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APPLYING CONTEMPORARY MANAGEMENT CONCEPTS IN FOOD INDUSTRY ENTERPRISES: A CONCEPTUAL PERSPECTIVE

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https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22897611

Abstract. The food industry operates under conditions of volatile consumer demand, strict quality and safety requirements, shortening product life cycles, rising input costs, and increasing pressure for sustainable production. These conditions require food enterprises to move beyond traditional administrative management and adopt contemporary concepts that integrate strategy, processes, people, technology, quality, and supply chains.

Keywords: food industry, contemporary management, lean management, total quality management, dynamic capabilities, digital transformation, competitiveness.

Food industry enterprises occupy a special position in the economy because their performance is directly connected with food security, public health, agricultural value chains, employment, trade, and household welfare. Unlike many other sectors, food manufacturing combines biological raw materials, perishable inventories, strict sanitary standards, seasonal supply fluctuations, high logistics sensitivity, and rapidly changing consumer preferences. These characteristics increase the complexity of managerial decision-making and make conventional functional management insufficient. Modern food enterprises therefore require a management system capable of combining efficiency with flexibility, standardisation with innovation, and cost control with continuous quality improvement.

Contemporary management theory provides a broad set of concepts that can be adapted to these requirements. The objective of this thesis is to systematise the most relevant concepts and explain how their combined use can improve the management of food industry enterprises. The analysis is based on a conceptual synthesis of strategic management, operations management, quality management, organisational capability theory, and digital management literature.

Lean management is particularly relevant to food manufacturing because it focuses on the elimination of non-value-adding activities. In food processing, losses may arise from excessive inventories, waiting time, unnecessary movement, defects, overproduction, inefficient changeovers, and spoilage. Lean principles encourage managers to map value streams, standardise operations, reduce bottlenecks, and establish continuous improvement routines. However, the application of lean methods in the food industry should not be reduced to cost cutting. Its strategic purpose is to create a stable production system in which resources are used efficiently while customer value is preserved.

Total quality management complements lean management by embedding quality responsibility across the entire organisation. Food enterprises cannot rely only on final product inspection because product safety and quality are created throughout procurement, processing, storage, packaging, and distribution. A contemporary quality culture therefore requires process discipline, employee involvement, supplier

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development, traceability, preventive controls, and systematic learning from deviations. When quality management becomes part of everyday managerial behaviour, it reduces rework, customer complaints, product recalls, and reputational risks.

Process management provides another important perspective. Traditional organisational structures often divide responsibility between procurement, production, finance, marketing, logistics, and quality departments. Yet the value delivered to the customer is generated through cross-functional processes. Process-oriented management shifts attention from isolated departmental performance to end-to-end value creation. For a food enterprise, this may include the full sequence from supplier selection and raw-material acceptance to processing, packaging, warehousing, distribution, and customer feedback. Process ownership and performance indicators help management detect interdepartmental inefficiencies and coordinate improvement efforts.

The resource-based view and the dynamic capabilities approach explain why two enterprises using similar technologies may achieve different results. Competitive advantage depends not only on physical assets but also on intangible resources such as managerial competence, brand reputation, supplier relationships, product-development routines, data capabilities, and organisational knowledge. In turbulent markets, these resources must be continuously reconfigured. Dynamic capabilities are therefore especially important for food companies facing changes in consumer tastes, packaging standards, distribution channels, sustainability expectations, and digital technologies.

Balanced performance management is needed to prevent excessive concentration on short-term financial indicators. Profitability remains essential, but a sustainable food enterprise should also monitor customer satisfaction, defect rates, delivery reliability, employee capabilities, innovation outcomes, energy and material efficiency, and supply-chain resilience. The balanced scorecard provides a useful framework for linking strategic objectives with measurable operational indicators. For food manufacturers, this approach supports managerial discipline by connecting daily processes with long-term strategic goals.

Digital transformation further expands the possibilities of contemporary management. Enterprise resource planning systems, manufacturing execution systems, sensor technologies, advanced analytics, digital traceability, and artificial intelligence can provide managers with real-time information about production conditions, inventory movements, quality parameters, equipment performance, and demand patterns. Digitalisation is most effective when it is treated as an organisational transformation rather than a purely technological investment. Its value depends on data quality, employee skills, process redesign, and managerial willingness to use evidence in decision-making.

The practical conclusion is that contemporary management concepts should be applied as complementary elements of a single system. Lean management improves flow and resource efficiency; total quality management strengthens process reliability; process management integrates functional units; strategic capability approaches develop adaptability; balanced performance management aligns indicators with strategy; and digital transformation improves information quality and decision speed. Their integration creates a management architecture based on continuous

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improvement, cross-functional coordination, learning, transparency, and customer value.

For successful implementation, senior management should begin with a diagnostic assessment of strategic priorities, process weaknesses, quality risks, digital maturity, and workforce capabilities. The enterprise should then select a limited set of management instruments linked to specific business problems rather than adopting fashionable concepts mechanically. Pilot projects, measurable indicators, employee training, leadership involvement, and feedback mechanisms are critical. This sequence reduces implementation resistance and allows new management practices to become embedded in organisational routines.

The use of contemporary management concepts in food industry enterprises is a strategic necessity rather than an optional managerial innovation. The specific characteristics of food production require simultaneous attention to efficiency, quality, safety, speed, resilience, and innovation. No single management concept can fully address these objectives. Sustainable improvement is more likely when lean management, quality management, process orientation, strategic capability development, balanced performance measurement, and digitalisation are integrated into one coherent management system. Such integration enables food enterprises to respond more effectively to uncertainty, reduce operational losses, improve product value, and strengthen long-term competitiveness.

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