

Menu Diversity Strategies: Navigating Diverse Markets for Restaurateurs

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Abstract: The article discusses the methods of adapting the restaurant business to the diverse cultural and demographic preferences of consumers. The emphasis is on the importance of inclusivity and authenticity in marketing strategies, which allows you to attract and retain the attention of different ethnic groups, genders and religions. In the context of globalization and increasing competition, restaurateurs are forced to take these factors into account in order to create strong connections with customers and increase brand loyalty. The article analyzes successful examples of the introduction of diversity marketing, including the use of local ingredients, adaptation to the growing popularity of plant-based diets and the introduction of entertainment activities on the menu. The result is the assertion that diversity marketing not only promotes fairness and equity, but is also beneficial from a business point of view.

Keywords: menu diversity strategies, menu diversity, different markets, orientation of restaurants to different markets.

1. Introduction

In the rapidly changing modern world, the issues of diversity in goods and services have become central elements in effective marketing strategies. This is directly related to the fact that the audience today is more diverse than ever before. Universal marketing methods that were previously effective are now losing their relevance, as consumers increasingly demand authenticity and inclusiveness from the brands they trust. To build strong and meaningful relationships with customers, companies need to consider these changes in their strategies.

The restaurant business has become the most dynamically developing sector of retail. Experts associate this trend with the purchasing habits of millennials, who value dining experiences more than traditional shopping or entertainment.

Despite its growing popularity, the restaurant and hospitality industry remains a complex business sphere. According to Forbes, although restaurant profits are increasing, this growth is accompanied by intensified competition within the industry. To stand out, some restaurants are choosing to diversify their income, for example, through the sale of retail goods.

The purpose of this article is to examine menu diversity strategies as a way for restaurants to navigate different market conditions.

2. Changing Eating Habits in Restaurants and Existing Menu Diversification Strategies

The growing popularity of plant-based alternatives is a notable trend. According to forecasts, by 2032, the global market for plant-based products will reach approximately \$87.12 billion [1]. Restaurants need to adapt to changing consumer preferences by offering dishes that include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, legumes, and seeds. Incorporating these ingredients into the menu will allow restaurants to attract a diverse customer base and meet the demands of new clients seeking unique culinary offerings.

Shared dining and family-style meals are becoming increasingly popular, altering the restaurant atmosphere. This approach involves tasting a variety of dishes in a relaxed setting, allowing guests to sample different menu items and flavors. Such practices foster a sense of community and bring a new dynamic to the dining experience. Restaurants that adapt their menus for shared dining better meet the needs of customers who prefer this style of eating [1].

In turn, to achieve sustainable development in the restaurant business, it is necessary to use a zero-waste strategy. Restaurants lose significant amounts annually—up to \$162 billion—due to food waste [2]. Implementing zero-waste inventory management practices is a key step toward reducing negative environmental impacts, optimizing resource use, and increasing profitability. Figure 1 below shows waste optimization methods.

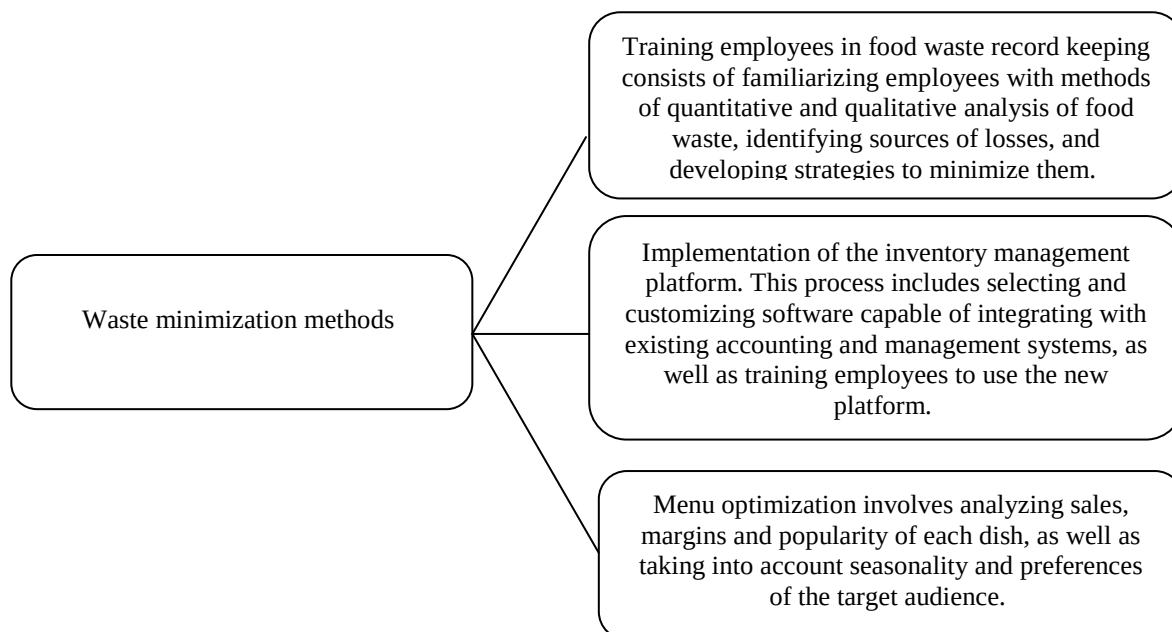


Fig.1. Waste minimization methods [2]

Moreover, due to varying weather conditions across different seasons, visiting a restaurant can offer new types of dishes thanks to seasonal menus. These menus change according to customer preferences, culinary trends, and the availability of ingredients at different times of the year. Using the seasonal menu concept allows meeting the demand for fresh local products and offering unique dishes that reflect the flavors of each season. Chefs can experiment with new recipes and create original flavor combinations, helping your restaurant stand out from competitors. Figure 2 below presents an example of a developed seasonal menu for a restaurant.



Fig.2. An example of seasonal menus [3]

Furthermore, as society evolves, modern consumers strive for unique and dynamic culinary experiences, seeking out unusual flavor combinations. Fusion cuisine, combining elements from various culinary traditions, meets these demands by offering gastronomic journeys that surprise and delight. Digital technologies will also play a key role in the development of the restaurant industry in 2024. Using online platforms will improve the customer experience, optimize operational processes, and create competitive advantages. Key aspects of digitalization include:

- Active use of social media for customer engagement
- Presentation of digital menus

- Online customer relationship management
- Implementation of digital booking systems
- Marketing via text messages
- Ordering through mobile apps

In the digital age, the use of data and analytics is becoming critically important for the restaurant business. Understanding customer behavior, preferences, and visit frequency allows for informed decisions on inventory management, menu planning, and profitability improvement. Modern restaurant management solutions, such as MarketMan, provide tools for automation, predictive analytics, and strategic analysis, facilitating operations optimization and cost reduction [3].

3. Restaurateurs Adapt to New Realities with Technological Solutions and Safety Training

Restaurateurs have adapted to new realities by employing technological solutions and training staff on new safety protocols. This has enabled them not only to survive but also to improve certain aspects of their operations, preparing for new challenges [4]. Consequently, restaurants are compelled to adapt to these conditions. Menu diversification strategies in the restaurant business are influenced by various factors, including cultural differences, local production characteristics, and innovations in the restaurant industry. Cultural differences play a key role in menu formation, as consumer preferences vary based on the traditions and customs of different regions. Local production characteristics also impact menu diversity: using fresh, local ingredients not only supports sustainable agriculture but also helps create unique dishes that reflect regional identity.

The culinary traditions of Southeast Asia are renowned for their rich and spicy flavors, achieved by combining ingredients such as chili, lemongrass, ginger, and shrimp paste. Frequently used ingredients include rice, coconut milk, fish sauce, tamarind, and Thai basil [5].

Eastern Asian cuisine, in turn, is known for using soy sauce-based seasonings, often accompanied by fresh vegetables and seafood. Key components include rice, tofu, green onions, ginger, garlic, and sesame oil. Traditionally, dishes are served with rice as a side, and meat is not the central element of the meal. This might be influenced by Buddhist principles in some regional cultures or the Japanese tradition of emphasizing the purity of the five basic tastes. For instance, Japanese cuisine is one of the most fascinating culinary fields. Surrounded by the ocean, Japan has an abundance of seafood, which heavily influences local dishes. The foundation of Japanese cuisine consists of rice and miso soup. Traditional Japanese dishes also include broths, fish, and pickled vegetables. The Japanese place great importance on seasonal ingredients, reflected in the variety of dishes depending on the time of year. Sushi, one of the most famous Japanese dishes, has gained worldwide popularity. Miso soup, an essential element of Japanese cuisine, is made from broth and miso paste with various ingredients like mushrooms or green onions, depending on preferences.

South Asian cuisine is characterized by a wealth of spices and fresh ingredients. Many dishes are prepared using a large number of spices, typical of the region due to its fertile soils. Seafood also plays an important role in the cuisine of coastal regions. Various types of meat are widely used in culinary traditions, with chicken and lamb being the most popular.

Middle Eastern cuisine represents a diverse array of local dishes and culinary traditions of the region. Popular dishes include hummus, baba ganoush, and falafel, as well as pastries like baklava. The influence of other regional cuisines, including Indian and African, is also noticeable.

European cuisine is known for its emphasis on fresh produce and hearty meats like pork, beef, and chicken. Taste preferences vary significantly between Mediterranean and Eastern European countries. The culinary traditions of Latin and South America are characterized by the use of fresh ingredients and a focus on vibrant flavors. Common products include rice, beans, chicken, beef, and pork [6].

Thus, it can be said that the culinary traditions of different countries are unique and interesting to explore. Despite certain similarities, each cuisine offers its distinctive flavors that are worth experiencing at least once in a lifetime.

Restaurants, in turn, can offer various types of menus depending on the time of day, seasonality, and customer preferences. For example, one establishment might have separate menus for brunch, lunch, and dinner, where the brunch menu is updated weekly while the others remain mostly unchanged. Table 1 below describes the main types of menus.

Table 1. Main Menu Types [7].

Menu Type	Description
Static Menu	A menu that remains unchanged for a long period. Updates, if any, involve a complete revision of the items.
Daily/Weekly Menu	A menu that is updated daily or weekly based on product availability or the chef's decisions.
Seasonal Menu	A menu that changes depending on the season or specific period, reflecting seasonal ingredients and dishes.
A la Carte Menu	A menu where each dish is offered separately, allowing for flexible changes based on customer preferences.
Prix Fixe Menu	A menu offering set meals at a fixed price, often used for promotional or seasonal offerings [7].

Let's consider modern trends that have been actively developing and gaining popularity among companies in recent years.

The use of local and environmentally friendly ingredients is gaining increasing importance and may become standard as the new generation takes over. Utilizing local ingredients not only improves product quality and reduces costs (in some cases) but also supports sustainability in the face of climate change and global warming. Maintaining close relationships with local producers allows better quality control of the products. This is one reason why the number of restaurants combining the functions of butcher shops and other specialty stores is growing, helping to maintain sustainability and quality control. Additionally, this allows restaurants to diversify their revenue streams and build a community around them by providing additional services that keep customers engaged. Combined with the zero-waste trend, such restaurants become attractive to eco-conscious customers who want to enjoy delicious food without guilt. Thus, using local ingredients attracts guests who value environmentally friendly establishments. Research shows that 62% of visitors prefer restaurants that use local products [2].

Thanks to globalization and the openness of chefs to collaboration, we have seen amazing examples of fusion cuisine, such as Japanese-Mexican, Japanese-Italian, Indian-Italian, and Southeast Asian. There is also a growing interest in African cuisine, especially West African dishes like Nigerian and Ghanaian.

Innovations in ingredients and animal product substitutes have led to a constant stream of new recipes, such as plant-based seafood, plant-based meat, vegan cheeses, and eggs. These products have tremendous potential for creating entirely plant-based menus and influencing fine dining.

In response to the complexity of culinary traditions, many restaurants are returning to simple and traditional cooking methods. This trend allows for an authentic and comfortable experience for customers by using traditional ingredients and preparation methods. Redesigning restaurant spaces and changing table settings also contribute to creating a traditional atmosphere [8].

4. Marketing Significance

By applying diversity marketing, companies can establish more authentic connections with their audience, taking into account the nuances and richness of their cultural backgrounds. This approach enables the creation of messages that integrate various elements of audience identity while conveying a unified, coherent message that resonates with a broad public [9].

A restaurant menu serves as the establishment's visual calling card. It is a key element that every visitor sees. An elegant and carefully designed menu, aligned with your restaurant's concept and effectively communicating information to customers, can significantly enhance its appeal.

A menu can play a crucial role in a restaurant's success. Besides informing customers about the dishes offered, a well-designed menu creates a positive first impression of your establishment. Guests can judge the quality of the dishes by looking at a thoughtful and stylish menu design. It is important to set the right expectations and ensure the menu has a flawless appearance [10]. Table 2 below discusses the significance of a menu.

Table 2. The Value of the Menu in the Restaurant [11]

Significance	Description
Creating First Impressions	A well-thought-out menu forms the first impression of the restaurant, setting the tone for the entire dining experience. It reflects the brand's uniqueness, the restaurant's style, and the overall atmosphere, influencing customer perception.
Attracting Attention	An aesthetically pleasing menu not only attracts attention but also encourages customers to explore all offerings, increasing the likelihood of choosing your restaurant over competitors.
Enhancing User Experience	A clearly structured menu facilitates navigation and dish selection. Well-organized content, logical order, and understandable descriptions make the selection process comfortable and enjoyable.
Increasing Sales	Effective menu design can significantly influence customer choices, encouraging additional orders. Visual elements highlighting key dishes and smart pricing strategies contribute to higher average checks.
Building Brand Loyalty	Consistent design across all platforms, including the restaurant menu, website, and online delivery, strengthens the brand and promotes customer loyalty. Consistency and visual appeal create trust and encourage repeat visits.
Adaptability and Development	Menu design should be flexible and ready for changes. This allows restaurants to introduce new dishes, incorporate seasonal offerings, and respond to customer feedback, staying relevant in a changing culinary landscape [11].

Thus, proper use of a menu can become a powerful marketing tool for your restaurant, helping to attract new customers and retain regular ones. Using menu diversification strategies promotes profitability while advancing fairness and equality in society. Modern restaurants strive for innovation, transforming into multi-faceted establishments to keep up with changing times. They now offer customers not only dining but also various retail goods. For instance, chains like Planet Hollywood and Hard Rock Cafe have long been selling souvenirs. In recent years, this trend has expanded, and even small restaurants have begun selling strategically selected products and home goods.

Incorporating retail sales into a restaurant's business model can be a rational step that helps cover low-profit margins and expand the brand. It gives customers another reason to visit the restaurant more frequently.

Restaurants offer a variety of retail goods that enhance the customer experience. For example, Star Provisions Market + Cafe in Atlanta sells a wide range of edible and home goods, carefully selected by chef and owner Anne Quatrano to complement the restaurant's atmosphere. This approach enhances guests' experiences, allowing them to purchase liked items and take them home.

The Garden & Gun Club in Atlanta sells items crafted by artisans whose works are featured in the namesake magazine. The magazine's CEO, Rebecca Darwin, notes that retail sales help business development, although they are not the primary revenue source.

Some restaurants collaborate with designers, offering visitors the chance to purchase interior items used in the restaurant. Examples include La Mercerie in New York, where visitors can buy tableware and furniture seen in the restaurant [12].

Restaurateurs can also benefit from selling branded merchandise. The National Restaurant Association recommends starting with unique and in-demand products that customers would want to take home.

Therefore, it can be said that modern menus become important tools for increasing sales. Using vibrant and detailed dish descriptions, offering recognizable brands, and including show elements like tableside cooking can significantly boost revenue. Restaurants adapt to new realities by finding creative ways to meet the growing needs of customers and increase their profits [13].

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, menu diversity and market orientation are key factors for success in the modern restaurant business. Inclusive and authentic marketing strategies enable restaurateurs to attract and retain a diverse customer base, which increases profits and strengthens brand loyalty. The incorporation of local ingredients, adaptation to changing consumer preferences, and the creation of a unique customer experience through entertainment events and eco-friendly practices provide a competitive edge. In the face of growing competition and globalization, such approaches become not only morally justified but also commercially beneficial. Strategic menu design and environmental sustainability also play important roles in enhancing the appeal of

restaurants to contemporary consumers. Ultimately, focusing on diversity not only promotes fairness and equality but also significantly improves business performance, opening up new opportunities for the growth and development of the restaurant industry.

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