic volume
	Live queue (no reservations)	refusal of bookings. this eliminates the "no-show" problem and creates an effect of popularity and high demand around the establishment
	Labor shortage & automation	compensating for staff shortages through online menus, robotic systems, and AI for operational tasks.
	Dark Kitchens & delivery	virtual brands without dining rooms, working exclusively for delivery. use of "light kitchens" with online cooking broadcasts
	Subscription model	subscriptions for daily coffee, wine, or fresh pastries to ensure stable and predictable revenue.
Product & gastronomy	Farm-to-table (locality)	use of local, organic products "from field to fork." collaboration with local farmers and maintaining own gardens.
	Plant-based food & synthetic meat	plant-based menus (vegan alternatives, lactose-free desserts, meat and fish made from plant proteins)
	Return to traditions	cooking over an open fire (jospier grills, tandoors), smoking, and using authentic techniques.
	Fermentation & zero waste	natural preservation and "root-to-stem" product use to minimize waste.
	Monoproduct	focus on a single dish (only burgers, dumplings, or tea), where quality is perfecte
	National identity	modern Ukrainian cuisine "for locals" (rejection of Soviet stereotypes in favor of authenticity and local craft)
Technology & innovation	Artificial intelligence (AI)	demand analysis, creation of personalized offers, and automated response to guest reviews.
	Contactless technologies	qr-codes for ordering and payment, virtual queues, order pickup via thermal lockers
	Robotics	robot-waiters, robot-baristas, and automated kitchen stations for quality standardization.
	Facial recognition (face id)	use of biometry to identify loyal customers within loyalty systems
Ecosystem & retail	Restaurants in retail	opening restaurant "islands" in supermarkets or producing own sauces/semi-finished products for retail shelves
	Food kits	selling "ready to cook" kits or home party kits curated by the chef.
	Eco-sustainability	rejection of plastic, transition to paper bottles, and fully biodegradable packaging

Source: [12-17]



Transformation of the restaurant market in 2025-2026 in Ukraine and EU countries demonstrates remarkable synchronicity, although the reasons for these changes often differ. In Ukraine, the key driver is adaptation to security constraints, while in European countries, environmental standards and labor costs take center stage. Analysis of the identified trends suggests that the restaurant market is in a phase of "pragmatic transformation" and serves as a survival mechanism in conditions of global instability.

The reasons for the emergence of the "new consumption culture" category in Ukraine are directly related to the curfew and constant stress, which forced parties to shift to daylight hours in the soft clubbing format, whereas in the EU, this trend emerged as a conscious choice in favor of healthy sleep and mental health. Simultaneously, Ukrainian establishments are massively implementing the culture of micro cocktails and happy hour 2.0 to provide guests with a premium experience for less money, while in Europe, this supports the global trend of moderate alcohol consumption and "mindful relaxation."

The "economics and operational management" category in Ukraine has been transformed by a critical increase in prime costs and the risks of guest "no-shows," making the live queue strategy and volume over margin the only ways to survive. In EU countries, similar models are implemented due to high competition and the need for maximum space utilization; however, it is in Ukraine where the restaurant has finally established itself as a "space for the day," where people work in the morning as if in a coworking space (driven by the need for energy independence) and relax in the evening.

The emergence of the "product and gastronomy" group of trends in Ukraine is driven by a powerful surge of national identity and the rejection of the Soviet past, which resonates with the European New Nordic movement but carries a deeper subtext of cultural resistance. The trend towards local products in Ukraine has become a logistical necessity due to complicated imports, whereas in the EU, it is part of a sustainable development strategy and the fight for ecology.



In the "technology and innovation" category, Ukraine demonstrates an accelerated pace due to the acute labor shortage caused by migration processes and mobilization. Artificial intelligence and robotics in Ukrainian establishments serve not as digital toys, but as replacements for missing employees. In EU countries, automation is also growing, but there it is aimed at reducing personnel costs, which are among the highest in the world.

The "ecosystem and retail" category emerged in Ukraine as a way to diversify income — restaurants are moving onto supermarket shelves with their own semi-finished products and sauces to stay with the client even during air raids. In Europe, this trend is driven by the desire of retail giants to keep the shopper in the store as long as possible by creating collaborations with well-known restaurant brands.

In general, the Ukrainian market often outpaces the European one in terms of adaptation speed. What becomes the norm in the EU through a long evolution of values is implemented instantly in Ukraine as a survival mechanism, turning the domestic experience into a unique case of crisis marketing for the entire world.

To understand whether a restaurant business is ready to implement a particular trend, it is necessary to consider the factors influencing the adaptability of restaurant enterprises, as they define the boundary between theoretical innovation and its successful practical implementation.

The internal potential of an establishment is built through management and organizational-structural factors responsible for decision-making flexibility, while financial and economic stability provides the resource base for modernization and the implementation of new business processes. A special role is played by the personnel factor, as the staff's receptivity to change and the level of their professional competencies directly affect whether a new technology will take root in daily operations. At the same time, the technological readiness of the enterprise itself becomes the foundation for digitalization and the use of modern information systems, which is critical for most 2026 trends.



At the same time, adaptability is constantly adjusted by the external environment, where market and technological factors form competitive pressure and dictate the pace of innovation diffusion in the industry. Socio-economic conditions, such as income levels and changes in the population's lifestyle, directly influence consumer preferences, while institutional and regulatory factors define legal boundaries, tax burdens, and government support for such initiatives. In the context of Ukraine, crisis and global factors take on decisive significance, necessitating instant adaptation to instability and unpredictable changes in the external environment, turning an establishment's ability to maneuver between internal resources and external challenges into the main guarantee of its viability.

Despite rapid development and adaptability, the hospitality industry in 2026 faces fundamental challenges that could become critical for those who ignore the "pitfalls" of digital and economic transformation. Mass digitalization — from qr-menus to artificial intelligence — carries an inherent risk of technological fatigue and the loss of the establishment's "human face." Since a guest comes to a restaurant not just for food, but for communication, excessive automation threatens to turn a visit into a mechanical interaction with a screen. The main challenge is finding the "golden mean," where technologies remove operational routine but leave space for staff empathy; establishments that preserve the "human touch" will become premium simply by the fact of having live service.

Simultaneously, economic pressure is intensifying, creating a difficult dilemma between quality and affordability. The desire to work with high-quality local products within the farm-to-table concept inevitably leads to an increase in the average check, while the real incomes of the population often do not keep up with this pace. Restaurateurs will have to show ingenuity in marketing and processing technologies to avoid turning into an "elite club for the chosen few" and to retain the mass guest without losing profitability.

Finally, the industry faces the threat of a creativity crisis and the "copy-of-a-copy" trap. In the pursuit of successful formats, the market becomes monotonous: when a certain



concept becomes popular, dozens of establishments begin to copy its interior and menu, creating visual noise in which the consumer stops distinguishing between brands. In 2026, the real currency will be authenticity, so only those who dare to create their own unique concept will win. The future belongs not to those who simply implement all trends in a row, but to those who know when to stop and ask whether the next innovation makes the guest happier and the business more genuine.

To overcome the fundamental challenges of the industry, marketing strategies must transform from aggressive promotion toward h2h communications (human-to-human) and predictive analytics. This allows establishments not just to survive, but to create new added value even in unstable conditions.

In response to technological fatigue, the strategy of emotional marketing and storytelling becomes key. Instead of emphasizing the speed of qr-ordering, marketing should focus on the "story behind the plate": telling about the chef, the origin of ingredients, or the mission of the establishment. The use of ai in this process shifts to the realm of an invisible assistant: the system analyzes guest preferences so that the waiter can make a personalized recommendation "from the heart," returning a human face to the service and creating a feeling of special treatment.

Economic pressure requires a transition to value-based marketing strategies and flexible pricing. Instead of direct dumping, which destroys the brand, establishments implement loyalty mechanisms built on engagement: for example, dynamic discounts in "happy hour 2.0" or exclusive offers for members of the establishment's community. An important tool here is "openness" marketing: demonstrating the real prime cost of local products and support for local farmers builds a guest's understanding of the price and a willingness to pay for quality and shared values.

To overcome the creativity crisis and the trap of monotony, the most effective strategy is niche positioning and authenticity branding. Marketing in 2026 should be based on searching for the unique "cultural code" of the establishment. This could be an



emphasis on local identity (for example, using forgotten regional recipes) or creating highly specialized formats (monoproduct). Instead of copying visual trends, establishments invest in community building around their brand, where guests become brand advocates, and the restaurant itself becomes a "place of power" for a specific audience.

Thus, modern marketing acts not just as a shell, but as a strategic filter that allows restaurateurs to implement innovations without losing the soul of the establishment, balance economics through trust, and stand out in the market thanks to sincerity rather than imitation.

Conclusions. The conducted research has allowed for a comprehensive assessment of the depth of the transformational processes sweeping the modern restaurant sector and a revision of outdated marketing paradigms through the lens of 2025-2026 digitalization. Based on the results obtained, the scientific hypotheses were verified, and a theoretical foundation was formed for building resilient business models in the hospitality sphere.

The analysis of factual data allowed for the full confirmation of the first hypothesis, demonstrating that the domestic restaurant market has become a platform for accelerated "pragmatic transformation." It was established that under conditions of labor shortages and security risks, the implementation of ai-analytics and flexible consumption formats (such as coworkings and retail ecosystems) in Ukraine occurs faster than in eu countries, as it is a vital reaction to external instability rather than just a tribute to fashion.

The second hypothesis regarding the role of the human factor in the digital age received partial confirmation. The study proved that h2h-communication strategies and emotional storytelling can effectively compensate for a guest's "technological fatigue" from total automation. However, to accurately determine the boundary beyond which digitalization begins to negatively impact brand perception, further applied research is needed, based on an in-depth analysis of consumer behavioral reactions in robotic establishments.



In summary, it can be argued that the successful development of a modern restaurant is impossible without the organic combination of high technology with authenticity and national identity. The approaches proposed in this work enable businesses to transition from the traditional provision of food services to the creation of full-fledged emotional ecosystems, where competitive advantage is formed not through marketing budgets, but through the depth and personalization of interaction with each client.

Perspectives for further research lie in developing specific mechanisms for integrating "invisible" artificial intelligence into an establishment's operational activities, which would allow for the automation of routine while leaving space for live empathy. Such an approach lays the foundation for the sustainable growth of the restaurant industry as a key link in the modern experience economy.

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