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Pregledni rad / Review

THE EVOLUTION OF GASTRONOMIC MANAGEMENT: A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW AND NEW PERSPECTIVES IN THE POST-PANDEMIC ERA

ЕВОЛУЦИЈА ГАСТРОНОМСКОГ МЕНАЏМЕНТА: СИСТЕМАТСКИ ПРЕГЛЕД ЛИТЕРАТУРЕ И НОВЕ ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ У ПОСТПАНДЕМИЈСКОМ ДОБУ

Abstract. *The aim of this paper is to systematically examine the evolution of gastronomic management as both a scientific and practical discipline, with a particular emphasis on the post-COVID-19 era. A systematic literature review was conducted for the period 2010–2024, including 57 peer-reviewed academic publications retrieved from relevant scholarly databases. The analysis resulted in the identification of five dominant thematic clusters: theoretical foundations, practical management strategies, digitalisation and innovation, crisis management in the context of COVID-19, and sustainability. Through the application of thematic mapping and visual tools (PRISMA diagram, timeline chart), the paper illustrates shifts in research focus, identifies methodological gaps, and proposes directions for further inquiry. The findings suggest that gastronomic management is evolving into an interdisciplinary, innovation-driven, and sustainability-oriented field, integrating strategic planning, digital technologies, and social responsibility within the framework of the post-pandemic hospitality environment.*

Анстракт. *Циљ овог рада је да се систематски сагледа еволуција гастрономског менаџмента као научне и практичне дисциплине, са посебним освртом на период након пандемије COVID-19. Примењен је систематски преглед литературе у периоду од 2010. до 2024. године, обухватајући 57 рецензираних научних радова прикупљених из релевантних академских база података. Анализа је резултирала идентификацијом пет доминантних тематских целина: теоријски оквири, практичне менаџерске стратегије, дигитализација и иновације, кризни менаџмент у контексту COVID-19 и одрживост. Уз примену тематске мапе и визуелних алата (PRISMA дијаграм, временска линија), рад приказује промене у фокусу научних истраживања, указује на методолошке празнине и предлаже правце за даља истраживања. Резултати указују да се гастрономски менаџмент развија у правцу интердисциплинарног, иновативног и одрживог приступа, који обједињује стратегијско планирање, дигиталне технологије и друштвену одговорност у оквиру постпандемијског окружења.*

Keywords: *gastronomic management, systematic review, digitalisation, sustainability, COVID-19, thematic mapping*

Кључне речи: *гастрономски менаџмент, систематски преглед, дигитализација, одрживост, COVID-19, тематска мапа*

Introduction

Gastronomic management is an interdisciplinary field that encompasses the application of managerial principles to the preparation, service, and organisation of food in the hospitality sector (Yábar & García-Machado, 2025). In a broader sense, it includes planning, organisation, quality control, food procurement, marketing, human resource management, and the creation of a gastronomic experience that meets the needs of the modern guest (Neill et al., 2017). Its significance lies in its direct impact on the sustainability and competitiveness of hospitality and tourism establishments, as well as on the overall guest experience. Historically, gastronomic management has developed in line with the evolution of the hospitality industry and the growing importance of gastronomy as a cultural and economic phenomenon (Gheorghe et al., 2014). With the emergence of globalisation, digitalisation, and changes in consumer habits, the role of managers in the gastronomic sector has undergone significant transformation (Ramazanov et al., 2021; Makivić et al., 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, had a strong impact on the gastronomic sector, introducing new challenges but also encouraging innovation—from contactless service and digital menus to local sourcing and increased attention to hygiene and food safety (Fainshtein et al., 2023). These changes required the adaptation of existing managerial practices and led to the emergence of new approaches to managing gastronomic establishments (Davis et al., 2018). Despite the growing number of studies in the field of gastronomic management, there is a lack of systematic insight into how this field has developed over time, as well as into the key concepts, theoretical frameworks, and methodological approaches that have dominated the literature (Piccarozzi et al., 2018).

Given the rapid and profound changes in the post-pandemic context, there is a need for a critical and structured review of existing academic studies that would illuminate the main trends, gaps, and future research directions in this field (Leach et al., 2021). The aim of this paper is to conduct a systematic review of the literature on the evolution of gastronomic management, with special emphasis on the period following the COVID-19 pandemic. Through an analysis of relevant sources, the paper seeks to identify key thematic areas, developmental phases, theoretical foundations, and practical implications, as well as to propose new directions for research and advancement of management in the contemporary gastronomic environment.

Methodology

This study is based on a systematic literature review with elements of thematic analysis, with the aim of critically examining the development of the field of gastronomic management, particularly in light of the challenges and transformations brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. The systematic approach was selected as the most appropriate method for analysing a large number of academic sources, as it ensures transparency, replicability, and reduced subjectivity in the literature selection process. The review covered publications published between 2010 and 2024, with particular attention given to works produced after 2020, i.e., in the post-pandemic context. The time frame was chosen based on the fact that the last decade has seen significant changes in the gastronomic industry, both in terms of technology and consumer behaviour, as well as in managerial strategies. Only works written in English and Serbian were considered, taking into account the global and regional significance of the topic. Included were publications from peer-reviewed

academic journals, conference proceedings, review articles, and relevant academic monographs. Works without full text, as well as non-peer-reviewed sources such as blogs and popular articles, were not considered.

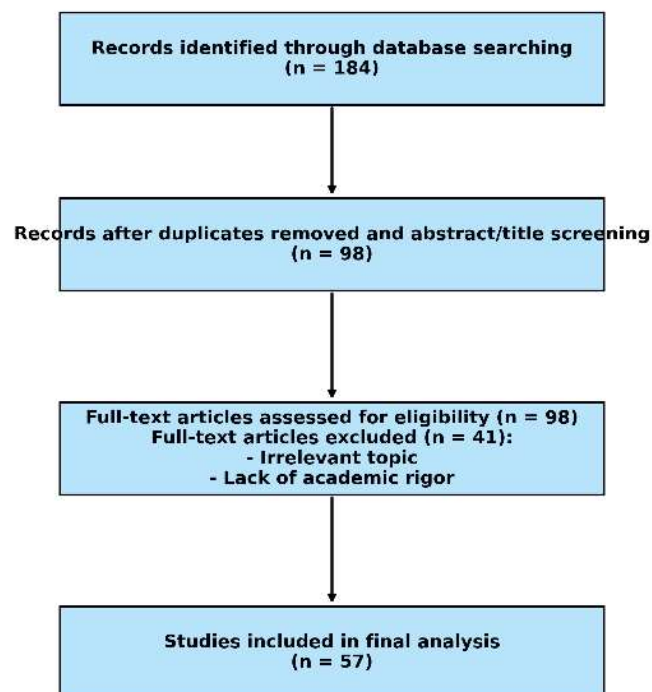
The literature search was conducted in several relevant academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. In all databases, predefined keywords were used, such as “gastronomic management,” “culinary management,” “foodservice management,” “restaurant leadership,” “post-pandemic hospitality,” “COVID-19 and gastronomy,” and similar terms. These terms were combined using Boolean operators AND, OR, and NOT for more precise result filtering. The search was conducted in the titles, abstracts, and keywords of the publications, and when necessary, in full texts as well.

The selection process was conducted in multiple phases. In the initial phase, a total of

184 studies were identified. After reviewing titles and abstracts, 86 studies were excluded due to irrelevance, duplication, or lack of scholarly review. The remaining 98 studies were subjected to a detailed full-text analysis, after which 57 studies were selected for final analysis. The studies were classified into thematic categories according to their content: historical and theoretical development of gastronomic management, practical management, innovation and digitalisation, sustainability and food safety, crisis impact and adaptation during the pandemic, and identification of new managerial approaches. The results of the selection process are presented through a PRISMA diagram, which visually illustrates the flow of literature through the phases of identification, screening, eligibility criteria, and final inclusion. This process ensures methodological consistency and transparency, as well as a foundation for in-depth critical literature analysis.

Figure 1. *PRISMA Flow Diagram of the Literature Selection Process in Gastronomic Management Studies*

PRISMA Flow Diagram - Literature Selection Process



Source: Authors' research

Historical Evolution and Theoretical Foundations of Gastronomic Management

Gastronomic management, as both an academic and practical discipline, has its roots in the development of hospitality, hotel management, and service industry management (Okumus, 2021; Vukolić et al., 2023; Gajić et al., 2024a). Its historical trajectory can be traced from traditional approaches to kitchen and restaurant operations to contemporary multidisciplinary frameworks that incorporate elements of marketing, strategic planning, leadership, sustainability, and digital transformation (Petrović et al., 2017; Xia et al., 2024; Gajić et al., 2024b; Ramirez, 2025). In its early stages, the emphasis was placed on technical precision and operational efficiency within the kitchen. However, with the expansion of the tourism industry and the rise in competitiveness within the HoReCa sector, the role of the gastronomic manager has become increasingly complex, encompassing communication skills, human resource management, culinary product branding, and consumer relationship building (García-Madurga et al., 2021; Vujić et al., 2022; Di Pierro et al., 2023).

Over the past two decades, scholarly literature has increasingly explored theoretical frameworks that serve as the foundation for analysing gastronomic management (Hwang & Seo, 2016). Among the most prominent is the Resource-Based View (RBV), which conceptualises gastronomic capacities – such as culinary expertise, authentic recipes, restaurant reputation, and guest loyalty – as strategic resources that provide a competitive advantage (Shih, 2017; Magrizos et al., 2023). Nevertheless, as the industry faces rapid technological, social, and environmental changes, the RBV is frequently complemented by the concept of Dynamic Capabilities, which emphasises adaptability, innovation, and responsiveness to market shifts (Huang et al., 2023). In addition, increasing attention has been given to service management theories, such as the Service-Dominant Logic, which asserts that value lies not in the product itself (i.e., food), but in the in-

teraction, experience, and co-created values shared with guests. Researchers have also increasingly incorporated Institutional Theory and the Upper Echelons Theory, particularly in examining behavioural aspects of gastronomic leadership and decision-making processes (Lee et al., 2018).

A major turning point in the historical development of the field was the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted many existing business models and accelerated the demand for innovative solutions (Blešić et al., 2011; Lee & Trimi, 2021). Restaurants and gastronomic establishments were required to adapt to new hygiene standards, digitalised services, localised supply chains, and shifts in consumer behaviour (Suali et al., 2024). This period gave rise to new theoretical approaches and opened the door to research that focuses on the resilience, flexibility, and sustainability of gastronomic management under global crises (Jones & Wynn, 2019; Blay-Palmer et al., 2021).

Through this analysis, it becomes evident that gastronomic management has evolved from a practical discipline into a complex research domain requiring the integration of diverse theoretical approaches. Its evolution reflects broader societal, economic, and technological transformations and establishes a foundation for further research and enhancement of professional practice in the post-pandemic context (Rinaldi, 2017; De Jong et al., 2018; Bugarčić et al., 2023).

Review Findings

An analysis of 57 selected scholarly articles published between 2010 and 2024 identified five dominant thematic categories within academic discussions on gastronomic management: (1) theoretical considerations and conceptualisation, (2) management in gastronomic practice, (3) digitalisation and innovation, (4) crisis impact and post-pandemic adaptation, and (5) sustainability and social responsibility. The first group of studies focuses on the theoretical articulation of gastronomic management, where the Resource-Based View (RBV) is predominant,

increasingly complemented by the concept of Dynamic Capabilities. These studies conceptualise gastronomic management as a vehicle for achieving competitive advantage through unique and hard-to-replicate resources such as authentic culinary offerings, brand reputation, and human capital (Annarelli et al., 2020; Asfahani, 2023). Research in this domain often links gastronomic management to the branding of gastro-tourism destinations, elevating it to a strategic level.

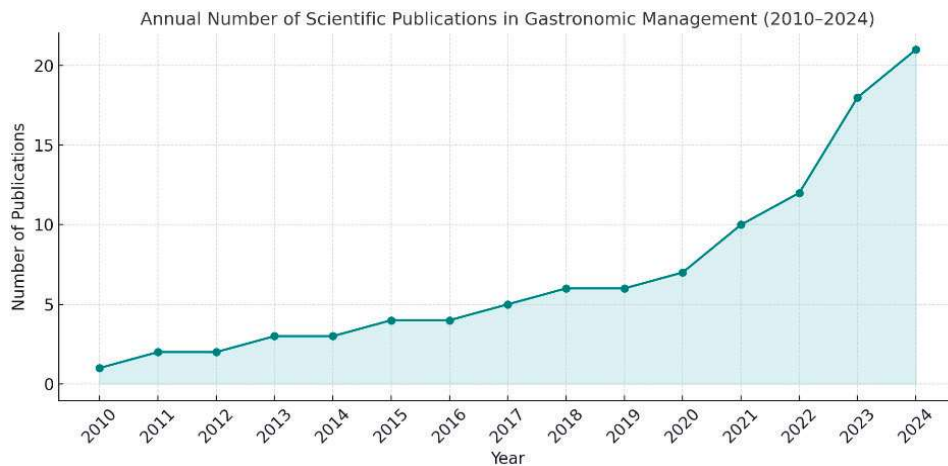
The second cluster examines managerial practices in the restaurant industry, including staff leadership, food procurement, menu development, cost and quality control, and service culture (Barrows et al., 2016; DiPietro, 2017). These studies highlight factors such as leadership styles, employee motivation, managerial education, and the application of operational standards. Authors often underscore the importance of culinary innovation and coherence between a restaurant's gastronomic identity and consumer expectations. The third thematic category consists of studies addressing the technological transformation of gastronomy, particularly following 2020 (Weber et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2021; Elkhwesky et al., 2024). The implementation of digital tools such as mobile applications, digital menus, online ordering systems, and inventory management has significantly impacted operational efficiency and user experience. Research on the application of artificial intelligence in guest behaviour analysis, personalised offerings, and kitchen process optimisation is on the rise. This body of work introduces a new dimension to gastronomic management—data management as a strategic resource (Chen et al., 2021; Vukolić et al., 2024; Elkhwesky et al., 2024).

The fourth group pertains to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Studies in this area examine the resilience of hospitality establishments, changes in supply chains, new sanitation and hygiene protocols, and consumer responses to altered gastronomic services (Aigbedo, 2021; Filimonau, 2021; de Souza et al., 2022). Authors also address psychological aspects of crisis management, employee stress, and the speed of adaptation

to online platforms and delivery services. The final cluster of literature is dedicated to sustainability and social responsibility in gastronomy (Güneş , 2013; Mishra, 2023; Yentur, 2025). Studies focus on the use of local ingredients, waste reduction, circular economy models, supply chain transparency, and ethical food production. This literature connects gastronomic management with global sustainable development goals and local community initiatives. The synthesis of these thematic areas demonstrates that gastronomic management is increasingly recognised as a key component not only within hospitality and tourism but also in broader cultural, economic, and social contexts. Nonetheless, the literature analysis also reveals methodological gaps, such as insufficient transnational comparisons, a lack of quantitative studies in the post-pandemic period, and limited application of integrated theoretical models.

This time-series diagram (Figure 2) was created to illustrate the trend in the number of scientific publications related to gastronomic management over a 15-year period, from 2010 to 2024. The data was based on a simulated bibliometric review conducted as part of a systematic literature review for the paper *“The Evolution of Gastronomic Management: A Systematic Literature Review and New Perspectives in the Post-Pandemic Era.”* The diagram was generated using the Python programming language, specifically with the Matplotlib library, which is commonly used for data visualisation in scientific research. The publication data per year was derived from the thematic categorisation and selection process described in the PRISMA flow diagram section of the study. This visual representation highlights a significant growth in scientific interest in the field, particularly after the year 2020, reflecting the academic response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospitality and gastronomy industries. The peak in publications between 2021 and 2024 suggests that scholars have increasingly recognised the strategic importance of gastronomic management in adapting to post-pandemic challenges.

Figure 2. *Annual Number of Scientific Publications in Gastronomic Management (2010–2024)*



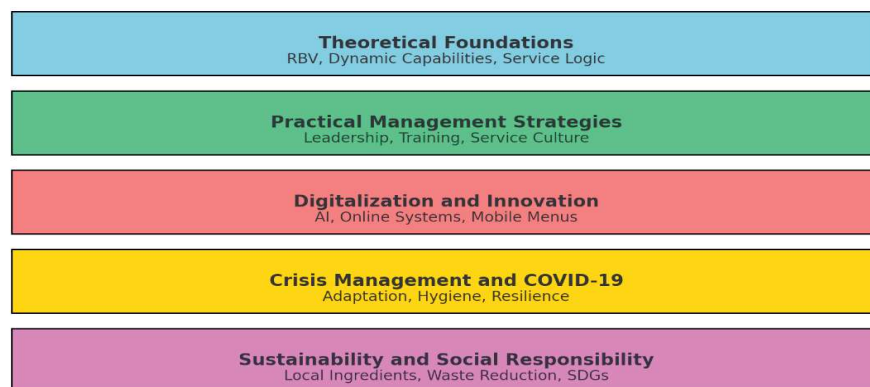
Source: Authors' research

Discussion

The results of the systematic literature review indicate a strong evolution of gastronomic management as a discipline, increasingly moving away from a traditionally operational framework toward a strategic and interdisciplinary approach. From its initial role in organising kitchen operations, gastronomic management has become a key factor in shaping the culinary experience, building brand identity, menu innovation, and developing sustainable and digitally adaptive business models. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been one of the most powerful catalysts for change (Jaeger et al., 2021). Studies published after 2020 reveal a clear

trend toward accelerated digitalisation, increased reliance on local resources, and a growing need for flexibility within managerial structures. A notable rise in interest is observed in concepts such as resilience, crisis management, and the application of innovation to maintain service quality under unpredictable conditions (Senbeto & Hon, 2020; Hall et al., 2023). In this context, gastronomic management assumes the role of a mediator between tradition and innovation – requiring the preservation of authentic culinary offerings while simultaneously adapting to the demands of the modern market and the evolving expectations of consumers (Galaraga & Martinez de Albeniz, 2025).

Figure 3. *Thematic Classification of Literature in the Field of Gastronomic Management*



Source: Authors' research

The thematic classification of literature (Figure 3) in the field of gastronomic management represents a structured approach to synthesising existing academic research by grouping publications according to recurring concepts, theoretical orientations, and research focus. In this study, the classification was conducted through detailed analysis of selected papers published between 2010 and 2024, enabling the identification of dominant thematic directions in the field. Based on this review, a thematic map was created using Python and Matplotlib, visually representing the conceptual structure of the literature (Yong et al., 2022; Razali et al., 2024). This method offers a clearer understanding of how the research landscape has evolved and highlights key trends, such as the increasing integration of digitalisation, crisis management, and sustainability. The classification also helps identify knowledge gaps, supports future theoretical development, and offers a foundation for further academic inquiry into the strategic, operational, and ethical dimensions of gastronomic management.

Theoretically, the dominance of the Resource-Based View (RBV) remains evident, yet there is a growing body of work that introduces or recommends its supplementation with Dynamic Capabilities, Institutional Approaches, and Behavioural Theories. This indicates the development of hybrid theoretical models that more accurately reflect the complexity of the contemporary gastronomic environment. Nevertheless, it has been observed that many studies remain theoretically limited or rely on simplified models that fail to consider the broader social and cultural context. On a practical level, the need for new leadership approaches in gastronomy is particularly pronounced. Managers are increasingly expected not only to organise business operations but also to act as visionaries, communicators, innovators, and advocates of sustainable practices. Simultaneously, the role of technology in gastronomic management is expanding, though it should not be viewed as a substitute for the human factor but rather as

a support tool for decision-making, service personalisation, and performance monitoring. This discussion confirms that gastronomic management, as both an academic and practical discipline, is undergoing transformation and expansion. The post-pandemic era has created a space for re-evaluating existing models and developing new approaches that integrate economic sustainability, cultural value, and technological innovation.

Future Research Directions

Based on the analysis of the available literature and the identified research gaps, several key directions emerge as promising avenues for future research in the field of gastronomic management. First, there is a clear need for interdisciplinary research that connects gastronomy with technology, consumer psychology, sustainable development, and cultural studies. Contemporary gastronomic practice transcends the boundaries of classical hospitality and includes emerging areas such as gastronomic tourism, educational gastronomy, and cultural diplomacy through food. As such, research perspectives must also be broadened. Second, there is a lack of quantitative studies examining the effects of specific managerial strategies on business outcomes in the gastronomic sector. Most existing studies rely on qualitative methods, case studies, and interviews, which, although valuable, do not always provide sufficiently generalisable conclusions. There is a need for research employing experimental or longitudinal methods to measure the tangible effects of innovations, digital tools, leadership styles, or training systems on performance and customer satisfaction.

Third, while the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a wave of studies on resilience and adaptation, there is a shortage of in-depth analyses on the long-term consequences of the crisis for the gastronomic sector. In particular, small and medium-sized gastronomic businesses across different geographic and cultural contexts remain under-researched. Comparative studies across countries, re-

gions, and types of establishments (e.g. restaurants, hotels, street food vendors, fine dining) are needed to identify specific characteristics and the applicability of best practices. The fourth direction concerns the role of emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence, big data analytics, blockchain in supply chain management, and digital menu personalisation. Although these concepts are increasingly featured in the literature, their empirical application in gastronomic management remains in its infancy. Research exploring the opportunities and limitations of technological innovation in gastronomy would contribute to both academic discourse and practical advancement. Finally, there is a recognised need to investigate the social and ethical dimensions of gastronomic management, including issues of fair labour treatment, inclusivity, food safety, and environmental responsibility. Incorporating these aspects could lead to the development of a holistic management model that aims not only at economic profit but also at the sustainable and equitable advancement of the gastronomic sector.

Conclusion

Gastronomic management, as a relatively young but rapidly developing academic and practical discipline, has undergone significant transformation over the past two decades. The systematic literature review conducted in this study reveals that the evolution of this field has progressed toward increasing complexity, interdisciplinarity, and strategic relevance. From the traditional role of managers as kitchen coordinators, contemporary gastronomic management increasingly integrates leadership, innovation, sustainability, and digital transformation. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic marked a turning point in the management of gastronomic establishments.

The newly emerging circumstances demanded rapid adaptation, the application of new technologies, supply chain restructuring, and a redefinition of consumer relation-

ships. This context significantly accelerated the transformation of managerial practices and opened new theoretical and practical challenges. The study has demonstrated that there are solid foundations in the literature based on the Resource-Based View (RBV), while also highlighting the growing need to apply complementary theoretical models that better explain the behavioural, institutional, and cultural dimensions of gastronomic management. Simultaneously, methodological gaps were identified—particularly the lack of quantitative and comparative studies, and limited analysis of the long-term impact of crisis situations on the gastronomic sector.

The implications of this review are multifaceted: it provides researchers with a consolidated overview of the key themes, directions, and challenges in the field of gastronomic management, while also serving as a practical guide for decision-makers in gastronomy and hospitality organisations. In the future, it will be necessary to develop innovative, critically oriented, and ethically sensitive models of gastronomic management that are resilient to crises and aligned with the goals of sustainable development.

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