#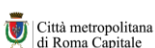 SSPICE IT! – Sustainability Skills Program for International Catering operators and Entrepreneurs through Integrated Training

Submodule n°20: Using Digital Technologies

THEMATIC AREA	**Researching Innovative and Sustainable Practices**
SUB AREA OF REFERENCE	*Digital and soft skills*
HOURS	4

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. **Identifying and Understand Sustainable Practices** and gain a comprehensive understanding of sustainability concepts and their application in the food and catering sector

2. **Identifying methods** of researching, implementing and maintaining innovative and sustainable practices

3. **Practical Application** by applying scientific knowledge and critical thinking skills to propose innovative and sustainable solutions

4. Learners will gain an appreciation for the **significance of collaboration** and how to engage with mentors and peers effectively in the food and catering sector

5. Learners will comprehend the role and potential of **digital technologies** and tools within the food and catering sector.

6. Learners will develop skills and knowledge and gain practical tools and techniques in defining **priorities**, **developing action plans**, to effectively manage their work.

7. Learners will develop the skills and knowledge necessary for setting meaningful and actionable **goals** in the food and catering sector.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Theoritical	Practical

✓ Reading ✓ Case studies	✓ Mapping the main innovative and sustainable practices by exploring the methodologies and analysing contemporary implementation ✓ Practical application of innovative and sustainable practices ✓ Evaluating the impact of innovative and sustainable practices into food and catering sector

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CONTENT

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1. Interacting, Communicating, and Sharing Information through Digital Technologies

1.1. Overview of Digital Technologies in Collaboration

The landscape of the food and catering sector is undergoing a profound shift due to the continuous advancement of technology, reshaping our perceptions of food and dining. Technological innovations, ranging from online ordering and delivery systems to sophisticated kitchen equipment and automation, are fundamentally revolutionizing the operational landscape of restaurants and foodservice establishments.

The potential applications are extensive, spanning from eco-friendly packaging to novel ordering mechanisms and immersive augmented reality encounters, enabling restaurants to harness technology to elevate the overall customer experience. Additionally, technology is impacting this industry by incorporating advanced kitchen equipment and automation. Restaurants can now integrate robotic kitchen assistants, smart ovens, and automated tools to expedite cooking processes, enabling them to serve more patrons in less time while minimizing labor requirements.

In the context of digital transformation in the food and catering sector, four key domains emerge:

- *Supply Chain Management*

- *Food Safety and Quality Control*

- *E-commerce Adoption and Delivery*

- *Customer Engagement and Experience*

With respect to enhancing the customer experience, technology plays a pivotal role in the foodand catering services industry. Leveraging technological advancements, businesses can augment operational efficiency and enrich the dining experience for their clientele. Various avenues exist to achieve this:

- **Online Ordering and Delivery Systems:** Streamlining orders and delivery via online platforms caters to customer convenience and personalization, enabling customized orders and real-time delivery tracking.

- **Mobile Ordering and Payment Options:** The integration of mobile platforms allows patrons to place orders and settle payments using their smartphones, enhancing efficiency in the ordering and payment processes.

- **Customer Feedback Platforms:** Utilizing feedback platforms enables restaurants and other similar businesses to gather valuable insights from customers, enhancing services based on constructive feedback and improving overall experience.

- **Digital Menus:** Adoption of real-time digital menus empowers customers to make informed decisions, thereby enhancing their dining experience while showcasing menu offerings more attractively.

- **Loyalty and Reward Programs:** Implementation of technology-driven loyalty and reward programs engages customers, fostering repeat business through incentives like discounts or rewards.

- **Virtual and Augmented Reality:** Experimenting with virtual and augmented reality elevates customer immersion during dining. Virtual tours, augmented menus, and interactive experiences add a unique dimension to the food/catering experience.

1.2. Best Practices for Digital Communication and Information Sharing

In the dynamic landscape of the food and catering industry, effective communication stands as a cornerstone of success. Whether within the bustling kitchen or in interactions with valued customers, the ability to convey information clearly and purposefully is pivotal.

Internal communication pertains to interactions between team members or teams. Whenever your staff conveys a customer's order to the kitchen or managers handle shift allocation, address employee concerns, delegate tasks, or exchange ideas, it exemplifies internal communication in action. In contrast, external communication encompasses exchanges between your business and its clients. For instance, disseminating promotional material constitutes a form of external communication.

Taking for granted that there are two distinct facets of restaurant communication, internal and external, best practices for both versions should be explored to set the ground for fruitful communication and information sharing.

1. *Strive for Consistency*: Consistency is paramount, spanning from your restaurant's branding to the language you employ. In external communication, align your messages with your brand identity. In internal communication, clarity takes precedence, employing unambiguous phrases familiar to your team for efficient understanding.

2. *Embrace Digital Communication*: Utilizing contemporary internet-based tools simplifies tracking conversations and clarifies who said what.

3. *Maintain Communication Records*: In internal communication, over the phone, internet, or in-person, written logs clarify who communicated what and ensure accurate dissemination of news. These records serve as references for quick verification and fact-checking. For external communication, concrete evidence of customer orders or allergy information aids in settling disputes.

4. *Choose the Right Communication Channel*: Not every situation demands the same communication approach. Tailor your method to the context; for instance, brief reminders suit business SMS, while phone calls may be time-consuming and distracting. Offer a variety of communication channels, including voice and video calls, SMS, emails, and group chats, allowing employees to choose the most fitting option.

5. *Enhance Tool Accessibility*: Facilitate effective staff-customer communication by employing accessible tools, particularly crucial during bustling periods. Opt for tools capable of accommodating high demand and ensure compatibility with mobile devices for on-the-go interactions.

6. *Integrate AI Support*: Utilize AI-driven solutions to streamline communication tasks, relieving human employees of administrative duties. This shift empowers employees to focus on meaningful conversations and insights rather than contact management.

7. *Instill Effective Communication in Corporate Culture*: Cultivate a robust restaurant culture by instilling the expectation of refined communication skills among employees. Seek out this skill in new hires, provide training for improvement, and acknowledge instances of exemplary communication.

8. *Foster Open Communication Channels*: Adopt an open door policy to create an approachable atmosphere, allowing employees to share concerns. Utilize mobile scheduling and communication apps to facilitate contact, particularly for sensitive matters that employees might prefer discussing in writing.

9. *Streamline Team Building Communication*: Employ communication techniques and tools that simplify interactions among your restaurant's teams. Efficient communication frameworks empower employees to focus on their tasks.

Manage Change Effectively: Communicate menu alterations or operating hour changes through all-staff meetings or dedicated team messaging tools. Ensure that your team knows where to access such updates to maintain uniformity and alignment across the restaurant.

2. Communicating Sustainability to Employees Though Gamification

In this chapter, learners will recognize the importance of communicating sustainability through the use of gamification. By analyzing the relationship between process gamifications and employee engagement learners will understand important elements of communication and efficiency.

2.1. Understanding Gamification

Have you ever considered that working is more enjoyable when you look at everything like a game? Indeed, there is a way to achieve that, through a technique called **gamification** (Growth Engineering, 2023). The term refers to the incorporation of **game elements into otherwise mundane processes**, to give the learner or the employee the satisfaction of progress or achievement. In other words, gamification is commonly associated with **employee engagement**. Are you interested in learning more about Gamification in work settings? Check the Video **here**!

2.2. Is Gamification Digital?

Gamification can be **both digital and analogue**, or even a mix of the two, which means that it can apply to practical tasks as well. When the goal of gamification is to teach an employee in an engaging way (as in Learning and Development), then a **literal video game or a simulator** can be used for more practical demonstrations compared to a wordy manual. The use of a handheld video game console for teaching purposes has been implemented in the fast food sector (Walker, 2022).

2.3. Gamification as Protocol

source: https://www.pexels.com/photo/pizza-and-monopoly-board-game-on-wooden-surface-4004418/

To properly understand the **analogue implementation of gamification**, one must **view it as a board game**. A board game may seem complex at first but as one immerses themselves in playing it, they can find it **entertaining to understand how the different rules and procedures apply**. Viewing it in an unconventional way, one can see that **the board game is a set of standard operating procedures and protocols**! In other words, by **making it fun** for the employees to learn about sustainable processes and protocols, you are essentially **communicating the best practices** in a way that will be better absorbed by learners!
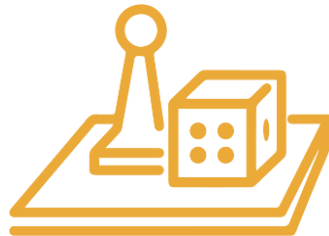
3. Technology-Driven Continuous Improvement

In this chapter, the learner recognizes the importance of high-end technology in the restaurant and catering sectors. In particular, they will be able to describe in what way technological advances supplement the human factor and how they can help with the further improvement of sustainable operations.

3.1. Digitalization and Tradition

Some **traditional restaurants** have not changed **the way they operate for decades**, or even centuries. Consequently, it is easy to imagine catering and restaurants as **sectors that do not require technological change**. If anything, the traditional atmosphere offers the selling point of a business. However, the use of technological trends today, which can **benefit sustainability** is promoting digital transition, even in these sectors, whether the changes are visible or not.

3.2. Where is the improvement?

Countless small changes may be **branded as improvement** and, of course, all supporters of sustainability **welcome innovative thinking**. However, the main areas of digital transition could be defined as the following:

Smart Appliances: Stationary devices can become smart, with **elements of AI and the Internet of Things (IoT)**, such as smart sensors. Essentially, such features could help the system **analyze, predict and apply processes**, improving them **marginally** and **accumulating** positive impact over a long period (Alt, 2021).

Data Analysis: The multidimensional collection of data can help identify patterns, ranging from unsustainable customer behaviour to improvements in choosing suppliers when it comes to carbon footprint (Hassoun et al., 2023)

Remember that technological change can cause disagreements too and transformation can be met with resistance from staff. Hence, it is quite wrong to dismiss the human element when discussing digital transformation.

In addition, we have already referred to gamification as not being strictly digital in restaurants and catering. However, when it comes to the digitized processes, gamification can indeed be framed in a designed **employee-friendly user interface**.

Exercise: Assessment Activities	
Pre-requisites	Having read Module 6.
Time	4 hours
Tools	PC, Smartphone, internet connection, pen and paper.
Objectives	1. Assessing the understanding of previous chapters.

Instructions

This exercise should be realized, when possible, in group. Imagine a fictional sustainable business, then realize the following activities:

1. Defining Priorities and Action Plans
- Define three sustainability goals for your business model.
- Develop actionable plans for each goal, outlining specific steps and timelines.

2. Making Decisions in Uncertain Situations
Describe a scenario in which you had to make a critical business decision in an uncertain and ambiguous situation. Explain your decision-making process, including how you considered potential unintended outcomes.

3. Handling Fast-Moving Situations and Conflicts
Provide an example of a fast-moving situation or conflict you faced in your business model setup. Explain how you demonstrated agility and flexibility to address it effectively.

4. Co-operating with Others for Action
Describe a collaborative project in which you worked with peers or team members to develop innovative sustainability ideas. Explain how these ideas were turned into actionable plans aligned with sustainability principles.

5. Learning from Success and Failure
Share a specific instance of success or failure in your sustainability efforts. Reflect on what you learned from this experience and how it influenced your sustainable business practices.

6. Sustainable Waste Management Practices
Identify and briefly explain two sustainable waste management practices you have implemented or plan to implement in your business model.

7. Sustainable Menu and Offerings
Describe how you have created a menu with a focus on seasonal ingredients, local sourcing, reduced animal products, and expanded plant-based options in your business model.

8. Selecting Sustainable Production Systems
Explain your process for choosing sustainable production systems for food and consumables in your business model, considering ecological footprint reduction.

9. Communicating Sustainable Ambitions
Outline your strategy for effectively communicating your sustainable ambitions and initiatives to your staff and consumers, promoting engagement and awareness.

10.   Measuring and Reporting Sustainability Impact
Explain the key performance indicators (KPIs) or metrics you use to measure the sustainability impact of your business model. Describe how you collect and report data on these KPIs to track and communicate your sustainability achievements.

EXTRAS

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