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THE ROLE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN ENHANCING CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE IN TOURISM AND FOODSERVICE: MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

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Abstract: *Digital technologies are increasingly transforming the way tourism and foodservice businesses interact with customers, deliver services, and develop competitive advantages. Online reservation platforms, digital menus, mobile applications, self-service technologies, and artificial intelligence-based solutions are changing customer expectations and influencing service delivery processes. This paper aims to examine the role of digital technologies in enhancing customer experience across tourism services and foodservice operations, focusing on their managerial implications and potential contribution to business performance. The research will explore how digital solutions influence service accessibility, convenience, personalization, customer satisfaction, and perceived service quality. Particular attention will be given to the similarities and differences between the adoption of digital technologies in accommodation and tourism services and their implementation in restaurants and other foodservice establishments. The study will also address potential challenges, including implementation costs, employee training requirements, data protection, and the need to maintain meaningful human interaction. A qualitative research approach, based on a review of the scientific literature and, where applicable, an analysis of selected tourism and foodservice businesses, will be used to identify relevant trends and managerial practices. The findings are expected to contribute to a better understanding of how digital transformation can support customer-oriented management, operational efficiency, and competitiveness in tourism and foodservice.*

• Introduction

Digital transformation has become one of the most significant drivers of change in the tourism and foodservice industries. The increasing availability of digital technologies has reshaped traditional business models, influencing the way companies communicate with customers, organize service delivery, manage operational activities, and develop competitive strategies. Online booking platforms, mobile applications, electronic payment systems, digital menus, self-service technologies, artificial intelligence, and customer relationship management systems have become increasingly important instruments for improving business performance and customer-oriented management.

In the tourism industry, digital technologies play an essential role throughout the entire customer journey, from the initial search for information and destination selection to booking, accommodation, on-site experiences, and post-travel feedback. Digital platforms facilitate access to tourism information, improve communication between service providers and consumers, and allow businesses to develop personalized offers based on customer preferences and purchasing behaviour. Furthermore, the integration of artificial intelligence and data analytics provides opportunities to anticipate customer needs, optimize service delivery, and increase customer engagement. Recent research highlights the growing importance of artificial intelligence-enabled technologies in shaping customer experiences and creating new opportunities for personalization in tourism.

• Material and method

The research adopts a qualitative approach based on a review of scientific literature and a comparative analysis of digital technology applications in tourism and foodservice.

The methodological approach was selected to identify the main technological developments in the two sectors, examine their influence on customer experience, and evaluate the managerial implications associated with their implementation. The information identified through the literature review and comparative analysis was organized into thematic categories. These categories were subsequently used to evaluate the contribution of digital technologies to customer experience and business management.

• Results and discussion

The introduction of technological solutions may create barriers for customers with limited digital competencies or restricted access to mobile devices and internet services. Furthermore, automated systems may reduce opportunities for direct communication with employees. In tourism and foodservice, personal interaction remains an important component of hospitality and perceived service quality.

The main effects identified through the comparative analysis are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Influence of digital technologies on customer experience

Customer experience dimension	Positive contribution	Potential limitations
Accessibility	Easier access to information and services	Digital exclusion
Convenience	Reduced waiting times and simplified transactions	Technical difficulties
Personalization	Offers adapted to individual preferences	Excessive use of personal data
Responsiveness	Faster communication and automated assistance	Limited capacity to solve complex requests
Transparency	Access to prices, descriptions, and reviews	Information overload or misleading content
Customer engagement	Continuous digital communication	Excessive promotional communication
Customer satisfaction	Improved service convenience and flexibility	Reduced personal interaction
Customer loyalty	Digital loyalty programs and personalized offers	Dependence on technological channels

The development of smart tourism destinations represents another relevant perspective. Through the integration of digital information systems, mobile applications, electronic payment solutions, and intelligent infrastructure, destinations can improve visitor accessibility and coordination among service providers.

• Conclusions

Digital transformation represents an important factor influencing the development of tourism and foodservice businesses, changing the way services are promoted, accessed, delivered, and evaluated by customers. The integration of digital technologies has created new opportunities for improving operational processes, increasing service accessibility, facilitating communication, and developing personalized customer experiences.