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PRACTICAL METHODS OF SERVICE QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN ESTABLISHMENTS OF RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

The article systematises practical methods of managing service quality in restaurant industry establishments (RIEs). Tools for analysing situations and developing ideas for improving quality are identified. Recommendations are provided on selecting the most favourable ideas for this sector. It is established that improving and ensuring service quality are key tasks for restaurant management. Quality management as a direction of activity of RIEs is carried out to improve services continuously and the mechanisms of enterprise activity as well as bring products and services into line with standards. The essence of the concept of “service quality management” in the context of restaurant activity is shown, its components and specifics of assessment are outlined. It has been found that effective quality management requires a comprehensive approach that includes standardisation of service processes, continuous monitoring of customer satisfaction, staff training and the introduction of innovative technologies. Among the tools that determine practical quality management methods, the tools of control, analysis, design, and management are highlighted.

The work is the quintessence of the results of research on the practice of functioning of RIEs. Attention is focused on practical methods and analytical tools that allow negative trends emerging in the activities of RIEs to be identified. In order to identify problem areas in the activity of establishments, it is recommended to conduct a self-assessment using various assessment methods and digital technologies to collect and analyse feedback. Based on the study of the experience of RIEs, the factors that form the quality of restaurant services are characterised. Goals for improving service quality are formulated. It has been established that if measures aimed at continuous and gradual improvement of service quality are insufficiently effective (or lose their effect), it is advisable to resort to a policy of breakthrough improvements.

The practical significance lies in the formulation of recommendations for improving quality management efficiency for managers of RIEs in order to strengthen competitive positions and customer loyalty. The results can be used in the practical activity of RIEs seeking to achieve high standards of service.

Key words: quality management, restaurant industry establishments, service quality, customer loyalty, quality assessment, management methods, management tools.

Кучер М. М., Корнєєв М. В., Щолокова Г. В., Степанюк Б. В. Практичні прийоми управління якістю послуг у закладах ресторанного господарства

У статті систематизовано практичні прийоми управління якістю послуг у закладах ресторанного господарства (ЗРГ). Визначено інструменти аналізу ситуацій та проробки ідей щодо підвищення якості. Надано рекомендації щодо вибору найбільш сприятливих ідей для даної сфери. Встановлено, що підвищення та забезпечення якості послуг



є ключовими завданнями менеджменту ЗРГ. Управління якістю як напрям діяльності ЗРГ здійснюється з метою постійного вдосконалення послуг і механізмів діяльності підприємств, а також приведення продукції та послуг у відповідність до стандартів. Розкрито сутність поняття «управління якістю послуг» у контексті ресторанної діяльності, окреслено її складові та специфіку оцінювання. Виявлено, що ефективне управління якістю передбачає комплексний підхід, який включає стандартизацію процесів обслуговування, постійний моніторинг задоволеності клієнтів, навчання персоналу та впровадження інноваційних технологій. Серед інструментів, що визначають практичні прийоми управління якістю, виокремлено інструменти контролю, аналізу, проєктування та управління.

Робота є квінтесенцією результатів дослідження практики функціонування ЗРГ. Увага сконцентрована на практичних прийомах і інструментах аналізу, який дозволяє виявити негативні тенденції, що починаються у діяльності ЗРГ. З метою виявлення проблемного поля у діяльності ЗРГ рекомендовано проводити самооцінювання із застосуванням різних методів оцінювання та використання цифрових технологій для збору й аналізу відгуків. На основі вивчення досвіду діяльності ЗРГ охарактеризовано чинники формування якості ресторанних послуг. Сформульовано цілі щодо поліпшення якості послуг. Встановлено, що за умови недостатньої ефективності (або згасання ефекту) заходів, спрямованих на безперервне і поступове поліпшення якості послуг, доцільно вдаватися до політики проривних покращень.

Практична значущість полягає у формуванні рекомендацій щодо підвищення ефективності управління якістю послуг у ЗРГ для посилення конкурентних позицій та лояльності клієнтів. Результати можуть бути використані у практичній діяльності ЗРГ, що прагнуть досягти високих стандартів обслуговування.

Ключові слова: управління якістю, заклади ресторанного господарства, якість послуг, лояльність клієнтів, оцінка якості, прийоми управління, інструменти управління.

Problem statement. The restaurant business is considered one of the most popular segments of the service industry. Growing competition in the restaurant services market and consumer demands for quality services as well as accelerating changes in the preferences of visitors of RIEs are prompting urgent quality issues to be addressed. Service quality is an important factor in competitiveness and a key factor in increasing customer loyalty and improving the long-term reputation of RIEs. Improving and ensuring service quality are key tasks for restaurant management. Underestimating the importance or lacking effective management systems aimed at improving service quality in RIEs inevitably leads to a loss of market position, reduced profitability and, as a result, business decline. In this context, quality management becomes a strategic tool for the development of RIEs. This necessitates the search for and implementation of effective practical methods of service quality management that meet modern customer requirements, international standards, and the strategic objectives of restaurant business development.

Analysis of recent research and publications. Theoretical analysis has shown that the basic definitions and approaches characteristic of quality management are considered in international standards and in many scientific works on quality issues. In particular, the concepts and general requirements for quality are defined by the ISO series of standards.

The following scholars have devoted their works to researching the problematic field of service quality, approaches and features of quality management systems in the restaurant business: O. Krukovska [1], S. Pavlova [2], V. Rusavska [3; 4], M. Riabenska [5], N. Sushko [6] and others. The works of these authors define the principles, problems, and tools of quality management in the restaurant industry, systematise methods and formulate evaluation criteria, analyse approaches to quality assurance, etc. Scientific works emphasise the importance of customer focus, staff training and the introduction of innovative technologies in RIEs, taking into account current trends and sustainable development requirements. However, practical methods and tools for analysing situations and developing ideas for improving quality in this area remain insufficiently researched.

The goal of the article is to identify and systematise practical management methods for achieving high service quality indicators and improving the activity of RIEs.

Presentation of the main material. The essence of the concept of “quality management” can be summarised as follows: it is the purposeful activity of enterprise employees that ensures the continuous improvement of core processes (by core processes we mean business-generating processes), intending to improve the quality of performance results. Quality management as a direction of the activity of RIEs is carried out to continuously improve the restaurant product, services, and directly the mechanisms of activity as well as bring services into line with standards (internal and/or international) [2; 3; 4; 6].

Service quality is an important object of operational and strategic management in the activity of RIEs. High quality of services provided contributes to the formation of restaurant guests’ loyalty and is considered as a basis for increasing the profit and economic stability of RIEs.

The quality of restaurant services has the following characteristics: it is closely related to consumer value, as the latter characterises the ability of a service to satisfy a specific customer need; it is related to the service process, as the service must be “provided correctly”; it is constant [5].

The typical structure of service quality in RIEs (restaurant services) is determined by the quality of the products produced (tasty, healthy, safe, and aesthetically pleasing) and the quality of service (service provision).

Quality management is carried out in accordance with generally accepted stages: goal setting, situation assessment, problem identification, and decision implementation. Goal setting includes operations for developing, formulating, and setting goals for the activity of RIEs. Situation assessment and problem identification are carried out

in the process of implementing the function of controlling inputs, outputs and the activities themselves by assessing the degree of deviation of the current state from the target state (by comparing a set of target process indicators). This comparison triggers a “quality loop” – from the identified deviation, through the analysis of information and the development of corrective measures and operational decisions, to the implementation of changes that contribute to improvement. In other words, analytical research is used to establish the causes of the situation and identify the root causes of the gap between the target and achieved quality levels. Once the causes have been established, measures to improve the situation are proposed. At the final stage, all that remains is to implement the decisions, introduce the changes and monitor the results achieved.

Practical quality management tools begin with formalising objectives and identifying gaps in indicators as well as highlighting key areas for problem-solving.

Among the tools that determine practical quality management methods, the following types can be distinguished:

- control tools that allow monitoring the implementation of quality improvement methods and adjusting influences based on interim results;
- analysis tools that allow, based on data, facts, surveys and observations, to identify the reasons for the quality not meeting the required level and to develop solutions in accordance with the specifics of the situation and available resources;
- design tools that enable the development of new products and services that meet the needs of a potential consumer, with clearly defined quality targets and the scope of functions of new products or services;
- management tools that enable effective communication of all orders and instructions related to the implementation of processes to executors as well as the creation and maintenance of a corporate philosophy focused on employee engagement in ideas and the implementation of continuous improvement.

Next, we will focus on practical methods and analysis tools that allow us to identify negative trends emerging in the activity of RIEs that lead to a weakening of their competitive advantages.

Quality management in RIEs is based on knowledge of the factors that form and evaluate the quality of restaurant services [7]. This makes it possible to more accurately diagnose the strengths and weaknesses of operations of RIEs, make informed management decisions and contribute to increasing customer focus and ensuring the sustainable development of the establishment.

With increasing competition in the restaurant services market, six groups of factors are gaining increasing attention, the content-related characteristic of which is presented in Table 1.

Each of these factors has its own dimension. These dimensions are typically used in the operational activity of RIEs to monitor service quality.

Dimensions of the restaurant services quality are described using variables, which are grouped into six blocks: conditions (how pleasant and comfortable the place is perceived to be), accessibility (how easy it is to get to the restaurant), staff (hospitality and knowledge of the menu, speed of service), atmosphere (how pleasant the atmosphere is in the establishment), food (how well the dishes are prepared and the size of the portions) as well as consistency and honesty (consistency in the provision of services).

Each of these factors can be described using qualitative and quantitative indicators (Table 2). Qualitative parameters are more difficult to formalise and mainly describe the process of service provision and its ability to meet consumer needs, while quantitative parameters allow the results of service provision to be assessed.

Various methods and tools can be used to measure service quality indicators, including customer surveys, monitoring and analysis of feedback on social media or websites of RIEs, food and drinks tasting, internal audits and checks by restaurant management, staff evaluations, etc. The most common methods and tools for assessing service quality in restaurants are listed in Table 3.

It should be noted that the quality of dishes and drinks is assessed using indicators that are divided into three groups: physical and chemical, organoleptic, and microbiological indicators, the values of which are specified in the technical conditions [10].

Since the restaurant business is focused on providing intangible services that are often subjectively evaluated, it is important to consider both the existing and latent (psychological) aspects of customer interaction. The choice of quality measurement tool depends on the object of measurement and the aspect of interaction with the consumer – the restaurant guest.

The assessment of the quality of restaurant services precedes standardisation, certification, the determination of optimal parameters, etc., which contributes to the effective management of restaurant guests’ consumer expectations and the adaptation of establishments to changing market requirements.

Quality control makes it possible to manage activities on acceptable terms as well as to develop and implement measures to correct the process. The following types of control can be used to perform control functions: technical and technological, sanitary and bacteriological, environmental, safety, and metrological.

An effective quality management system (QMS) for restaurant services involves systematic control at all stages of service, continuous training and motivation of staff, and prompt response to customer feedback (Figure 1).

Table 1

The content-related characteristic of factors affecting the quality of restaurant services

Dimension	Variable	Definition
Conditions	Interior and exterior (colours, finishes, design)	Physical characteristics that a customer perceives at first glance, such as colours, finishes, and the design of premises
	Comfort	Comfortable furniture and space
	Hygiene	Cleanliness of premises and tableware
Accessibility	Location	Ease of access
	Parking	Possibility of secure parking
	Payment options	Payment options and methods offered by the establishment (cash, cards, vouchers, etc.)
Staff	Reception and courtesy	Friendly attitude towards visitors to the establishment
	Knowledge and skills (experience)	Level of staff knowledge about food
	Appearance	Appearance of staff
	Speed	The degree of efficiency with which staff respond to visitor requests
	Attentive attitude of staff	A sense of politeness, understanding of needs, confidence, and attitude
Atmosphere	Audiovisual environment	Musical accompaniment, noise level
	Lighting	Appropriate lighting according to the type of restaurant
	Aroma	The aroma of dishes, absence of unpleasant odours (kitchen)
	Temperature	The climate in the establishment, created for the comfort of visitors
	Self-identification with user types	How closely the establishment is identified with the type of customers who visit the restaurant
Food	Taste	Food and drinks should have a pleasant taste
	Smell	Perception of a pleasant aroma by smell
	Variety	Variety of menus
	Serving (presentation)	Visually appealing food, aesthetic presentation of dishes
	Hygiene of food products	Food products are clean
	Freshness of food products	Food that is in good condition and retains its natural properties
	Temperature	Food at the right temperature: hot dishes are served hot, and cold dishes are served cold
Consistency and honesty	Standardised service	The customer receives the same quality of service under all circumstances
	Prestige	The customer feels that the restaurant has a certain level of recognition
	Attention to complaints	Prompt and adequate response to complaints

Source: developed by the authors based on [7]

The implementation and support of such a system allows not only to improve the quality of services, but also to optimise operational processes, reduce costs, increase productivity and, as a result, significantly increase the overall efficiency of a restaurant.

Quality assurance includes activities in a QMS aimed at creating a set of conditions for the compliance of restaurant services with established quality requirements (Figure 2). This subsystem includes internal QMS audits of the establishment and other preventive actions provided for by the ISO 9000 series standard.

The culture of formalising goals and defining them based on achieved and expected trends has been shaped over many years. Self-assessment helps to avoid mistakes in this process by analysing and identifying negative trends (events) in the activity of RIEs.

The analysis of negative trends identified in the process of summarising the experience of the activity of RIEs made it possible to set targets for the future. These targets can be seen as the start of the PDCA cycle, which corresponds to the planning (Plan) step of the target values of expected results.

The decomposition of goals by management levels aimed at achieving high quality and profitability indicators of RIEs is presented in Table 4.

The goals listed in Table 4 are grouped into four directions.

Goal 1. Cost reduction can be achieved by reducing food losses and reducing cost items such as salary expenses.

Goal 2. It is necessary to continuously improve the quality of service and dishes by improving quality control, monitoring the speed of service, maintaining feedback with restaurant guests, etc.

Goal 3. It is necessary to work with each restaurant guest to increase their loyalty to the establishment. This can include incentivising loyal customers, creating a comfortable atmosphere in the establishment, working with

Table 2

Indicators for assessing the quality of services in restaurants

Quality aspect	Qualitative indicators	Quantitative indicators
Food and drinks	quality of food and drinks: – freshness of ingredients; – compliance with the recipe; – aesthetics of presentation; – taste sensations; – presence/absence of ingredients/allergens	– average number of complaints about the quality of dishes; – % of returns of dishes; – % of local products used; – etc.
Service	staff behaviour: – friendliness; – attentiveness; – quick response; – knowledge of the menu; – conflict resolution skills; – flexibility in solving problems and responding to customer requests; – individual approach to customers; – language skills	– average waiting time for a visitor for an order (from arrival to an order, from an order to serving, from serving to payment, etc.); – customer service time (order and payment process); – % of compliance of order, offer, and request; – number of service complaints; – % of repeat visits; – average bill; – etc.
Atmosphere	pleasant atmosphere and environment: – cleanliness and order; – comfort; – lighting; – musical accompaniment; – interior design; – aroma in the hall	– temperature in the hall; – noise level (dB); – number of reviews about the atmosphere; – etc.
Price/Value	pricing policy and price-quality ratio: – fairness of price; – meeting expectations; – perception of “profitability”; – offers	– average bill; – number of promotional offers; – percentage of customers who have used the loyalty programme
Accessibility	– ease of booking; – availability of parking; – clarity of location; – availability of information about dishes and services (menu, prices, promotions, etc.)	– waiting time for a free table; – % of successful online reservations; – etc.

Source: developed by the authors based on [8; 9]

Table 3

Methods of assessment and tools for determining the quality of services in restaurants

Tools	Explanation
Surveying and interviewing customers about their experience visiting the restaurant	the SERVQUAL model – assessment of expectations and perceptions on a 7-point Likert scale (22 questions grouped into 5 blocks); calculation of the Net Promoter Score (NPS) – answer to the question “Would you recommend our restaurant to a friend/colleague?”; calculation of the aggregate Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) based on multiple assessments; mystery shopping methodology.
Analysis of online reviews and ratings	monitoring customer reviews on social media, online platforms (Google Maps, TripAdvisor, Facebook, Instagram, etc.) and other media
Testing dishes	conducting tastings of dishes and evaluating their quality, including taste
Audit	verification of the actual level of service against internal standards
Analysis of financial indicators	determining the average bill, profit, expenses, and other financial indicators of the restaurant’s activities
Staff assessment	assessment of the level of professional training of staff and their ability to communicate with customers

Source: developed by the authors based on [1; 11]

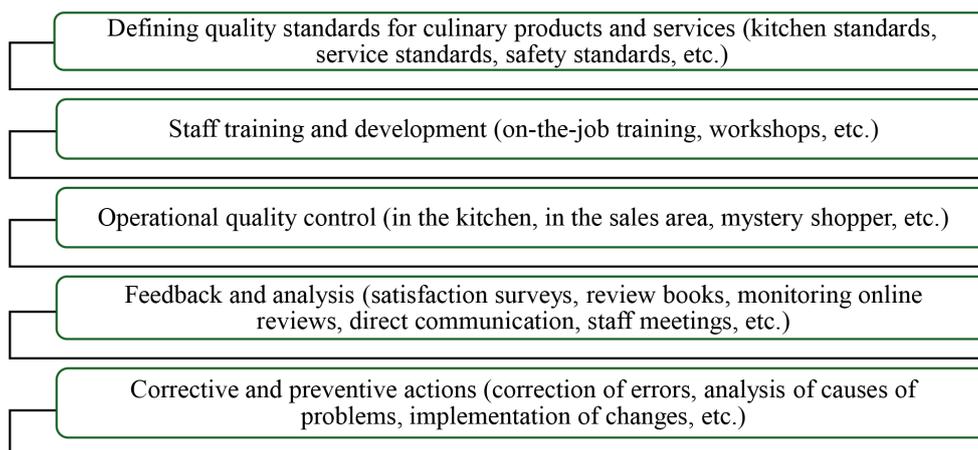


Fig. 1. Key elements of a QMS in a restaurant

Source: developed by the authors



Fig. 2. Conditions for compliance of restaurant services with established quality requirements

Source: developed by the authors based on [12]

dissatisfied customers and resolving conflict situations. PR campaigns and marketing are very important in terms of stimulating customer loyalty and creating the establishment's image.

Goal 4 involves the development and implementation of sustainable development strategies, including technological development, throughout the entire restaurant product production chain, especially at the stage of service implementation in accordance with the modern philosophy of the relationship between the seller and the buyer of services.

The analysis has shown that if measures aimed at continuous and gradual improvement of service quality are insufficiently effective (or their effect is fading), it is advisable to resort to a policy of breakthrough improvements. The combination of breakthrough (referring to the Hoshin Kanri strategic management and planning system) and gradual improvements (referring to the Kaizen management system) in practical implementation can significantly improve the quality of services in RIEs.

Goals aimed at achieving high quality and profitability indicators of a restaurant

First-order goals	Second-order goals	Third-order goals
1. Reducing the costs of dishes and operating expenses	1.1. Reducing product losses	1.1.1. Reducing the risk of food spoilage: optimisation of warehouse accounting; improvement of storage conditions (temperature, humidity). 1.1.2. Minimising waste during preparation: training staff in the efficient use of ingredients; reviewing and optimising portion sizes
	1.2. Reducing personnel costs	1.2.1. Optimisation of staff work schedules. 1.2.2. Increasing productivity through training and automation
2. Improving the quality of service and dishes	2.1. Improving quality control of dishes	2.1.1. Compliance with preparation standards and quality control: development of detailed recipe cards; conducting regular tastings and inspections. 2.1.2. Ingredient quality control: quality control of raw materials and semi-finished products from suppliers; product intake control system
	2.2. Improving service efficiency	2.2.1. Installation of order tracking devices and reduction of order fulfilment time: introduction of a POS system for fast order taking; monitoring of food delivery time. 2.2.2. Service quality control programme directly with guests: collection of feedback (questionnaires, QR codes for reviews); analysis of reviews on online platforms (Google Maps, Facebook)
3. Working with clients (guests)	3.1. Stimulating loyal customers	3.1.1. Running promotions and developing loyalty programmes: accumulative bonuses, discounts for regular guests; personalised offers. 3.1.2. Improving comfort and atmosphere in the establishment: regular updating of interiors and equipment; providing pleasant musical accompaniment
	3.2. Working with dissatisfied customers and resolving conflicts	3.2.1. Quick response to complaints: training staff in effective problem solving; the possibility of free replacement of the dish or compensation. 3.2.2. Analysis of reasons for dissatisfaction: keeping a complaints log and analysing them; making changes to processes based on feedback
4. The concept of sustainable development and innovation	4.1. Development and implementation of a sustainable development strategy for a restaurant	4.1.1. Socio-economic development of a restaurant implementation of staff training and development programmes; supporting local suppliers and producers. 4.1.2. Implementation of modern technologies: process automation (online booking, electronic menu); using energy-efficient equipment

Source: developed by the authors

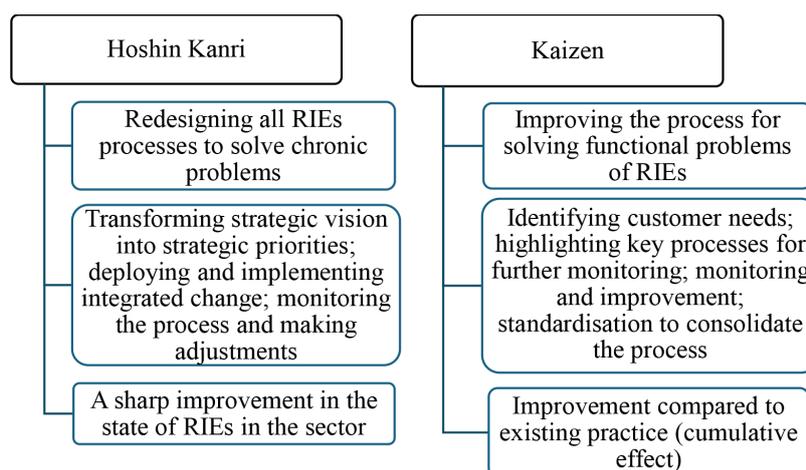


Fig. 3. The essence of breakthrough and gradual improvements in quality management in RIEs

Source: developed by the authors

The characteristic of breakthrough and gradual approaches to improving the quality of services in RIEs is illustrated in Figure 3.

A QMS is a system-forming organisational structure that permeates the entire enterprise. Therefore, almost any significant improvement to it must be implemented as a project and managed in accordance with the specifics of the attitude to breakthrough changes in RIEs.

Conclusions. The quality of services in RIEs is a determining factor in competitiveness, customer loyalty and their long-term economic stability. Quality management should be viewed as a strategic development tool that combines process standardisation, continuous monitoring, staff training, and the use of modern technologies. Practical quality management tools begin with formalising goals and identifying gaps in performance indicators as well as identifying key areas for problem-solving. Among the tools that define practical quality management methods are control, analysis, design, and management tools. Practical assessment tools (questionnaires, the SERVQUAL, mystery shopping, online review analysis, internal audits) ensure objective control and help to make timely adjustments to activities. The results of the analysis of negative trends identified in the process of summarising the experience of the activity of RIEs made it possible to set targets for the future, in particular for the development of a service quality improvement programme. The main goals for improving the quality and increasing the profitability of RIEs include: reducing the cost of dishes and operating expenses; improving the quality of service and dishes; increasing customer loyalty to the establishment; and developing and implementing sustainable development strategies, including technological development.

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