

Delivery app data and algorithms: traditional method vs the *Masterrestaurant* method



By **Diego F. Parra** · Updated 2026-09-04 · Dark Kitchens & Foodtech

MASTERRESTAURANT®

White Paper

Datos y algoritmos de las apps de delivery: método tradicional vs método Masterrestaurant

Método probado en +8.400 restaurantes · 43 países

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QUICK VERDICT

Verdict: delivery app data and algorithms do not reward the best restaurant, they reward the one that produces the signals the system knows how to measure —acceptance time, cancellation rate, menu availability, listing conversion and geographic order density— and every one of those signals sits with the operator, not the platform. The traditional method negotiates the commission and buys ads; the Masterrestaurant method instruments those five signals on its own dashboard, protects per-dish contribution margin before accepting any promotion, and treats the app as one channel inside a local digital engine that also includes Google Business Profile and Maps. With Uber Eats at 26,1% of the US market (Earnest Analytics, 2024) and iFood at 87% of Brazilian e-food bookings (Statista, 2024), an operator who does not measure their own signals has outsourced demand to an intermediary with pricing power.

An operator in the 500 thousand to 1 million dollar annual band showed me his Rappi panel: three straight months of declining orders, with no change to menu or pricing. The platform's answer was a generic recommendation to spend on ads. The real problem sat elsewhere: his average acceptance time had climbed from 42 seconds to over two minutes because the tablet lived in the back office, and the algorithm had quietly demoted him within his zone.

That is the industry's blind spot. Apps publish policies, publish fee schedules, publish loyalty programs, and never publish the ranking function; because they never publish it, the whole sector operates on superstition. Geolocated ads get bought without knowing whether the problem is visibility or conversion, a 30% discount gets accepted without anyone computing the dish's contribution margin, and a hidden kitchen opens to 'capture more zone' when the zone was already crowded with virtual restaurants from the same operator.

This document does what a consultant does in a board meeting: separate what the platform controls from what you control, attach a number to each lever, and leave behind a 90-day roadmap a finance director can approve. We work with verifiable public data —Statista, Earnest Analytics, Grand View Research, CANIRAC, IBISWorld— and with the Masterrestaurant framework of per-channel unit economics. No figure here comes from a proprietary sample: the reading is ours, the numbers are cited.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

Side-by-side comparison

	TRADITIONAL METHOD	MASTERRESTAURANT METHOD
Diagnosing an order decline	✗ Blamed on the market or competitors; average reaction in 30-60 days	✓ Broken into 5 measurable signals; detected within 7 days on a weekly dashboard
Promotion decision (BOGO, 30% off)	✗ Accepts whatever the app suggests; post-promotion margin unknown	✓ Runs only if the dish holds $\geq 55\%$ contribution margin with food cost $\leq 32\%$
In-app advertising spend	✗ Flat monthly budget, no attribution; judged on total orders	✓ Variable budget per zone; judged on incremental cost per order with a cut-off threshold
Order acceptance time	✗ Not measured; tablet shared with the register, peaks of 120 s or more	✓ Target ≤ 45 s with a dedicated device and audio alert; audited every shift
Menu availability (sold-out items)	✗ Items switched off whenever someone remembers; cancellations from stockouts	✓ Inventory sync twice per shift; target cancellation rate below 2%

	TRADITIONAL METHOD	MASTERRESTAURANT METHOD
Commission structure	✗ Percentage renegotiated once a year, isolated from the rest of the P&L	✓ Modeled as variable OpEx inside prime cost and offset with a channel-specific menu
App vs owned channel	✗ 70-90% of delivery volume concentrated in a single platform	✓ 60% ceiling per platform; the rest migrated to direct ordering via Google Business Profile
Physical menu and QR menu	✗ Physical menu scrapped to 'save money', QR left as the only option	✓ Both: physical menu for dining-room narrative and upselling; QR for delivery and pricing

Chapter 1 — What does a delivery app algorithm actually measure?

The algorithm measures operational signals, not kitchen quality: order acceptance time, restaurant-side cancellation rate, minutes of menu availability, listing conversion and order density per zone.

No platform publishes its ranking function, and that opacity carries measurable cash consequences: with Uber Eats holding 26,1% of the US delivery market at the close of 2024 according to Earnest Analytics, and iFood concentrating 87% of Brazilian e-food bookings according to Statista 2024, the operator negotiates against a counterpart that sets rules without any duty to explain them. What you can do is feed those five signals properly, because they are free. A location that cuts average acceptance from 120 to 40 seconds bought nothing: it moved the tablet to the hot line and named a shift owner. That is the lever the dashboard will never suggest, because the dashboard sells ads. Arguing commission percentages from a single location is a negotiation lost before you sit down.

Chapter 2 — Commission is not the lever; ranking is

Earnest Analytics measured 26,1% share for Uber Eats in the United States at the end of 2024, and in Spain Ken Research 2025 places Glovo near 31% and Just Eat around 26%: these are counterparts with market power who set the price rather than discuss it. The Masterrestaurant method flips what gets optimized. Instead of fighting for three commission points, we work the variables that move ranking inside the zone, which cost nothing and respond within 14 to 21 days. An honest concession belongs here: for years I recommended auditing contracts before operations, and I had the order wrong. The contract defines the ceiling of your margin; ranking defines whether there is any volume for that margin to exist on. Growing 18% in orders and losing money on the channel is a normal outcome, not an anomaly. The app dashboard reports transactions and gross billing; it never reports contribution margin per dish, and that is where the reading breaks down.

Chapter 3 — Orders climbing while margin falls: the dashboard trap

When a 30% promotion pushes the mix toward high food-cost dishes, the ticket rises and profit evaporates, because the discount applies to selling price while ingredient cost stays exactly where it was. The hard rule of the Masterrestaurant framework applied by Diego F. Parra is straightforward: no dish enters a delivery promotion if its food cost exceeds 32%, and that 32% is a ceiling, never a target. With Latin American meal delivery projected by Statista 2024 above USD 39 billion by 2027, the volume will arrive regardless; the question is whether it arrives with margin or only with noise. One algorithmic signal produces different economic effects depending on

business size, which is why generic recipes fail. Below 500 thousand dollars a year, the operator lives off a single zone: two minutes of acceptance delay cost positions that never come back that month. Between 500 thousand and 1 million you meet the problem that opened this document, with three straight months of decline and no change to menu or pricing.

Chapter 4 — The effect changes by annual revenue band

Above 1 million the operator already splits volume across platforms and can measure real elasticity per channel. Past 5 million, the conversation shifts to category agreements and aggregate data. And beyond 10 million, with a multi-city structure, the risk inverts: cannibalization among your own brands inside one zone weighs more than any commission, especially where CANIRAC 2025 counts over 1,200 active dark kitchens in Mexico City, up 40% since 2023. Above 5 million dollars a year, the celebrity-chef restaurant or the large-format themed venue runs a cost structure that invalidates the standard manual. Its listing converts on brand rather than promotion, and its real prep time collides with the platform's delivery promise: the algorithm penalizes the delay even when the dish justifies it. What works is segmenting the digital menu, keeping off the channel any preparation that exceeds 18 minutes on the line. Kitchen robotics enters at this scale too, with Grand View Research attributing 40,8% of that market to North America, and so does the temptation of a parallel virtual brand.

Chapter 5 — The high end: celebrity chef, large format and its own costs

Here I am categorical: launching a virtual brand out of a destination restaurant's kitchen dilutes the quality signal that holds the price, and incremental revenue rarely offsets the reputational damage. Suppose the app changes the weight of geographic density and your location drops six positions on Monday. Week one, orders fall 22%; week two, the team cuts purchasing; week three, menu availability breaks from stockouts and the algorithm downgrades you again, this time on a signal that does depend on you. That negative feedback loop is what ruins healthy operations, and you cut it at step two, not step one. So the 90-day roadmap starts by instrumenting acceptance, cancellation and availability with daily measurement, before spending a peso on ads. The system's scale explains the urgency: iFood reported 100 million orders in a single month in August 2024 according to Statista, across more than 380,000 partner establishments in over 1,500 Brazilian cities.

Chapter 6 — What would happen if the platform reshuffled your zone tomorrow

Your listing competes inside that mass. Opening a ghost kitchen to capture more territory works and fails at the same time, and both statements hold. It works because it lowers fixed cost per brand and lets you test concepts without leasing a dining room; within cloud kitchens, the independent segment concentrated 61,7% of revenue in 2025 according to Grand View Research, which confirms the model is not reserved for large chains. It fails when the zone is already saturated with virtual restaurants from the same operator, because then you compete against your own supply for the same courier and the same impression. The bridge between both truths is geographic and gets calculated before signing: count how many active listings in your category sit inside the delivery radius at peak hours, and if they pass twelve, the new kitchen adds no demand, it redistributes what you already had. The first thirty days you touch no advertising: you instrument.

Chapter 7 — The 90-day roadmap a CFO can sign off on

Tablet on the hot line with a named owner per shift, daily logging of acceptance and cancellation, and an audit of menu availability by time band, which is where invisible sales bleed out. From day 31 to 60 you recalculate contribution margin per dish on the delivery channel, pull from promotion anything above 32% food cost, and re-

order the digital menu by profitability rather than popularity. From 61 to 90 you test geo-targeted advertising, and only then, because by now you know whether your problem was visibility or conversion. Automation comes afterward: White Castle runs over 100 drive-thrus with voice AI according to Restaurant Dive 2024, at 90% order completion and roughly 60 seconds per order, a timing benchmark worth holding as reference. Start by moving the tablet. The first difference concerns the object itself: the traditional method tries to optimize commission, a price set by a third party with market power, while the Masterrestaurant method optimizes the operating signals feeding the ranking, which cost nothing and sit entirely under the operator's control.

Chapter 8 — The five differences that move margin

With Uber Eats holding 26,1% of the US delivery market at the end of 2024 according to Earnest Analytics, arguing percentages with a platform that size from a single location is a lost negotiation before it starts. Second comes the measurement horizon. The app panel shows orders and revenue; it never shows margin. A restaurant can grow 18% in orders and still lose money on the channel if the mix drifted toward high food cost dishes pushed by a promotion. Our framework forces the month to close on contribution margin per channel rather than revenue per channel, and that single discipline changes which dishes get promoted. Third, geography. Dispatch algorithms prioritize order density per radius because their marginal delivery cost falls when two orders land close together. That explains why hidden kitchens cluster where demand already exists —CANIRAC counted more than 1.200 active dark kitchens in Mexico City in 2025, up 40% from 2023— and why opening a virtual restaurant in an empty zone almost never works, however cheap the entry looks.

Chapter 9 — The five differences that move margin — in practice

Fourth, how the catalog gets treated. Under the traditional approach the digital menu mirrors the dining room. Under ours it is a separate product, with fewer SKUs, combos designed to lift average ticket without adding kitchen time, and packaging costed inside the dish. The physical menu still exists and still governs the in-person experience; the QR and the app catalog serve a different purpose and do not replace it. Fifth, and most neglected: ownership of the customer. The platform keeps the contact record, the history and the frequency. Your structural defense is your own local digital engine —a complete Google Business Profile listing, Maps presence, a steady flow of 5★ reviews and a direct ordering path— because that is the only asset that survives a unilateral change in fees or ranking rules.

POINT BY POINT

Comparative analysis by decision criterion

DIAGNOSTIC SPEED WHEN ORDERS FALL

A · TRADITIONAL METHOD Spotted at month close and blamed on the market; correction starts 45-60 days later.

B · MASTERRESTAURANT The weekly dashboard isolates which of the five signals degraded; correction starts within 7 days.

Verdict: Masterrestaurant wins. The window between degradation and correction is money: a lost month in a 500 thousand to 1 million band operation never comes back through ads.

REAL PROFITABILITY OF PLATFORM PROMOTIONS

A · TRADITIONAL METHOD The suggested promotion gets accepted; post-discount, post-commission margin never gets computed.

B · MASTERRESTAURANT Mandatory prior filter: contribution margin $\geq 55\%$ after discount and commission, dish food cost $\leq 32\%$.

Verdict: Masterrestaurant wins, with an honest caveat: turning promotions down costs short-term visibility and has to be offset with operating hygiene.

EFFICIENCY OF GEOLOCATED AD SPEND

A · TRADITIONAL METHOD Flat monthly budget judged against total orders; incremental volume is impossible to isolate.

B · MASTERRESTAURANT Ads by zone and daypart, judged on incremental cost per order with an automatic cut-off.

Verdict: Masterrestaurant wins outright. Judging against total orders artificially inflates the return of any campaign.

PLATFORM DEPENDENCE RISK

A · TRADITIONAL METHOD 70-90% of delivery in a single app; the operator learns about the risk when fees change.

B · MASTERRESTAURANT 60% ceiling per platform plus an owned local digital engine feeding direct orders.

Verdict: Masterrestaurant wins. With iFood at 87% of Brazilian bookings (Statista, 2024), market concentration is already a territory risk, not a hypothesis.

IMPLEMENTATION COST IN THE FIRST QUARTER

A · TRADITIONAL METHOD Low in management hours; high in cash, because advertising is the only lever pulled.

B · MASTERRESTAURANT High in management hours for six weeks; almost nil in cash, because the signals are free.

Verdict: The traditional method wins on initial effort, and this is the only box it wins. If executive time is your bottleneck, sequence it: acceptance and availability first.

SCALABILITY TO MULTI-UNIT OR CHAIN

A · TRADITIONAL METHOD Each site negotiates and buys ads on its own; no standard, no comparability between locations.

B · MASTERRESTAURANT Same dashboard and same thresholds everywhere; internal benchmarking shows where to intervene.

Verdict: Masterrestaurant wins. Above 5 million a year, without comparable metrics across sites management cannot prioritize where to place the team.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

Traditional method: negotiate the commission and wait WHAT 80% OF THE SECTOR DOES

- ✗ The app is treated as a demand supplier rather than a channel with its own unit economics.
- ✗ The only lever discussed is the commission percentage, which happens to be the one the operator controls least.
- ✗ Geolocated ads are bought on a flat monthly budget, with impressions never separated from conversion.
- ✗ Promotions are accepted exactly as the platform panel suggests, without recomputing the dish's contribution margin.
- ✗ The digital menu is a literal copy of the dining-room card, same prices and same photos from four years ago.
- ✗ Nobody on the team owns the channel's operating metrics; the tablet lives wherever it lands.

Masterrestaurant method: instrument the five signals MASTERRESTAURANT

- ✓ The digital channel is modeled as a business unit with its own break-even and its own menu engineering.
- ✓ Five operating signals —acceptance, cancellation, availability, listing conversion, zone density— are measured weekly.
- ✓ Ads run by zone and daypart, cut automatically when incremental cost per order exceeds contribution margin.
- ✓ Every promotion passes a prior filter: if the dish cannot hold 55% contribution margin after discount and commission, it does not run.
- ✓ The channel menu has its own architecture: fewer SKUs, tickets built around combos, packaging costed inside the dish.
- ✓ An escape route gets built: Google Business Profile, Maps and 5★ reviews feed direct orders until dependence drops below 60%.

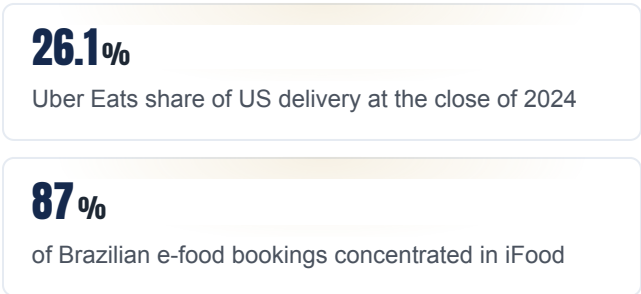
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THE NUMBERS THAT MATTER

Market indicators framing the decision



1200+

active dark kitchens in Mexico
City, 40% more than in 2023

61.7%

of cloud kitchen revenue generated
by independent operators

39

BN USD

meal delivery projected for Latin America by 2027

380k

iFood partner establishments across
more than 1.500 Brazilian cities

VISUALIZATION

The numbers, visualized

Uber Eats share of US delivery at the close of 2024



of Brazilian e-food bookings concentrated in iFood



active dark kitchens in Mexico City, 40% more than in 2023



of cloud kitchen revenue generated by independent operators



meal delivery projected for Latin America by 2027



iFood partner establishments across more than 1.500 Brazilian cities



Sources: [Earnest Analytics 2024](#) · [Statista 2024](#) · [CANIRAC 2025](#) · [Grand View Research 2025](#) · [iFood 2024](#)

REAL CASE

"I arrived convinced the problem was the commission. Diego made me measure something else for two weeks: acceptance time, sold-out items and cancellations. We were accepting at 118 seconds on average and running 11 sold-out SKUs through most of the weekend. With a dedicated tablet, an audio alert and inventory sync twice per shift, acceptance dropped to 38 seconds and cancellation went from 6,4% to 1,9%. Orders rose 31% in nine weeks without a single extra peso on ads, and channel contribution margin moved from 41% to 54% because we also cut the digital menu from 62 SKUs to 34."

— Operations director, three-location casual dining group, 500 thousand to 1 million USD annual band, Bogotá

HOW TO APPLY IT IN YOUR RESTAURANT

A 90-day roadmap to take the channel back

1 Days 1-15 · An honest baseline of the five signals

Before touching anything, measure. Pull average acceptance time, cancellation rate by origin, weekly hours with sold-out items, listing-view-to-order conversion and order distribution by radius from each platform panel. Cross that against your P&L: effective commission, packaging cost and ad spend, all inside the channel's prime cost. Most operations under the 500 thousand USD band discover here that delivery food cost breaks 32% because packaging was never costed into the dish. Record the baseline with a date; without it no later improvement can be attributed to anything.

2 Days 16-45 · Operating hygiene and channel menu redesign

Attack what is free first. Dedicated tablet with audio alert and a named owner per shift, acceptance target under 45 seconds. Inventory sync twice per shift so no sold-out item stays published. Then channel-specific menu engineering: cut the digital catalog to SKUs that travel well and hold margin, build two or three combos that lift average ticket without adding kitchen time, and rewrite descriptions and photos. Keep the physical dining-room menu intact, with its narrative and its server upselling: the QR complements delivery, accessibility and price updates, and never replaces it.

3 Days 46-70 · Geolocated ads with a cut-off threshold

Money enters only once the operation is clean. Run ads by zone and daypart, never on a flat monthly budget, and compute incremental cost per order: period spend divided by orders above baseline, not by total orders. When that cost exceeds the contribution margin of the channel's average ticket, cut the zone. In parallel, build your own local digital engine: a complete Google Business Profile with current hours and photos, correct categories, and a systematic 5★ review request flow that feeds your Maps visibility.

4 Days 71-90 · Diversification and a board-ready dashboard

Set a 60% dependence ceiling per platform and work direct ordering from your Maps listing and your site. Build the dashboard that goes to the board: contribution margin per channel rather than revenue; incremental cost per order by zone; the five operating signals with a twelve-week trend; and dependence by platform. That dashboard turns a commission argument into a unit economics argument, which is the only one where you hold an advantage. Review it monthly and recalibrate the channel menu each quarter using rotation data.

FAQ

Frequently asked questions about delivery app data and algorithms

What restaurant data do delivery apps actually use to rank me?

Platforms never publish their ranking function, but their own partner guides converge on the same signal families: acceptance and preparation time, restaurant-attributable cancellation rate, catalog availability, rating and reviews, listing conversion, and geographic order density. None of those six depends on the commission you pay; every one of them depends on your daily operation.

Does spending more on in-app ads help increase sales on Rappi or Uber Eats?

It helps only if your problem is visibility rather than conversion, and that gets diagnosed before you pay. When your listing gets views but converts poorly, advertising amplifies a broken funnel and you fund it. Measure incremental cost per order —spend divided by orders above baseline— and cut it once it exceeds the contribution margin of the channel's average ticket.

Should I open a dark kitchen or reinforce the physical restaurant I already have?

In dark kitchen vs physical restaurant the answer depends on demand density inside the target radius, not on rent savings. Grand View Research attributed 61,7% of cloud kitchen revenue to independent operators in 2025, which confirms the model works; it works where orders already concentrate. Without density, a hidden kitchen is just a site with lower fixed costs and the same missing demand.

Should I drop the physical menu and keep only the QR menu?

No. The physical menu controls the dining-room experience: it sets service pace, carries the menu narrative and enables server upselling, which is where average ticket gets built. The QR serves a different purpose —delivery, accessibility, price updates and view analytics— and complements it well. The Masterrestaurant recommendation is always both, each with a defined role.

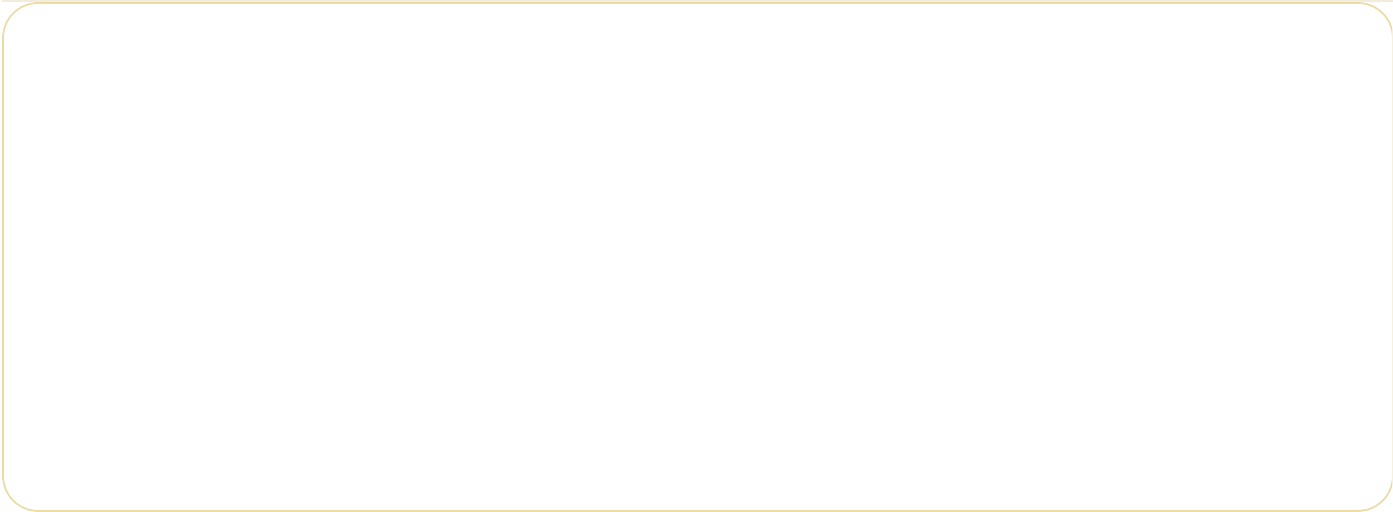
DATA & SOURCES

Sector data 2026 (official sources)

Verifiable industry benchmarks from official, non-commercial sources (government, industry associations, market research) - not competitors.

Metric	Benchmark 2026	Source
Robots de Serve Robotics a desplegar en Uber Eats	hasta 2.000 robots	Serve Robotics — Form 8-K FY2024 (SEC)
Cuota conjunta de Serve, Starship y Nuro en flotas globales 2024	18%	Mordor Intelligence — Autonomous Delivery Robots Market 2024
Mercado de entrega de paquetes por dron en 2023	USD 585,9 millones	Grand View Research — Drone Package Delivery Market 2023
Proyección de entrega de paquetes por dron a 2030	USD 5.238,8 millones (CAGR 38,7%)	Grand View Research — Drone Package Delivery Market 2030
Entregas comerciales por dron de Zipline (abril 2024)	1 millón (primera empresa en lograrlo)	Grand View Research — Drone Package Delivery Market
Unidades de drones de reparto proyectadas 2024 a 2030	de 32.456 a 275.703 unidades	Grand View Research — Drone Package Delivery Market

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