

Strategic Management of Service Enterprises in The Post-Pandemic Economy: Digitalization, Sustainability and Trust-Based Communications

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Abstract

The article examines the strategic management of service enterprises in the post-pandemic economy under the combined influence of digitalization, demand volatility, growing customer expectations, and sustainability requirements. The relevance of the study is associated with the restructuring of consumer behavior: customers increasingly expect remote coordination, transparent pricing, predictable service procedures, ethical communication, and reduced transaction costs when choosing a provider. The scientific novelty of the study lies in the development of a managerial model that transfers observations from emotionally sensitive and institutionally regulated service markets into a broader economic framework of service enterprise adaptation. The paper systematizes post-pandemic changes in service design, digital communication, reputation management, information transparency, resource planning, and sustainable development. The purpose of the study is to substantiate a set of managerial techniques that strengthen the adaptability of service enterprises through digital coordination tools, trust-based marketing, customer journey governance, and sustainability-oriented product decisions. Sector-specific materials on funeral services are used as an illustrative case of a market characterized by high emotional involvement, information asymmetry, ethical constraints, and regulatory pressure. The article has practical value for managers of service enterprises, small and medium-sized businesses, municipal service operators, and researchers of strategic management in the service economy.

Keywords: strategic management, service enterprises, post-pandemic economy, service digitalization, customer journey, trust-based communication, information asymmetry, sustainability, small and medium-sized businesses, service marketing.

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1. Introduction

The relevance of the topic is determined by the transformation of service markets after the COVID-19 pandemic. Service enterprises operate in environments

where customers expect a managed, transparent interaction: remote coordination, clear pricing, predictable timing, documented agreements, and communication that reduces uncertainty before and after the purchase. These expectations are especially evident

in markets where customers make decisions under time pressure, emotional tension, or limited access to verified information. In such markets, a company's competitive position depends on its ability to build a trustworthy service environment, reduce transaction costs, and maintain a stable reputation across digital and offline channels.

The post-pandemic economy has increased the significance of hybrid service formats. Online consultations, digital records of service stages, customer accounts, automated notifications, public explanations of procedures, and structured feedback systems have become instruments of managerial control rather than auxiliary communication tools. At the same time, sustainability requirements influence product policy, resource use, logistics, and long-term positioning. For service enterprises, this means that strategic management is increasingly connected with three interrelated directions: digital coordination of service delivery, trust-based communication with customers, and economically justified sustainability practices.

The purpose of the study is to develop an analytically grounded framework for the strategic management of service enterprises that connects digital transformation, customer trust, sustainability, and information transparency in the post-pandemic economy. The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. to systematize post-pandemic changes in service procedures, customer communications, and demand structure;
2. to identify digital and media-based solutions that restructure the service product and reduce information asymmetry between provider and customer;
3. to connect managerial decisions with sustainability indicators, reputation management, resource planning, and regulatory constraints in service markets.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in integrating research on post-pandemic service transformation, digital communication, reputation-based marketing, sustainability indicators, and sectoral regulation into a unified model of strategic management for service enterprises. Materials related to funeral services serve as an empirical illustration of a broader managerial problem: how a company operating in a sensitive,

regulated market manages trust, information, resources, and customer experience under conditions of uncertainty.

2. Materials and Methods

The empirical foundation of the study consists of scholarly publications published in 2021–2025 that address the digital transformation of service markets, sustainability-oriented management, customer trust, information transparency, and sectoral regulation. Studies of funeral services, digital memorialization, cemetery administration, and ethical advertising are used as materials from a highly sensitive service market in which managerial problems are concentrated: information asymmetry, reputational dependence, emotional customer vulnerability, limited applicability of aggressive promotion, and the need for transparent procedures. This approach allows the analysis to move beyond a single industry and reveal general managerial mechanisms relevant for service enterprises in the post-pandemic economy.

The article employs the following methods: analysis of scholarly sources, comparative examination, problem-oriented systematization, interpretation of service management practices, and synthesis of digital communication concepts with managerial, economic, and sustainability-oriented models of enterprise adaptation.

3. Results

The post-pandemic reality of service business is characterized by the restructuring of the service offering around trust, remote coordination, transparency, and digital visibility of procedures. The customer increasingly evaluates the whole route of interaction with the company: the initial inquiry, consultation, documentation, payment, timing, feedback, and post-service communication. From the standpoint of strategic management, competition shifts toward customer journey design, where economic value is created through reduced uncertainty, lower transaction costs, stable operational discipline, and reputational reliability.

The digitalization of service enterprises changes the architecture of interaction between company and customer. Digital interfaces allow the provider to fix agreements, display service stages, support remote participation, personalize communication, and accumulate data for later managerial decisions. Sector-specific studies of digital memorial spaces and virtual

participation practices show a broader tendency: service value increasingly moves from a single physical procedure toward a managed digital experience, where the customer receives a structured channel of participation, documentation, and continuity [1; 2]. For service enterprises, this means integrating digital tools into product policy, communication strategy, quality control, and reputation management.

Comparative studies of service markets show that digital media redistribute influence within the service value chain: online intermediaries, public reviews, platform-based communication, aggregator visibility, and search results increasingly affect the customer's choice [3; 9]. This tendency has economic consequences. The higher the information asymmetry, the stronger the customer's dependence on external signals: ratings, recommendations, official profiles, explanations, and visible pricing. In strategic management, the priority shifts toward the governance of the information perimeter: unified service showcases, transparent price structure, digital coordination protocols, recording of work stages, customer accounts, and notification systems. Ethical restrictions on advertising and the limited efficiency of direct promotion in sensitive markets strengthen the relevance of reputation-based communication and explanatory content [8; 10].

The sustainability line changes the economic logic of strategic choice in service enterprises. Resource efficiency, responsible product policy, environmental impact, institutional compliance, and social acceptability increasingly influence competitiveness, especially in markets connected with public infrastructure or municipal regulation. Indicator-based approaches to sustainability show that environmental, economic, social, and institutional parameters should be linked with measurable managerial actions rather than treated as declarative principles [5]. In regulated service markets, this requires coordination among product decisions, digital registries, data-handling procedures, access rules, and administrative standards [6; 7]. For managers, sustainability becomes a field of practical economic calculation: the company compares costs, customer acceptance, regulatory risks, reputational effects, and long-term resource constraints.

Taken together, the sources provide grounds for identifying a strategic nexus for service enterprises: a company simultaneously manages customer experience, digital channels of trust, resource and sustainability constraints, information transparency, and legal correctness of service procedures.

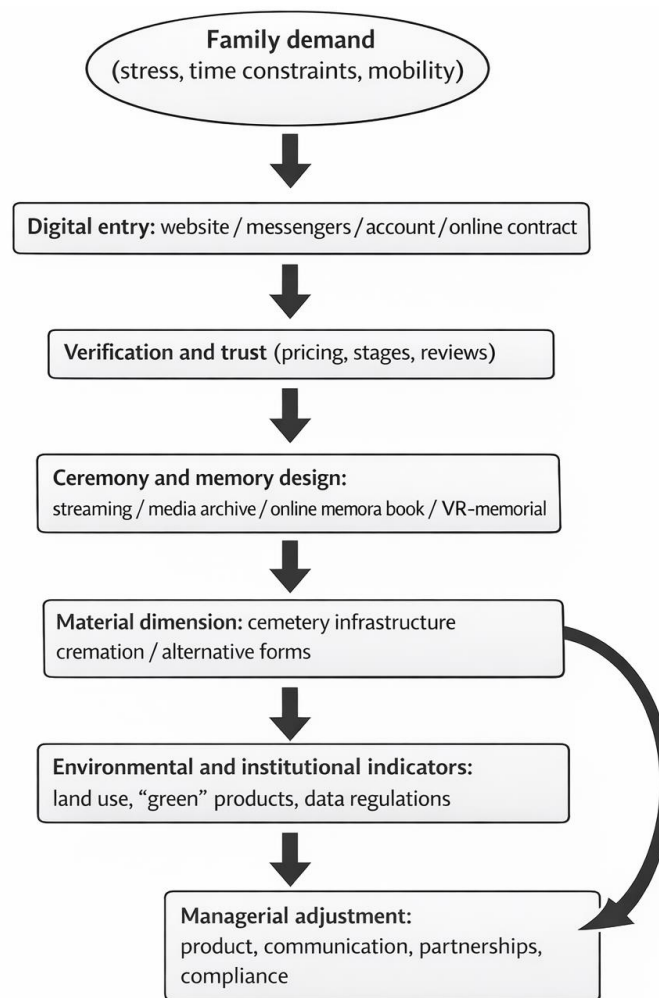


Figure 1. Strategic management cycle of a service enterprise under digital, reputational and sustainability pressures in the post-pandemic economy (synthesized from [3–5; 9; 10])

At the level of marketing communications, the post-pandemic service enterprise moves from a sales-oriented approach toward service communication. The content of messages and digital touchpoints should reduce uncertainty, explain procedures, justify pricing, support respectful interaction, and make the customer’s choice verifiable [10]. At the level of advertising promotion, direct persuasive formats have limited applicability in markets with high emotional involvement or ethical sensitivity; therefore, reputation-based formats, explanatory materials, public service standards, and customer feedback systems acquire stronger managerial value [8]. At the level of the information environment, the central managerial task lies in reducing asymmetry by structuring channels and labeling information sources, including official resources, partner platforms, reviews, public instructions, and contact centers [9]. Under post-pandemic conditions, a service company’s strategic

program can be built around three product and management lines:

- 1) digital process organization (online contracts, routing, payments, timing);
- 2) digital memorialization (media archive, memorial page, VR scenarios);
- 3) sustainability-oriented decisions: resource efficiency, responsible product policy, transparent standards, and compliance with regulatory requirements.

4. Discussion

The obtained results shift the strategic management of a service enterprise from the logic of isolated service provision to the logic of customer experience governance. Competitiveness is formed through digital points of trust, transparent procedures, reputation

management, and the company’s ability to reduce customer uncertainty. Sector-specific studies of digital memorial spaces and virtual participation practices are useful here because they reveal a broader economic tendency: service value increasingly extends beyond the moment of direct provision and continues through digital traces, archives, customer accounts, and mediated

participation [1–3]. Accordingly, the strategic product line of a service enterprise can be developed through service packages, in which operational procedures, communication standards, digital documentation, and feedback mechanisms are integrated into a single customer journey.

Table 1. Digital management tools of a service enterprise and their economic effects (based on [1; 3; 8–10])

Digital management tool	Service outcome for the customer	Managerial effect	Control metric
Online contract and digital recording of service stages	reduction of uncertainty and conflict potential	reduction of transaction costs	share of arrangements completed remotely; number of complaints
Customer personal account with timing, documents and notifications	process manageability in a stressful or time-limited situation	execution discipline and resource planning	deviation from schedule; share of timely notifications
Reputation showcase with reviews, explanations and FAQ	verifiability of provider choice	strengthening of trust and reduced dependence on intermediaries	inquiry conversion rate; share of inquiries generated through recommendations
Digital service history and personalized communication	continuity of interaction after the initial transaction	expansion of the service line and retention growth	repeat requests; retention rate; satisfaction score
Remote consultation and media support	lower access barriers for customers	wider market reach and flexible workload distribution	share of remote consultations; customer satisfaction with digital channels

The sustainability line requires managerial integration of product policy, resource planning, operational procedures, and regulatory compliance. Indicator-based approaches show that high-impact decisions are connected with environmentally responsible products, rational resource use, institutional transparency, and the ability to measure performance gaps [5]. In regulated service markets, digital administration raises questions about registries, data access, service records, and the allocation or use of public infrastructure, which affects the strategies of both municipal operators and private

enterprises [6; 7]. In applied strategy, sustainability is expressed through a portfolio of decisions: resource-saving service formats, reduction of redundant operations, transparent standards, responsible supplier selection, and digital tools that support traceability of procedures.

Before presenting the second table, it is necessary to identify the communication risk. Service markets are highly sensitive to information asymmetry when customers lack the time, expertise, or emotional stability

to compare providers. In such conditions, intermediaries, aggregators, reviews, search algorithms, and social media comments influence economic behavior. Advertising activity is constrained by ethical boundaries;

therefore, a structured information environment and service-oriented communication become instruments of strategic management [8–10].

Table 2. Information channels and managerial measures for reducing information asymmetry in service markets (based on [8–10])

Channel/environment	Typical risk for the customer	Managerial measure of the enterprise
Search results and aggregators	substitution of official information by commercial intermediaries	official profile card, structured data, transparent pricing
Social media and messengers	emotionally charged manipulation, rumors	unified communication tone, verifiable regulations, moderation
Content publications and media materials	shift of emphasis from service to sales	explanatory materials, service instructions, ethical restrictions
Reviews and reputation platforms	reputational attacks, artificial review boosting	review verification, public responses, dispute resolution protocol
Offline word-of-mouth circulation	fragmentation of information	standardized information leaflets, contact center, digital account

The strategic package for a post-pandemic service enterprise can be built around the triad of “trust – digital coordination – sustainability.” The trust block rests on transparent pricing, ethical promotion, verified communication channels, and reputation monitoring. The digital coordination block rests on customer accounts, remote consultations, service-stage recording, notifications, and structured feedback. The sustainability block rests on responsible product decisions, resource efficiency, institutional compliance, and measurable indicators that allow the company to connect economic performance with long-term resilience.

5. Conclusion

The study has shown that post-pandemic changes in service markets consolidated remote coordination, digital communication, transparent pricing, and higher customer expectations regarding predictability of procedures. Service enterprises now compete through the

quality of the whole customer route: inquiry, consultation, documentation, payment, timing, feedback, and post-service support.

The analysis has shown that digital technologies restructure the service product by reducing information asymmetry and strengthening managerial control over customer interaction. Online contracts, customer accounts, service-stage recording, remote consultations, public explanations, reviews, and digital feedback systems transform communication into a measurable managerial resource. Sector-specific materials from sensitive service markets confirm that digital tools are especially valuable when customers make decisions under uncertainty, time pressure, emotional tension, or limited access to verified information.

The connection between strategic decisions, sustainability, and regulation has been substantiated. Sustainability-oriented management in service

enterprises is linked with responsible product policy, resource efficiency, transparent standards, data handling, institutional compliance, and the ability to assess performance through indicators. From a managerial and economic perspective, the optimal trajectory for a post-pandemic service enterprise lies in developing a digital perimeter of trust, constructing an integrated customer journey, reducing information asymmetry, and introducing sustainability-oriented decisions that strengthen long-term adaptability.

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