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**SECTION: TOURISM AND HOTEL  
AND RESTAURANT BUSINESS**

**FOOD CULTURE AND ETHICS AS A STRATEGIC  
RESOURCE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
RESTAURANT BUSINESS**

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The modern restaurant business is developing in the context of a profound transformation of economic, sociocultural, and technological systems. Alongside competition for the quality and innovativeness of gastronomic offerings, societal demands for ethical, safe, and sustainable operations of food service establishments are growing. Guests increasingly evaluate restaurants not only by the taste and presentation of dishes, but also by the principles of menu formation, sources of ingredient supply, waste management approaches, and consideration of cultural and dietary needs.

This paradigm shift creates a dual challenge for the industry: the need to ensure profitability while integrating the values of food culture and ethics into daily operations. The restaurant is no longer merely a place for consuming prepared meals—it is becoming a carrier of a gastronomic philosophy that combines respect for traditions, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability [1; 2; 3].

An important element of this approach is the food safety culture, which goes beyond purely sanitary standards and regulations. Modern research emphasizes that safety in a food service establishment should be based on value-oriented principles, where every employee is aware of their personal responsibility for the quality and safety of products [1; 2]. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), an effective safety culture is based on leadership commitment, transparent communication, regular training, and the ability to harmonize different culinary traditions in multinational teams [1]. Borges et al. [2] add that in multicultural teams, it is particularly important to align approaches to hygiene and production processes in order to avoid conflicts and maintain high service quality.

Equally relevant is food waste management. The issue of food waste in the HoReCa sector has reached a global scale: around one-third of all food produced globally is lost annually, a significant share of which occurs in food service

operations [3; 4]. Researchers propose various solutions: «zero waste» and «circular economy» concepts, partnerships with charities to donate surplus food, menu and procurement optimization [3; 4]. These practices not only reduce environmental impact but also improve the establishment's image, fostering in guests a sense of involvement in socially significant initiatives. At the same time, their implementation is constrained by strict sanitary regulations, additional costs, and the lack of economic incentives for small businesses [4].

A key success factor is ethical leadership, which shapes a healthy psychological climate and ensures high-quality service. The restaurant industry is characterized by a fast work pace, emotional load, and stressful situations. Khan et al. [5] show that management transparency, fair distribution of responsibilities, and support for professional development improve team morale and reduce the risk of conflicts. Uddin et al. [6] found that in establishments with clear ethical principles, employee burnout rates are significantly lower and staff turnover is minimal. Hashim and colleagues [7] note that ethical leadership strengthens trust both within the team and among guests, who subconsciously perceive an atmosphere of honesty and responsibility.

In the context of globalization, cultural sensitivity and the preservation of gastronomic authenticity are becoming increasingly important. The restaurant is often perceived as a space that conveys cultural meanings, historical experiences, and gastronomic heritage. Molz et al. [8] develop the concept of *cultural humility*, which involves readiness for dialogue with different cultures, deep respect for authentic culinary traditions, and the ability to adapt service to guests' expectations without losing identity. This approach is especially important for large cities and tourist regions where representatives of various ethnic groups interact daily. Adhering to the principles of cultural sensitivity helps avoid oversimplifications and stereotypes, making the gastronomic offering more profound and convincing.

At the same time, researchers warn against cultural appropriation, meaning the use of culinary traditions for commercial purposes without understanding their context. Global experience shows that authenticity and respect for traditions can form the basis for success. Japanese and Mexican restaurants actively preserve regional culinary practices, and in Ukraine, the number of establishments combining traditional recipes with modern presentation is growing— for example, Lviv restaurants recreating Galician cuisine, or Poltava taverns serving authentic borscht with dumplings made from local products. Such projects not only satisfy guests' gastronomic interest but also fulfill an educational mission, popularizing local heritage.

Preserving authenticity and ensuring cultural sensitivity require a comprehensive approach that covers recipe development, supplier selection, staff training, and marketing strategy. Only by harmoniously combining traditions and innovations can a restaurant create a unique offering that not only attracts visitors but also builds a positive cultural image of national cuisine worldwide.

One of the modern innovative tools in the restaurant business is nudges – behavioral interventions aimed at influencing dish choices while preserving the customer's full freedom of choice. Unlike direct advertising or administrative restrictions, nudges work through subtle changes in the decision-making environment,

stimulating desired actions without coercion. As Thaler and Sunstein [11] note in their seminal work *Nudge*, the effectiveness of this approach lies in combining insights from behavioral economics and consumer psychology, where even small contextual modifications can significantly alter a person's choice.

In the restaurant sphere, nudges are particularly relevant for promoting sustainable eating practices, reducing food waste, and encouraging demand for healthier and more environmentally friendly dishes. Research by Van Gestel et al. [9] demonstrated that even slight changes in menu presentation or the placement of items can significantly influence customer behavior. For example, replacing the plain name «vegetable salad» with a more detailed and appealing description such as «salad of local seasonal vegetables with aromatic herbal dressing» proved far more effective in encouraging selection. The effect is explained not only by rational reasoning but also by the creation of positive emotional and sensory expectations.

Similar results were obtained by Van den Broek et al. [10], who studied the influence of special menu labels on the selection of eco-friendly dishes. Experiments showed that the use of visual symbols— such as a «green leaf» or «chef's choice» icon— can increase demand for low-carbon or meat-free dishes. However, the authors warn that combining several different nudges does not always produce a synergistic effect; excessive stimuli or messages may cause information overload, reducing the impact of each tool.

An important aspect highlighted by Thaler and Sunstein [11] is the ethics of using nudges. The effectiveness of nudges in the restaurant business depends not only on the creativity of their implementation but also on their ethical dimension. They emphasize that ethical nudges are characterized by transparency, absence of manipulative pressure, and alignment with the establishment's declared values. In other words, if a restaurant positions itself as a promoter of healthy eating and ecological responsibility, the nudges it implements must reinforce these principles through real actions rather than mere marketing tricks.

In practice, this means that encouraging the choice of plant-based dishes should be accompanied by their high quality, use of local and seasonal products, and transparent information about ingredient origins. When customers see consistency between marketing messages and actual practices, their trust and brand loyalty increase.

Global practice shows that nudges can be effective not only in promoting healthy eating but also in reducing food waste. For example, offering smaller portions with attractive names or placing reusable containers near the food service area can subtly encourage guests to take only the amount they need.

Thus, nudges offer broad opportunities for combining commercial interests with social and environmental responsibility. To achieve lasting effects, they must be implemented systematically, taking into account cultural context, target audience, and the restaurant's strategic goals. Empirical research and practice confirm that the most effective interventions are those integrated into the overall business strategy, combining visual, verbal, and organizational elements, and supported by real changes in the product or service (Table 1).

Table 1 – Examples of effective nudges in the restaurant business

№	Type of nudge	Example (global practice)	Example (Ukrainian practice)	Expected effect
1	Verbal (appetizing descriptions)	«Garden herb salad with a hint of citrus» instead of «Vegetable salad» [9]	«Poltava borscht with fresh herb aroma» instead of «Borscht»	Increase in dish orders by 15-25%
2	Visual menu marker	«Green leaf» icon for low-carbon dishes	«Seasonal dish» pictogram in summer restaurant menus	Increase in sustainable dish selection by 10-20%
3	Menu item placement	Positioning healthier dishes first on the list	Placing vegetarian dishes at the beginning of the «Hot Dishes» section	Increase in orders by 8-12%
4	Portion size manipulation	Offering «small plates» with more attractive names	«Mini dumpling surprise» as a tasting portion	Reduction in food waste by 10-15%
5	Strategic product placement	Placing fruit at eye level in hotel buffets	Placing healthy snacks near the checkout in food courts	Increase in selection of healthy products by 15-30%
6	Social reinforcement	Menu note: «9 out of 10 guests choose this dish»	Sign: «The most popular dish among our regular guests»	Increase in orders of a specific item by 20-30%
7	Interactive experience	QR codes linking to videos about ingredient origins	Cards with stories about farmer suppliers	Increase in customer trust and loyalty

Source: authors' elaboration

Analysis of scientific sources confirms that food safety culture, waste management, ethical leadership, cultural sensitivity, and the use of ethical nudges form a multidimensional system in which the restaurant is not just a place for eating but an environment for creating cultural experiences. Hospitality industry establishments require managers with strategic vision, willingness to invest in staff, implement innovative practices, and at the same time preserve authenticity and respect for cultural diversity. For further development of this sector, it is necessary to develop standardized indicators for assessing the level of food culture and ethics, economic models proving the profitability of ethical practices, and educational programs preparing future HoReCa specialists to work in a world where ethical standards are as important a success criterion as gastronomic mastery.

In conclusion, food culture and ethics can be regarded as a strategic resource of the modern restaurant business, capable of shaping not only economic outcomes but also social capital, influencing the environmental situation, and fostering intercultural dialogue. Their integration into the daily operations of an establishment is not a temporary trend but a fundamental condition for sustainable development and competitiveness in a globalized economy.

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