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TRENDS AND INNOVATIVE FOOD DELIVERY MODELS IN THE RESTAURANT BUSINESS

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Introduction. The food delivery segment in Ukraine is rapidly evolving, responding to modern consumer demands. The fast pace of life, the proliferation of digital technologies, and the popularity of online services have significantly transformed approaches to dining. Food delivery has become an integral part of everyday life, offering convenience and time savings. Although it may seem like a contemporary phenomenon, its origins date back to 1889, when Italian King Umberto I and Queen Margherita requested the owner of a tavern to deliver the finest pizza to them. The queen's feedback on the dish was extremely positive, giving rise to the famous "Margherita" pizza.

The first online food delivery order, in the modern sense, took place in 1994 when Pizza Hut accepted an order for pizza via a web page. According to statistics, today one in four people worldwide orders food online. Forecasts predict that the number of online delivery service users will continue to grow, reaching 2.5 billion by 2028 [1].

The COVID-19 pandemic presented significant challenges for many businesses, including the restaurant industry [2]. Food establishments were forced to adapt to new conditions and change the way they interacted with customers, leading to a sharp rise in the popularity of delivery services such as Glovo, Menu.ua, Bolt Food, Delivery.com, and others. For many restaurants and cafes, delivery has become one of the few ways to remain in the market [3]. According to a 2020 consumer sentiment study of Ukrainians conducted by Deloitte, 73% of the population used food delivery services for groceries and ready-made meals [4]. Between April 2019 and March 2020, demand for such services increased by 2.7 times, as confirmed by a study of online demand for grocery and meal delivery services.

In 2022, due to the war in Ukraine, the food delivery market shrank, with some delivery services, such as the Dnipro-based company Rocket, forced to suspend operations. However, within a year, businesses adapted to new challenges, and by 2023, they had restored order volumes and frequency to pre-war levels. Factors contributing to the increased demand for food delivery included power outages, which limited the ability to cook at home, as well as air raid alerts, during which people were forced to stay in shelters. Reduced mobility among the population and heightened safety concerns also drove the growth of online food orders.

Thus, the history of food delivery reflects changes in society, the economy, and technology. From delivering the first pizza to complex online platforms serving millions of users daily, food delivery has become an essential part of modern infrastructure. Crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine have tested the delivery sector but have also driven the development of new approaches and technologies, helping businesses survive and adapt to emerging challenges [5].

Today, food delivery not only meets consumers' nutritional needs but also helps sustain businesses during difficult times, providing comfort and access to essential products even under extraordinary circumstances.

Thanks to innovative solutions such as contactless delivery, adaptation to mobility restrictions, and the development of user-friendly applications, this industry continues to grow and evolve.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The research involved a comprehensive analysis of both Ukrainian and international scientific works and articles, aiming to explore various aspects of food delivery models and their innovative applications. Notably, significant attention was given to food delivery organization models, as examined in the works of O.V. Danylenko, L.M. Zotsenko, and M.L. Bratitsel [6]. These authors outlined the priorities for the development of digital technologies in the restaurant business in Ukraine, providing an in-depth view of the FoodTech sector and its evolution.

Innovative technologies in the restaurant business were another focus of this study. V.A. Hrosul and O.Y. Chatchenko [7], along with K.M. Kashchuk, I.V. Mosiychuk, and I.V. Saukh [8], extensively discussed methods for updating business models in the hospitality sector. Their works highlighted how innovation drives operational efficiency and customer satisfaction. Similarly, N.V. Prylepa [3] emphasized the transformative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on restaurant innovations, particularly in customer experience and business sustainability.

These findings are supported by international studies, such as those by D. Gavilan [9], who analyzed the role of innovation in online food delivery during the pandemic, and by C. Hong [2], who investigated the factors affecting customer behavior in this domain. Additionally, the analysis considered broader market trends and strategies implemented by leading international delivery platforms. For instance, D.V. Budzin and O.B. Konarivska [10] explored consumer behavior in restaurant business during socio-political challenges. Furthermore, the growing interest in ghost kitchens as a billion-dollar opportunity, as described by J. Guszkowski [11], showcases the potential for the future development of the delivery sector.

Overall, the research underscores a complex interplay between global innovations and local adaptations, ecological considerations, and the integration of digital technologies in the food delivery ecosystem. These studies provide a solid foundation for understanding the dynamic trends that shape this rapidly evolving industry.

The purpose and objectives of the article. The purpose of this study is to analyze innovative food delivery models in the restaurant business, their impact on demand and supply, as well as the factors contributing to their development in Ukraine's food delivery market. The core objectives include the following: to analyse innovative food delivery service organization models in the restaurant business; to study major trends in this segment; to conduct a comparative analysis of the primary market participants; to identify the key challenges facing the food delivery market in Ukraine, as well as to outline the prospects for its further development.

To achieve the study's objectives, general scientific and specialized research methods were employed, including analysis and synthesis, deduction and induction, description, comparative analysis, generalization, observation, forecasting.

Data analysis and results. The Ukrainian market identifies two main models of food delivery organization: the aggregator model and the in-house delivery service (Table 1). The aggregator model operates as an intermediary, where the aggregator acts as a third party between the customer and the restaurant [6]. It processes orders through its own application and forwards them to the food establishment. The in-house delivery service model involves the restaurant managing the entire process independently. This includes accepting orders, fulfilling them, packaging, transporting the food via a courier to the customer, and receiving payment.

This approach to classification, however, does not fully account for the diversity of food delivery models prevalent in the international market. For example, the aggregator model can be divided into the order and delivery model and the integrated model. The order and delivery model implies that the aggregator takes on not only the processing and handling of orders but also the delivery. Many restaurants already have their own delivery teams; they just need a way to present their offerings online. The integrated model allows restaurants to switch to online ordering while handling delivery themselves.

In addition, the meal kit delivery model is gaining popularity. It offers the delivery of high-quality ingredients for customers to prepare dishes at home based on restaurant recipes [9]. The role of the courier is crucial here, as they must ensure fast delivery and maintain the quality of ingredients. Software for logistics planning is often used to optimize routes and increase the number of deliveries.

Another model consists of so-called “dark kitchens”, which specialize exclusively in food delivery. These establishments do not have customer dining areas or waitstaff; all resources are focused on inventory and quality products. Couriers are the primary representatives of the restaurant when interacting with customers [12].

Table 1

Comparative Table: Aggregator Model vs. In-House Delivery Service Model

Criterion	Aggregator Model	In-House Delivery Model
Increase in customer base	Access to the aggregator's audience	Limited to customers already familiar with the restaurant
App development	No resources needed for development	Requires app and website development
Additional advertising	Restaurant offers are visible to many platform users	Advertising depends solely on the restaurant's efforts
Customer communication	Communication goes through the aggregator	Direct interaction with customers
Brand recognition	Customer loyalty is directed toward the aggregator	Own app and delivery enhance brand recognition
Customer database	Owned by the aggregator	Owned by the restaurant
Customer loyalty	Loyalty is directed toward the aggregator	Customers become loyal to the restaurant
Competition	Offers are listed alongside competitors	No competitor advertisements
Costs	No expenses for logistics and technology	Additional costs for development, staff, couriers
Dependence	Dependence on aggregator's terms and rules	Full control over processes

Source: author's own research

During the pandemic, another food delivery model emerged – dark stores. These are specialized closed-type supermarkets created exclusively for collecting online orders and accessible only to couriers. Their appearance was a response to the growing demand for fast delivery during the pandemic. Dark stores optimize the process of collecting and delivering goods due to a carefully selected assortment and convenient product placement for fast service. They require fewer investments than traditional stores but are more profitable as they are focused solely on the fast processing of online orders.

Based on the various processed models of food delivery organization, the following classification can be proposed (Fig. 1).

1. Aggregator model:

• Order and delivery model (logistics model): The aggregator provides an online platform for order processing and ensures delivery.

• Integrated model: The aggregator accepts online orders, but the restaurant handles delivery independently.

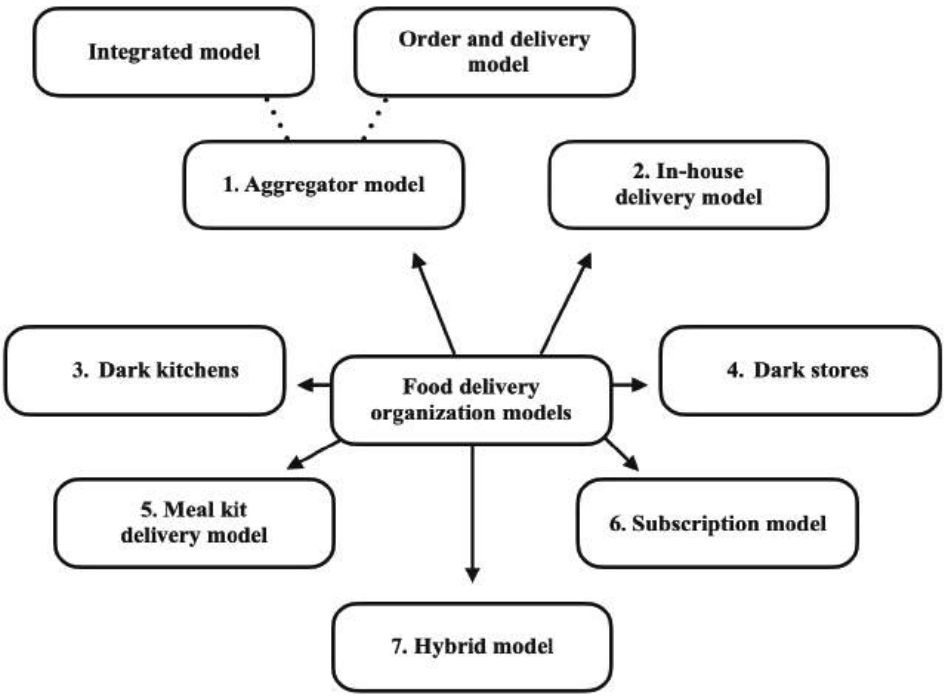

Figure 1. Classification of food delivery models

Source: author's own research

2. In-house delivery service model: The restaurant has its own ordering app and manages deliveries itself.

3. Dark kitchens (virtual kitchens): A virtual establishment focused exclusively on delivery, with no physical dining area for on-site service.

4. Dark stores: Closed-type supermarkets created solely for fulfilling online orders and accessible only to couriers.

5. Meal kit delivery model: Delivery of ingredients and a recipe for customers to prepare meals themselves.

6. Subscription model: Scheduled delivery of ready-made meals, with payment made in advance for a week or month.

7. Hybrid model: A combination of two or more delivery models, allowing the establishment to flexibly meet the needs of different customer segments.

This classification reflects a comprehensive approach to food delivery organization, considering the diversity of business models and consumer needs. It allows food establishments to choose the optimal model based on the specifics of their operations, customer base, and available resources.

The food delivery market in Ukraine is characterized by the presence of both local and international companies, which actively compete and influence its development. The majority of online orders are dominated by two major international companies, operating under the aggregator model of food delivery – Glovo and Bolt Food.

The Spanish company Glovo began its operations in Ukraine in October 2018. Currently, Ukraine is the third-largest market for Glovo. The service now covers approximately 10,000 partners. Glovo operates in 38 cities across Ukraine, with plans for further expansion to the east. As part of its growth strategy, Glovo focuses on supporting local businesses, including engaging small and medium-sized enterprises. As of 2024, the average Glovo user in Ukraine places 11-12 orders annually [13].

To increase the number of users and orders on the platform, in February 2024, Glovo introduced the On-Demand delivery service for businesses. This feature allows establishments to order a Glovo courier in cases where they lack their own delivery service, or their couriers are overloaded. Another innovation on the platform is the integration of social functions designed to enhance user interaction with the service. Users will be able to find friends, recommend establishments, create public and private lists of establishments, and view video recommendations from restaurants. Glovo's key goal is to grow across all main areas: geographical expansion, increasing the number of partners and users, as well as expanding the range of products and services available for order. The company aims to attract at least 20% of new users each month, underscoring its ambitions for scaling and strengthening its market presence.

The Estonian company Bolt Food began its operations in Ukraine in October 2020. As a result of competition, Bolt Food lagged behind Glovo in terms of market coverage, number of users, and partners, although it held the second position in the food delivery market in Ukraine. With the onset of the full-scale war, the company faced numerous challenges: a significant portion of its partners ceased operations, and there was a shortage of couriers. However, Bolt Food continued launching services in new cities, joined volunteer projects, and supported Ukrainians in various ways. One of Bolt Food's main priorities is increasing consumer choice. In the first half of 2024, the number of restaurant partners grew by 25%, and since the beginning of the full-scale invasion, compared to the pre-war period, the company has doubled its operations. Bolt Food is actively expanding its geographic coverage and is already catching up with its main competitor. The company's focus on consumers and support for local businesses helps improve its service and increase the number of orders. Table 2 provides a comparative overview of Glovo and Bolt Food based on key criteria.

The model of in-house food delivery, where establishments organize their own logistics service, is common among large restaurant and cafe chains that have sufficient financial resources to maintain their own courier staff [14]. This approach is highly popular among consumers due to several advantages. Firstly, many establishments offer free delivery when a certain order amount is reached, which serves as an additional incentive for customers. Secondly, establishments actively use reward mechanisms, such as providing discounts, promo codes, or complimentary dishes.

Another significant advantage of this system is the speed of delivery. For example, consider the popular pizza delivery service La Piec. For customers in the green zone, delivery is made within 29 minutes from the moment the order is confirmed. If the courier is even one minute late, the customer receives a promo code for a free pizza on their next order. This system not only ensures convenience and promptness but also helps with building a loyal customer base. Through a comprehensive approach that combines quality service, speed, and a flexible bonus system, establishments ensure a high level of customer satisfaction and encourage repeat orders.

Table 2

Comparison of Glovo and Bolt Food

Criterion	Glovo	Bolt Food
Availability	More cities in Ukraine, wide range of services.	Limited coverage, focus on large cities and food delivery.
Delivery cost	Typically higher, with Glovo Prime subscription for free delivery.	Usually cheaper, frequent promotions with free delivery.
Interface	Intuitive app with advanced features.	Simple app, focus on food delivery.
Promotions and discounts	Regular discounts for new users.	Frequent promotions, free delivery in many cases.
Delivery speed	Fast, but delays may occur due to high demand.	Faster on short distances, especially during peak hours.
Customer support	Prompt support via chat, but delays in resolving complex issues.	Support via chat, responses may take longer.

Source: compiled by the author

Thus, international food delivery companies dominate the market due to their wide coverage, innovative technologies, and convenience for users. At the same time, local establishments are actively implementing their own delivery models, focusing on the needs of their audience and providing a personalized approach to customers. These delivery services have the potential to reduce costs and improve service quality due to direct interaction with customers and the absence of intermediaries. Therefore, international platforms and local delivery services complement each other, ensuring healthy competition and contributing to the improvement of food delivery services.

The food delivery segment in Ukraine, like in the global market, is experiencing dynamic growth due to the implementation of innovative solutions and cutting-edge technologies aimed at meeting the needs of modern consumers [15; 16]. Food delivery companies are actively adapting by implementing eco-friendly initiatives. To reduce the negative impact on nature, delivery platforms are switching to biodegradable materials and packaging made from recycled resources, which helps decrease plastic waste. Additionally, optimizing delivery routes helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions, improving overall logistics efficiency. Such sustainable practices not only contribute to environmental conservation but also enhance consumer loyalty, as sustainability and ecological responsibility are becoming increasingly important factors for customers.

Today, food delivery services are becoming more diverse, catering to consumer needs. Interest in a healthy lifestyle continues to grow, and more Ukrainians are choosing nutritious food options. In response to this demand, restaurants are expanding their menus by adding various healthy choices [17]. This approach not only improves consumer well-being but also boosts the competitiveness of establishments that align with modern nutrition trends.

The dark kitchen model, which is gaining popularity in the food delivery sector, focuses on optimizing the meal preparation process for delivery without the need for dining areas or waitstaff. This allows establishments to allocate their resources toward improving inventory, enhancing ingredient quality, and reducing delivery time – an essential factor for modern consumers. Since these establishments do not incur costs for renting and maintaining customer-serving spaces, they can offer more competitive prices and more efficient operational processes. Ghost kitchens, which often serve multiple brands simultaneously, enable restaurant businesses to flexibly adapt to demand changes, expanding their menus without significant capital investments [10]. According to Euromonitor International, the market for dark kitchens and virtual restaurants could reach $1 trillion by 2030 [11].

Artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics are actively used to enhance customer interactions and personalize services. AI algorithms optimize delivery routes, predict customer preferences, and even adapt menus based on individual tastes, making the dining experience more engaging and efficient [18]. Restaurants and delivery platforms use these technologies to implement personalized promotional campaigns that consider order history and customer preferences [8; 19]. Additionally, automation significantly improves efficiency by reducing human errors and speeding up order processing. AI also aids in inventory management, ensuring accurate demand forecasting and optimizing product supply chains.

Automated food delivery is becoming increasingly prevalent worldwide, with one of the most exciting innovations being the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (drones) [20]. Major companies like Amazon and Uber Eats are actively testing drone delivery, which significantly reduces delivery time, especially in densely

populated urban areas. Moreover, these technologies help lower transportation costs, as they eliminate the need for traditional vehicles, thereby reducing carbon emissions and improving the environmental sustainability of the delivery process.

Autonomous vehicles are also widely used for food delivery. Self-driving cars equipped with sensors, cameras, and other advanced technologies enable safe movement without a driver. Testing and real-world observations have shown that autonomous vehicles can reduce delivery times by up to 40% and significantly decrease the number of road accidents. In addition to drones, companies are also introducing delivery robots designed to navigate sidewalks and pedestrian areas in urban environments. These compact, motorized, and highly maneuverable robots efficiently move through crowded spaces. Such innovations mark a crucial stage in transforming the food delivery industry.

Overall, the food delivery sector in Ukraine is actively evolving, integrating global trends while considering the specific needs of local consumers. From environmental awareness and a focus on healthy eating to innovative approaches in delivery logistics and technology adoption, these changes enhance efficiency, establish new service standards, and improve customer satisfaction.

The food delivery segment in the restaurant business shows a steady growth trend, driven by several key factors: the transformation of consumer habits, the development of digital technologies, and the popularization of services that provide quick and convenient access to food [21]. It is expected that the food delivery market will continue to develop dynamically. Delivery models implemented by individual establishments will become more popular, but they will not fully replace international competitors, who are likely to maintain dominant positions. The Ukrainian market is saturated, leading to intense competition among participants through marketing strategies, promotional offers, and loyalty programs [22]. At the same time, small local delivery services risk losing their market positions due to high competition.

Social factors contribute to the popularity of delivery services among young people and office workers who seek to save time. Additionally, the number of people working remotely is growing, which stimulates demand for grocery delivery and ready-made meals. Subscription models, which involve scheduled delivery of prepared meals with prepayment for a week or month, will become more common. The older generation is also gradually adapting to the food delivery format, which will expand the user base. Restaurants and cafes will actively update their menus, introducing new items to attract customers. There will also be an increase in demand for environmentally friendly solutions, such as bike delivery and the use of biodegradable packaging.

Among the potential threats are the unstable economic situation in the country and the possible decline in the purchasing power of the population. Economic factors, including changes in income levels, could negatively impact demand, especially on expensive delivery options.

The overall forecast for the food delivery segment in Ukraine predicts growth of 15–20% due to the active transition to online platforms. Restaurants and small businesses are likely to develop their own mobile apps more frequently or form partnerships with aggregators. Competition will drive improvements in service standards, which will become a necessary condition for establishments to survive in modern conditions. Thus, the food delivery segment in Ukraine has significant potential for further development, provided that market participants adapt to customer needs and implement innovative approaches.

Conclusions. The demand for food delivery services in the restaurant business is rapidly growing due to the convenience of the service, the wide variety of cuisines, and delivery times. This is associated with the fast pace of life, changing consumer habits, and the impact of the war, which caused internal displacement to the west and increased demand for contactless services.

During the research of the food delivery segment, an analysis of modern models for organizing this service was conducted, and a classification was proposed, which includes the aggregator model (comprising the ordering and delivery model and the integrated model), the own delivery service model, cloud kitchens, dark stores, the meal kit delivery model, subscription model, and hybrid model. This classification is comprehensive as it allows for a thorough assessment of the state and prospects of the food delivery market, including innovative directions that are just gaining popularity.

The research revealed that the most common model is the aggregator model, represented by two international companies – Glovo and Bolt Food. At the same time, the own delivery service model is gradually gaining popularity among local food service establishments, indicating their desire for independence and improvement of customer service quality. Innovative models, such as cloud kitchens and dark stores, are showing dynamic expansion, in line with global trends in the food delivery sector.

The forecast for the development of the food delivery segment in the restaurant business indicates further growth of this market, particularly due to the implementation of innovative business models and the active use of modern technologies such as process automation, service personalization, and environmentally oriented solutions.

Thus, the food delivery segment in Ukraine is at an active development stage. Its successful adaptation to modern trends and innovative challenges will be key to enhancing competitiveness and satisfying consumer needs.

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Halyna Kushniruk, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor, Associate Professor of the Department of Hotel and Restaurant Business and Food Technologies, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv. **Ostap Ivanyshyn,** Master Student, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv. **Trends and innovative food delivery models in the restaurant business.**

The purpose of this research is to examine innovative models of food delivery in the Ukrainian restaurant business market. To achieve this goal, several key tasks have been identified, including an analysis of food delivery models, an exploration of major trends in this segment, and a comparative analysis of the primary market participants. A classification of different food delivery models is proposed. Particular attention is devoted to studying consumer behavior. This approach enables a deeper understanding of the preferences, expectations, and habits of customers utilizing delivery services. Additionally, the study includes the positioning of local and international companies that actively compete and influence the development of the food delivery market. Based on the findings, the research identifies the key challenges facing the food delivery market in Ukraine and outlines prospects for its further development.

Key words: food delivery, Ukrainian market, restaurant business, organizational models, innovations, development trends, industry prospects.

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Метою дослідження є вивчення інноваційних моделей доставки їжі на ринку ресторанного бізнесу України. Для досягнення цієї мети було визначено кілька ключових завдань, серед яких аналіз моделей організації служб доставки їжі, дослідження основних тенденцій у цьому сегменті та порівняльний аналіз основних учасників ринку. Під час дослідження сегменту доставки їжі проаналізовано сучасні моделі та запропоновано класифікацію, яка відображає комплексний підхід до доставки їжі з урахуванням різноманітності бізнес-моделей і потреб споживачів. Класифікація охоплює агрегаторну модель, модель власної служби доставки, «хмарні» кухні, даркстори, модель доставки наборів продуктів харчування, гібридну модель та інші, що надає можливість закладам ресторанного господарства обирати оптимальну модель залежно від специфіки їхньої діяльності, клієнтської бази та ресурсів. Встановлено, що в Україні найпоширенішою є агрегаторна модель, а модель власної служби доставки їжі поступово набирає популярності серед локальних закладів ресторанного бізнесу, що свідчить про їхнє прагнення до незалежності та підвищення якості обслуговування клієнтів. У статті особливу увагу приділено вивченню поведінки споживачів. Такий підхід дозволяє глибше зрозуміти вподобання, очікування та звички клієнтів, які користуються послугами доставки їжі. Дослідження включає аналіз позиціонування локальних і міжнародних компаній, які активно конкурують та впливають на розвиток ринку доставки їжі. Виявлено, що міжнародні компанії домінують на ринку завдяки широкому охопленню, інноваційним технологіям, а локальні заклади ресторанного бізнесу активно впроваджують власні моделі доставки, орієнтуючись на потреби своєї аудиторії та забезпечуючи індивідуальний підхід до клієнтів. Встановлено, що сегмент доставки їжі в Україні активно розвивається, інтегруючи міжнародні тенденції такі як екологічні ініціативи, здорове харчування, «хмарні» кухні та віртуальні ресторани, штучний інтелект та аналітика даних тощо. На основі отриманих результатів дослідження визначено ключові виклики, що стоять перед ринком доставки їжі в Україні, та окреслено перспективи його подальшого розвитку.

Ключові слова: доставка їжі, український ринок, ресторанний бізнес, організаційні моделі, інновації, тенденції розвитку, перспективи галузі.