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Branding Through Communication: the Impact of Communication Policy on the Perception of Hotel and Restaurant Services

The article explores current issues related to the development of effective communication policies in the hotel and restaurant industry (HoReCa) as a key factor in shaping brand perception, emotional attachment, and long-term customer loyalty. In the context of digitalization, intense competition, and growing customer-centric expectations, hospitality businesses face new challenges in the communication sphere. The purpose of the study is to provide a theoretical rationale and practical analysis of the impact of communication policy on brand formation in hotel and restaurant services, as well as to identify effective approaches to brand communications in a dynamic market environment.

The paper systematizes scientific approaches to branding, including the concepts of P. Kotler, D. Aaker, and K. Keller, reveals the structure and content of communication policy in the HoReCa business, and outlines the role of integrated marketing communications in creating a holistic consumer experience. A thorough analysis is conducted on the use of digital communication channels such as social media, mobile applications, and CRM systems, which foster emotional connections with consumers. Key factors of effective brand communication are identified in the context of market trends and consumer behavior patterns, including authenticity, consistency, personalization, dialogical interaction, adaptation to technological innovations, and a focus on social responsibility. It is substantiated that in conditions of digital transformation, the communication policy in HoReCa should be considered a multidimensional strategic system of brand management.

The article proposes practical recommendations for improving communication policies, including omnichannel integration, the development of internal communication culture, active use of SMM, online reputation management, and value-based brand positioning. It is emphasized that the coherence and consistency of communications shape competitive advantages, strengthen customer trust, and contribute to the sustainable development of hotel and restaurant enterprises. Future research should focus on empirical measurement of communication effectiveness and modeling of strategies in different segments of the HoReCa industry.

communication policy, branding, hotel and restaurant business, HoReCa, integrated marketing communications, digital channels, emotional loyalty, brand perception.

Statement of the problem. In today's environment, the hotel and restaurant industry operate within a context of intense competition, rising consumer expectations, and the continuous need for innovative service renewal. One of the key factors in establishing a sustainable market position for enterprises in the HoReCa sector is effective branding, which is based not only on visual or value-based brand attributes but also on a well-structured, strategically designed communication policy. Communication, as a tool of interaction with the target audience, increasingly defines the nature and depth of brand perception among consumers.

At the same time, despite the active use of communication channels in the hotel and restaurant business, the comprehensive impact of communication policy on shaping consumer perception of service quality, brand values, and its emotional and psychological reception remains underexplored. There is a pressing need for in-depth analysis of how strategic communication-particularly the tools of public relations, digital communications, and emotional branding-influences a company's image and the level of customer loyalty.

Moreover, contemporary challenges such as digitalization, global crises, and the cultural diversity of audiences necessitate a rethinking of traditional approaches to communication development. Consequently, the issue of forming an adaptive, authentic, and socially responsible communication strategy becomes increasingly relevant - one that not only

conveys brand messages but also establishes a profound emotional connection with the consumer, thereby strengthening the brand's position in a dynamic service market.

Analysis of recent researches and publications. In modern marketing, a brand is viewed not merely as a name or a symbol but as a set of tangible and intangible attributes that exist in the minds of consumers [16]. In particular, M.O. Riabenka and A.V. Lukianets emphasize that a brand encompasses the actual characteristics of a product or service and their subjective «imprint» - the associations, emotions, and values shaped through marketing communications [16]. Most Ukrainian researchers [7, 8, 18, 20] interpret a brand according to a «non-product scheme», perceiving it as an intangible complement to the product co-created by the producer and the consumer. S. Giglio, E. Pantano, F. Bilotta, and T. Melewar [23] aptly note that «brand = perception», meaning that the essence of a brand lies in the perception of the target audience. This understanding underscores the critical role of communications: the brand image is formed through the interplay of company-generated messages and consumer feedback. Theoretical branding models highlight the importance of consistency between brand identity and brand communication. For instance, according to D. Aaker, brand identity represents its «heart» and «soul», which make a brand unique and appealing [22].

D.S. Faivyshenko [20] explores the concept of strategic brand management. Accordingly, strategic communication should serve to convey brand identity externally, shaping the desired perception. Strategic brand management encompasses the definition of the brand's mission, vision, objectives, and long-term development guidelines (brand vision), which collectively ensure its competitiveness [20]. D. Faivyshenko emphasizes that in a highly competitive environment, the timely implementation of a brand strategy is essential - defining a clear strategic mission and brand objectives outlines the direction of development and enhances the brand's significance in the minds of consumers [20].

Theoretical models - such as the brand equity concepts developed by D. Aaker [22] and K. Keller [25, 26] - converge on the idea that brand value is created through perception, which is shaped by consistent and relevant communications. Strategic brand communication is implemented through a comprehensive marketing communication policy - namely, the purposeful use of promotional tools (advertising, public relations, sales promotion, digital content, etc.) aimed at creating a desired brand image. Researchers identify various approaches to communication strategies within the HoReCa sector. For instance, T. Oklander et al. [12], in their study of communication strategies in hotel enterprises, determined that the most effective approaches are broad-penetration strategies (mass market coverage) and intensive marketing strategies (active promotion), depending on the pricing segment of the establishment. Thus, branding theory underscores that without a well-defined communication strategy, a brand cannot effectively build value in the minds of consumers.

With regard to the communication policy in the hotel and restaurant business, which encompasses all forms of interaction with clients that influence their perception of the brand - the experience of Ukrainian HoReCa enterprises highlights the critical role of a well-designed communication strategy in fostering customer loyalty. In particular, H. Yankovska [21] notes that under current challenges, competitive advantages are achieved by those hotels that have established an effective system of marketing communications with their customers and have succeeded in building high levels of customer loyalty.

M. Riabenka and A. Lukianets [16] examine the process of brand development in hospitality establishments. They emphasize that a well-established brand with clearly defined values facilitates the promotion of new services and strengthens the market position of an enterprise. Moreover, they highlight that professionally implemented marketing communications during brand formation protect hotel and restaurant businesses from competitors' marketing attacks and allow for reduced promotional costs while increasing

market entry effectiveness [16].

R.V. Fedorovych points out that investments in communication directly influence the market success of HoReCa brands. Advertising has traditionally been a key instrument in the communication strategy of the hospitality sector. It not only informs consumers about service offerings but also shapes the brand image, creating a unique market perception of the company [10].

A.V. Karpenko and M.V. Khacer argue that advertising captures attention toward hotel or restaurant services and forms an image in the minds of the target audience that distinguishes the establishment from its competitors [6]. L.F. Romanenko investigates the specifics of online advertising, noting that advertising messages can be used effectively to position a service by emphasizing unique advantages (such as signature cuisine or distinctive interior design) and thus influence customer expectations and evaluations [15].

Special attention should be given to research on the role of digital communications. Social media, online reviews, and user-generated content (UGC) significantly influence the perception of hotel and restaurant brands. The study by V.Yu. Svitlychna and S.A. Aleksandrova [17] demonstrates that active two-way communication on social media enhances brand trust and audience engagement. According to the authors, the use of social platforms enables hospitality establishments to respond promptly to consumer inquiries, collect feedback, and consider customer preferences fostering open dialogue and building brand trust [17]. The researchers emphasize the importance of social platforms in strengthening brand recognition and attracting new audiences through viral content and peer recommendations [17]. Engaging influencers and bloggers has become a widespread approach to promoting hospitality services: endorsements from public figures or travel bloggers can generate increased interest in a venue and help create a desirable brand image (e.g., as a trendy or exclusive destination) in the minds of consumers [17].

The role of service in shaping the brand of hotel and restaurant complexes is examined by V. Demus and R. Korsak [4]. The perception of a hotel or restaurant brand is formed at the intersection of communication influences and actual service experience. Communication policy creates expectations regarding service quality, while the direct service either confirms or contradicts these expectations, thereby influencing the brand's future reputation. Thus, service quality itself becomes an integral part of brand communication. In their study, V. Demus and R. Korsak emphasize that in the hospitality sector, service is a key factor in brand formation: the quality of service delivery has a direct impact on customer loyalty, the establishment's reputation, and its overall success [4].

In the study conducted by H.-T. Tso, C.-C. Hou, C.-S. Chen, and M.-C. Ngo, it is emphasized that even technological innovations, such as online check-in, mobile keys, and digital menus - are integral elements of brand communication, signaling the brand's innovativeness and customer-centric orientation. The researchers found that a well-designed hotel environment (servicescape) and a high level of service quality delivered by staff significantly enhance customers' positive internal responses (such as emotions and satisfaction). These, in turn, increase customer engagement with the brand and foster brand loyalty [27].

Visual and atmospheric elements of service also serve as powerful brand communicators. Interior design, music, scents, and the overall ambiance all contribute to the emotional backdrop upon which a guest's perception is built. The emotions experienced during a stay at a hotel or restaurant are retained in memory and associated with the brand. A cozy and welcoming atmosphere can foster an emotional connection between the guest and the place. An international study by S. Giglio, E. Pantano, F. Bilotta, and T. Melewar [23], which analyzed large datasets of customer-generated photographs of luxury hotels, demonstrated that images of guestroom and restaurant interiors have a substantial impact on

brand perception. These visual attributes often shape the guest's overall impression of the brand. The findings revealed that photograph-based analysis helps identify the specific features that most strongly influence the customer experience - typically the details of decor, ambiance, and environment [23]. Thus, non-verbal factors, such as visual style and service environment - constitute a language of brand communication: they can reinforce brand positioning (e.g., luxurious decor affirms the brand's luxury status) or, conversely, undermine it if they fail to align with the brand's promised identity.

The role of communication through experience should not be overlooked. The concept of brand experience posits that every consumer touchpoint with the brand generates a specific experience that shapes the overall perception of the brand. In the HoReCa sector, «moments of truth» - ranging from the booking process and hotel check-in to interactions with a waiter in a restaurant - are particularly critical. The study by E. Heleta-Svrakic [24] demonstrated that controlled brand communications (such as tone of voice and messaging), when aligned with a clearly defined brand personality, can have a significant impact on consumer loyalty. Specifically, brand personality traits such as competence and sophistication are greatly reinforced through consistent communication and correlate with higher levels of trust and repeat visits [24]. In other words, when a brand consistently communicates professionalism and care, customers perceive it as reliable (competent) and prestigious (sophisticated), which in turn reinforces their loyalty [24].

Despite the growing number of scholarly works devoted to various aspects and challenges of brand communication in the hospitality industry, a number of critical issues remain underexplored. In particular, research on branding through the lens of communication policy in the hotel and restaurant business requires deeper theoretical and methodological reflection. Contemporary academic discourse tends to focus primarily on general issues of marketing strategy development and promotional tools, often overlooking a systematic analysis of how different types of communication - traditional, digital, and interpersonal - affect the process of consumer brand perception specifically within the HoReCa sector.

Thus, the scholarly development of the topic «Branding through Communication: The Impact of Communication Policy on the Perception of Hotel and Restaurant Services» is highly relevant both for advancing branding theory within the framework of the service economy and for improving management practices in the hotel and restaurant business. It serves as a foundation for enhancing brand competitiveness and sustainability in the face of increasingly variable consumer expectations and behavior.

Statement of the objective. The purpose of this study is to provide a theoretical rationale and practical analysis of the impact of communication policy on the formation of brand perception in the hotel and restaurant service sector, as well as to identify effective approaches to building brand communications in the HoReCa industry in order to enhance competitiveness and customer loyalty. In accordance with the stated purpose, the research aims to address the following objectives:

- 1) to reveal the theoretical foundations of branding and communication policy and to characterize modern approaches to brand formation in the service sector;
- 2) to analyze the structure and content of communication policy in hotel and restaurant enterprises from the perspective of its impact on consumer brand perception;
- 3) to determine the role of integrated marketing communications in building brand identity and shaping a holistic consumer experience;
- 4) to explore the specifics of using digital communication channels and their influence on emotional engagement and customer loyalty;
- 5) to identify the key success factors of brand communications in the HoReCa sector in the context of current market trends and consumer behavior patterns;
- 6) to propose practical recommendations for improving brand communication policy

in the hotel and restaurant industry, taking into account digitalization and the growing importance of customer-centricity.

The main material. According to L.V. Balabanova, V.V. Kholod, and I.V. Balabanova, branding - is a purposeful process of forming a unique brand image that reflects the company's values and distinguishes its offering from competitors [2]. Branding - is a systematic process of creating, developing, and managing a brand with the aim of establishing a unique identity, achieving market differentiation, and ensuring long-term value for both the consumer and the company. In a broad sense, branding encompasses not only the external attributes of a company (such as its name, logo, color scheme, and slogan) but also the entire system of associations, emotions, and values that arise in the consumer's mind through interaction with a product, service, or organization. The theoretical foundations of branding emerged at the intersection of marketing, consumer psychology, sociology, and management. Classical approaches developed by scholars such as P. Kotler, D. Aaker, and K. Keller define a brand as a «promise of value» that must be clearly perceived, consistently communicated through various channels, and reinforced by the experience of using the product or service. According to D. Aaker, a brand is not merely a trademark but a system comprising: - brand identity – what the brand aspires to be in the eyes of the consumer; - brand equity – the added value the brand provides to a product; - brand loyalty – the consumer's willingness to consistently choose the brand [22]. K. Keller expands on this with the concept of customer-based brand equity, emphasizing the consumer's perception of the brand in terms of: - brand awareness; - strength, uniqueness, and relevance of associations; - emotional attachment; willingness to repurchase [25].

In contemporary conditions, branding is viewed not only as a marketing tool but also as a strategic management function that influences a company's reputation, value, capitalization, and relationships with customers and partners. Modern brands seek to embody values and meanings that resonate with the expectations of their target audiences. This shift has led to a transition from transactional branding (focused solely on sales) to relational branding, which emphasizes the development of long-term relationships. Scholarly literature identifies several key functions of a brand: 1. Identification – ensures recognition of the product or company. 2. Guarantee – signals consistent quality. 3. Emotional – fosters a sense of trust, affection, and belonging. 4. Communicative – conveys values, mission, and style. 5. Differentiation – helps distinguish the brand from competitors in the market [26].

Thus, branding is not merely an element of visual identity or advertising, but rather a comprehensive communicative and strategic practice that shapes the unique positioning of an enterprise and contributes to the development of sustainable competitive advantage. In the service sector, particularly in the hotel and restaurant industry (HoReCa) - the brand acquires special significance, as services are intangible, and consumers rely heavily on reputation and the brand's promise of quality[19]. Under such conditions, the brand functions as a representative marker of quality, reliability, and emotional comfort, compensating for the consumer's inability to test the service in advance. It is through the brand that consumers form their expectations of service, while the enterprise conveys its uniqueness, dependability, and values. Branding in the service sector goes far beyond visual elements (such as logos, corporate colors, or names); it encompasses the entire customer experience, including the atmosphere of the venue, service standards, the emotional tone of staff communication, online reviews, and even corporate ethics. As noted by T.M. Melnyk, in the hospitality industry, a brand is formed as a set of impressions accumulated by the consumer throughout their interaction with the service, and it becomes the foundation for repeat patronage [11]. Therefore, branding in the hotel and restaurant business serves as a strategic tool for managing intangible assets, enabling companies to build strong emotional connections with customers and secure a stable competitive position in the market through an integrated system

of communications, service standards, and brand identity.

The next step in this study is to examine the structure and content of the communication policy of hotel and restaurant enterprises from the standpoint of their impact on consumer brand perception. A company's communication policy encompasses a system of tools and channels through which it interacts with its target audience, conveying brand-related messages [5]. The components of communication policy include advertising, public relations (PR), sales promotion, personal selling, digital marketing, and other marketing communication instruments that together create a coherent image of the company in the consumer's mind [17]. Modern approaches to brand formation in the service sector emphasize the creation of emotional connections with customers and the development of a positive consumer experience, rather than focusing solely on the tangible attributes of the product [2, 11]. The concept of service branding highlights that every interaction with a customer is an act of communication that influences brand perception. Accordingly, service quality, staff behavior, and the overall atmosphere of the establishment - all become integral parts of the brand and must be strategically managed by the enterprise.

Key elements of a brand include its identity (such as the name, logo, and corporate style) as well as the brand promise - the associations and values the company seeks to instill in the minds of consumers [9]. Theoretical foundations of branding emphasize that a successful brand in the service sector ensures market differentiation and fosters long-term customer loyalty through a consistent and persuasive communication strategy.

In the context of influencing consumer brand perception, the structure of communication policy in hotel and restaurant enterprises appears as a systematic combination of strategic and tactical elements, ensuring comprehensive brand positioning within the information space. Its effectiveness is determined by the harmonious integration of content components (what is communicated) and communication channels (how and through which mediums the message is delivered), taking into account the specific nature of service-based interactions. Based on an analysis of scholarly sources and operational practices within HoReCa establishments, the following key structural components of communication policy can be identified:

1. Conceptual core of communication – the brand's mission, brand promise, values, and attributes that remain consistent over time – and define the ideological foundation of all communications.

2. Instrumental component – a set of marketing communication tools such as advertising, public relations (PR), digital communications, BTL activities, influencer marketing, and events, all tailored to the target audience.

3. Organizational-communication environment – the internal service culture, staff behavior standards, and spatial design, all of which also function as channels for conveying brand messages.

4. Feedback and monitoring – tools for evaluating consumer responses (online reviews, social media feedback, Net Promoter Score [NPS], customer journey maps), which allow for ongoing adjustment of the communication strategy.

5. Content of communication policy is developed according to the principles of emotional, cognitive, and behavioral influence. The emotional dimension involves the use of associative imagery, storytelling, visual symbols, and service experiences that evoke trust, care, and satisfaction. The cognitive level focuses on informing consumers about service quality, benefits, safety, and uniqueness. The behavioral dimension stimulates repeat purchases, recommendations, and active participation in brand communication.

A distinctive feature of effective communication policy in the hospitality industry is its service-centricity, meaning that service interactions are treated as full-fledged communication tools. Every customer touchpoint with the enterprise - whether digital, physical, or emotional

- must be content-aligned with the brand strategy. This necessitates a high level of internal communication culture among staff and requires ongoing training and development.

From the perspective of brand perception, it is message coherence, the consistency of communications, their emotional valence, and their visual and semantic integration with the corporate style that determines a brand's ability to form a clear, stable, and positive image in the consumer's mind. In the service sector, where the tangible component is minimal and customer interaction is highly personalized, such integrity is critically important.

Thus, communication policy in the hotel and restaurant business should be regarded as a multidimensional system of brand management, grounded in emotional-communicative interaction, service experience, and the consistent delivery of brand values across all customer touchpoints. Its strategic construction determines not only the level of brand awareness but also the depth of the consumer's emotional connection with the brand an increasingly critical factor in fostering sustainable loyalty under conditions of intense market competition.

The communication policy of HoReCa enterprises has a complex structure, encompassing both external and internal communications aimed at shaping the desired brand image in the minds of consumers. Communications include mass media advertising, digital marketing (websites, social media pages, email campaigns), sales promotion tools (special offers, loyalty programs), PR activities (participation in exhibitions, sponsorships, media relations), and other instruments that directly address the customer. Internal communications refer to service standards and scripts, staff training, corporate culture, and internal PR, all of which ensure the transmission of brand values through service quality and employee behavior. In this context, the staff acts as a carrier of the brand: their manner of communication, appearance, friendliness, and competence form an integral part of the communication policy and significantly shape customers' perception of the brand. The content of communication policy is defined by the brand's positioning and its target audience. Structurally, it can be understood through three key dimensions: what is communicated (core messages, brand value propositions); how and where it is communicated (choice of channels and formats); how feedback is obtained (consumer response monitoring and review management).

A well-balanced combination of these elements creates a cohesive brand image in the minds of consumers. For instance, if a hotel positions itself as family-friendly and cozy, its advertising will emphasize family values, its social media content will focus on family-oriented themes, the interior design and services will be tailored to children's comfort, and the staff will convey a caring and attentive attitude. Such alignment across communication touchpoints reinforces brand trust and shapes a clear brand perception that corresponds to the declared positioning. In the context of growing competition in Ukraine's HoReCa market, a well-developed and consistently implemented communication policy becomes a critical prerequisite for successful branding and a decisive factor influencing consumer choice.

It is also important to define and substantiate the role of integrated marketing communications (IMC) in building brand identity and shaping a holistic consumer experience. The concept of IMC entails the coordination of all communication channels and tools used by a company to deliver a consistent, coherent, and persuasive brand message to the consumer [12]. In the HoReCa industry, implementing IMC means that the consumer receives a unified brand message across all interaction stages - from the first exposure to an advertisement or social media post to the actual consumption experience in a hotel or restaurant. This approach supports the construction of brand identity - a set of associations and characteristics the brand seeks to be identified with. Brand identity includes not only the name and logo but also defined brand values, tone of communication, service style, and the ambiance of the establishment - everything that distinguishes the brand [2]. Integrated communications play a central role in shaping this identity, as they ensure the consistency of all brand messages and

consumer touchpoints. Advertising slogans, visual style, social media content, staff behavior, and even background music or interior design when all these elements are aligned and reflect the same values and imagery, they engrave a clear and lasting brand image in the consumer's mind [12]. This coherence creates a synergy effect: the impact of each channel is amplified by the support of others, forming a holistic and recognizable brand. A holistic consumer experience is the sum of all impressions and emotions a client receives while interacting with the brand across different service stages. IMC facilitates the formation of such an experience by enabling seamless transitions between touchpoints. For instance, a guest may first encounter an attractive restaurant post on Instagram, then visit the website to reserve a table, receive an email confirmation, and finally arrive at the restaurant where they receive the same level of care and service style promised in the online communications. If the brand demonstrates consistency at every step with unified visual elements, tone of voice, and alignment between expectations and actual experience, then the customer develops a positive and trust-based perception, strengthening their emotional connection to the brand. As a result, integrated communications help build long-term relationships with customers, as consumers perceive the brand as cohesive and reliable throughout every stage of interaction.

The next step in the study is to identify the specific features of digital communication channels and their impact on emotional attachment and customer loyalty. In the digital age, the communication strategies of hotels and restaurants are increasingly shifting into the online space. Digital channels - websites, social media platforms (such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok), messengers (Viber, Telegram), mobile applications, and email newsletters have become the primary tools for interaction between HoReCa brands and their customers. Their main advantage lies in the ability to maintain continuous two-way communication: businesses can promptly inform their audiences about news, special offers, or changes in operations, while consumers can leave feedback, ask questions, and share their experiences. Such active, real-time interaction significantly enhances customer engagement [14]. Social media, in particular, serve as powerful instruments for fostering emotional attachment to a brand. Through platforms like Facebook or Instagram, restaurants and hotels can showcase the informal side of their operations - sharing stories about the team, behind-the-scenes moments of food preparation, real guest experiences, and cozy snapshots from daily life. This type of content evokes positive emotions and a sense of closeness with the brand, which becomes the foundation for building emotional attachment and long-term loyalty [3].

Content that resonates with the values and lifestyle of the target audience creates an association between the brand and positive emotional experiences. For example, if a café positions itself as a place for youth leisure, publishing humorous videos, engaging in lively comment interactions, and using contemporary slang all help establish an emotional connection with a younger audience. When consumers feel this connection, their loyalty increases, they are more likely to choose the brand repeatedly due to a sense of trust and affinity. Digital channels also allow for flexible personalization of communications, which is a key factor in strengthening loyalty. Mobile applications of hotels and restaurants, along with loyalty programs featuring digital cards, enable the collection of data on guest preferences and visit history. Based on this data, brands can offer targeted special offers: birthday discounts and bonuses, or personalized recommendations for dishes or services that may appeal to a specific customer [14]. Such individualized attention through digital channels enhances emotional attachment, as the customer feels valued and seen. Another important feature of digital communication is the ability to provide immediate feedback. Guest reviews on platforms such as Google, Facebook, or specialized sites like TripAdvisor allow brands to quickly learn about complaints or praise. A timely brand response whether thanking a guest for positive feedback or professionally addressing a reported issue - demonstrates customer-centricity and care, which positively influences reputation and loyalty [3].

In the Ukrainian HoReCa sector, an increasing number of establishments are adopting chatbots to respond to frequently asked questions, online reservation systems for booking tables or rooms, and messenger notifications to update customers on order status. All of these tools enhance service convenience and help cultivate a customer habit of interacting with the brand through user-friendly digital solutions. Thus, digital communication channels not only expand audience reach but also create new opportunities for emotional engagement with customers and the development of long-term loyalty [3].

It is also important to identify the factors that determine the effectiveness of brand communications in the HoReCa sector, taking into account current market trends and consumer behavior patterns.

The effectiveness of a brand's communication strategy is determined by how well it aligns with current market trends and the needs of target consumers [13]. In the HoReCa sector, several key factors influence the success of brand communications:

1. Clear positioning and message consistency. A brand must have a clearly defined unique selling proposition and a set of values that are consistently communicated across all channels. Alignment of brand imagery in advertising, social media, websites, and direct service interactions helps create a unified and recognizable style. When brand messages do not contradict each other, confusion is avoided, and consumer trust is strengthened.

2. Emotional appeal and authenticity. Today's consumers, especially younger generations, value genuineness and emotional closeness to brands. Communications that evoke real emotions, such as touching guest stories, humorous behind-the-scenes moments, or a focus on human connection - can establish stronger bonds than purely informational messages. It is essential that the tone of communication reflects the brand's actual behavior. Any discrepancy between what is promised and what is delivered undermines trust, while authenticity enhances brand reputation.

3. Personalization and audience segmentation. Taking into account the behavioral characteristics of different consumer segments improves communication effectiveness. For business travelers, the focus may be on speed and professional amenities; for families with children, on safety and entertainment; for younger audiences, on trendy design and social media presence. The brand should adapt its messaging and channels accordingly, for example, promoting family offers via Facebook parenting groups, while advertising youth events through Instagram and TikTok. Personalized messaging (such as addressing customers by name or suggesting services based on prior visits) significantly increases engagement.

4. Use of current trends and technologies. Brand communications must stay «in tune with the times». Consumers today respond positively to innovations such as mobile ordering apps, digital menus, contactless payment systems, and AR/VR hotel tours. These technologies enhance not only the service itself but also serve as engaging content for brand communications.

5. Sustainability and social responsibility. A growing number of customers are attentive to a brand's environmental and social impact. Communication strategies that highlight eco-initiatives, such as reducing plastic use, supporting local producers, or engaging in charity work resonate strongly with conscious consumers and add extra value to the brand.

6. Two-way dialogue and consumer engagement. Communication has evolved from a one-way broadcast to a dialogue. Effective strategies involve actively engaging customers, for example, conducting service quality surveys, collecting feedback, or organizing interactive social media activities (e.g., contests or challenges). When customers feel their opinions influence business decisions, their loyalty increases, as the brand is perceived as more attentive and responsive.

7. Reputation management and referrals. In the digital age, word-of-mouth (WOM) and online reviews have a major impact on consumer behavior. A successful communication

strategy includes building a positive reputation and encouraging customers to share recommendations. This can be achieved through both service quality and communication techniques, such as inviting guests to leave a review, offering referral programs («bring a friend»), or reposting user-generated content from satisfied customers. Seeing real stories and endorsements from others significantly boosts trust and facilitates the customer's decision in favor of the brand.

Given current market trends in Ukraine (including digitalization, post-pandemic transformations, the emergence of a new generation of consumers, and increasing competition from both local and international players), HoReCa brands must adopt flexible and proactive communication strategies [9]. For example, in the post-COVID-19 period, it became especially important to communicate health and safety measures (such as disinfection protocols and physical distancing) to restore guest trust. During times of social or economic crisis, messages highlighting corporate social responsibility, community support, and patriotic initiatives have gained particular relevance. Such communications by Ukrainian hotels and restaurants in 2022–2023 resonated strongly with the public. Brands that are able to capture these sentiments and adapt their communication strategies accordingly gain a competitive advantage in the form of enhanced consumer loyalty and respect [1].

Thus, the effectiveness of brand communications in the HoReCa sector is determined by a company's ability to «speak the same language» as its customers, to align with their current values and expectations, while employing modern marketing tools and channels.

Based on the conducted research, it is advisable to formulate practical recommendations for improving the communication policies of hotel and restaurant brands, taking into account the growing impact of digitalization and the increasing importance of customer centricity.

Drawing from the analysis, the following practical steps are proposed to enhance the communication strategies of Ukrainian HoReCa brands under current conditions of digital development and customer-oriented transformation:

1. Develop omnichannel presence. Ensure a seamless customer experience across both online and offline channels. All information about services, menus, rooms, prices, and promotions should be consistently presented across the website, social media platforms, printed materials, and directly at the establishment. For example, table or room reservations should be equally convenient through various channels - phone, website, mobile app, or messenger. Omnichannel communication enhances customer convenience and reinforces the perception of the brand as technologically advanced.

2. Personalize communications and leverage CRM systems. Implement customer relationship management (CRM) systems to collect and analyze data on customer preferences and behavior. Based on this data, personalize offers, such as sending greetings on special occasions (e.g., birthdays, anniversaries), providing exclusive discounts to frequent guests, or recommending new services aligned with previous purchases. Personalization demonstrates customer-centricity and strengthens guests' emotional attachment to the brand.

3. Invest in staff training. Enhance employee qualifications in communication and service delivery. Staff represent the «face» of the brand, so training in effective communication, conflict resolution, and service standards is essential. The internal communication policy should clearly convey the brand's mission and values to all employees, enabling them to authentically reflect these values in interactions with guests. Motivating staff to uphold high service standards through initiatives such as recognition programs or bonuses for positive customer feedback also contributes to improved brand communication.

4. Active SMM and content marketing. Develop a clear social media strategy by regularly producing high-quality, visually appealing, and relevant content. Alternate informative posts (e.g., about the menu, services, or promotions) with engaging and

entertaining content, such as contests, polls, culinary tips, or behind-the-scenes stories from the establishment. It is crucial to respond promptly to followers' comments and messages, and to encourage guests to share their own content, tag the location or brand in their posts. This enhances the brand's visibility in the digital space and helps build a community around the brand.

5. Implement technologies to enhance service. Actively adopt new digital solutions and clearly communicate their benefits to customers. For example, introduce electronic menus or QR-code ordering systems in restaurants, online check-in for hotels, and chatbots for 24/7 support. Marketing communications should emphasize how these innovations make the guest experience more convenient, efficient, and secure. Such messaging highlights the brand's innovative character and its commitment to making customers' lives easier.

6. Monitor and manage online reputation. Assign dedicated staff to regularly monitor reviews across various platforms and social media. Develop a response protocol for handling feedback: express appreciation for positive reviews, respond neutrally and constructively to negative ones, and offer solutions or compensation when appropriate. Open and professional engagement, even with dissatisfied customers, demonstrates that the brand values each guest and is committed to improvement. This approach earns respect from the broader audience observing the brand's communication.

7. Communicate brand values and social responsibility. In modern marketing, it is important not only to promote products or services but also to showcase the soul of the brand. It is recommended to highlight social and charitable initiatives, environmental efforts, and participation in local communities through brand communications. For example, informing customers that a portion of profits is donated to charity or that the establishment is switching to eco-friendly packaging, such messages resonate with the values of many consumers and strengthen emotional connection. The brand is perceived as responsible and socially engaged, which increases customer loyalty, as people are more inclined to support businesses that contribute to society.

8. Implementing these steps will enable hotel and restaurant brands to develop a more effective and modern communication policy. A customer-centric approach, combined with the active use of digital tools, will foster deeper emotional engagement with the target audience and enhance guest satisfaction and loyalty. As a result, HoReCa businesses will not only attract new customers but also retain existing ones, transforming them into brand advocates - a particularly important outcome in the dynamic and competitive hospitality services market of Ukraine.

Thus, in the context of digitalization and the growing emphasis on customer-centricity, the communication policy of hotel and restaurant enterprises assumes a new strategic role - not only as a tool for promotion, but as an instrument for building long-term emotional connections with consumers. The implementation of an omnichannel approach, personalized interaction based on CRM systems, active presence in digital media, enhancement of staff communication skills, online reputation management, and a strong focus on social values together shape a holistic, effective, and customer-oriented communication model. These approaches enable HoReCa brands not only to maintain contact with customers but also to influence their emotional perception, loyalty, and behavioral decisions. As a result, communication policy becomes a key factor in enhancing competitiveness, strengthening market positions, and ensuring the sustainable development of HoReCa enterprises amid rising consumer expectations and the high informational saturation of the market.

Conclusions and prospects for further researches. As a result of the conducted research, it was established that the communication policy of hotel and restaurant enterprises (HoReCa) plays a crucial role in shaping brand perception, emotional attachment, and long-term customer loyalty. In today's market environment, characterized by dynamism,

information saturation, intense competition, and rising customer-centric expectations, effective communication serves not only as a tool of marketing influence but also as a strategic function for managing relationships with consumers.

Communication policy in the HoReCa sector should be based on the principles of consistency, authenticity, integration, and emotional engagement. The instrumental combination of external channels (digital media, PR, advertising, branded content) and internal channels (service standards, staff communication culture) enables the creation of a coherent brand identity and a positive consumer experience. It has been determined that digital communication channels not only ensure timeliness and reach but also offer new opportunities for personalization, interactivity, and the development of emotional dialogue with the audience. At the same time, the importance of reputation management and social responsibility is growing, as they become integral components of the brand's value-based communication package.

The practical recommendations proposed within the framework of this study, including the development of omnichannel presence, personalized communication and CRM use, investment in staff training, active SMM and content marketing, implementation of service-enhancing technologies, monitoring and management of online reputation, and the communication of brand values and social responsibility - are aimed at building an effective, customer-oriented, and adaptive communication policy. Such a policy can enhance the competitiveness of hotel and restaurant brands, strengthen consumer trust, and ensure the sustainable development of the business.

Future research should focus on the following directions: empirical investigation of the impact of different types of communication (visual, interpersonal, digital) on consumer behavior and emotional brand perception in the HoReCa sector; modeling the effectiveness of integrated communication strategies across various segments of the hotel and restaurant industry (luxury, budget, boutique, etc.); development of metrics and KPIs for evaluating the effectiveness of communication policy in the context of brand management and the digital transformation of service enterprises. These research directions will help enhance the scientific grounding of managerial decisions in branding and communication within the hospitality industry.

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Брендинг через комунікацію: вплив комунікативної політики на сприйняття готельно-ресторанного сервісу

У статті досліджуються актуальні питання формування ефективної комунікативної політики у сфері готельно-ресторанного бізнесу (HoReCa), як ключового чинника побудови бренд-сприйняття, емоційної прив'язаності та довготривалої лояльності споживачів. У сучасних умовах цифровізації, високої конкуренції та зростання клієнтоцентричних очікувань, підприємства індустрії гостинності стикаються з новітніми викликами у сфері комунікацій. Мета дослідження полягає в теоретичному обґрунтуванні та практичному аналізі впливу комунікативної політики на процес формування бренду в

готельно-ресторанному сервісі, а також у визначенні ефективних підходів до бренд-комунікацій в умовах динамічного ринку.

У роботі систематизовано наукові підходи до брендингу, зокрема концепції Ф. Котлера, Д. Аакера, К. Келлера, розкрито структуру та зміст комунікативної політики HoReCa-бізнесу, визначено роль інтегрованих маркетингових комунікацій у побудові цілісного споживчого досвіду. Проведено ґрунтовний аналіз особливостей використання цифрових каналів комунікації, таких як соціальні мережі, мобільні застосунки, CRM-системи, що формують емоційний зв'язок зі споживачами. Визначено чинники ефективності бренд-комунікацій у контексті ринкових тенденцій та поведінкових патернів клієнтів: автентичність, послідовність, персоналізація, діалогічність, адаптація до технологічних новацій та акцент на соціальну відповідальність. Обґрунтовано, що в умовах цифрової трансформації комунікативна політика HoReCa повинна розглядатися як багатовимірна стратегічна система управління брендом.

Запропоновано практичні рекомендації щодо її вдосконалення, які охоплюють омніканальну інтеграцію, розвиток внутрішньої комунікаційної культури, активне використання SMM, управління онлайн-репутацією та ціннісне позиціонування бренду. Підкреслено, що саме цілісність і послідовність комунікацій формує конкурентну перевагу, зміцнює довіру клієнтів і сприяє сталому розвитку підприємств готельно-ресторанної сфери. Перспективи подальших досліджень пов'язані з емпіричним вимірюванням ефективності комунікацій та моделюванням стратегій у різних сегментах HoReCa.

комунікативна політика, брендинг, готельно-ресторанний бізнес, HoReCa, інтегровані маркетингові комунікації, цифрові канали, емоційна лояльність, бренд-сприйняття.

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