Executive Briefs

How to increase restaurant sales on Rappi without funding the platform's growth out of your own margin

By **Diego F. Parra** · Updated 2026-09-10 · Dark Kitchens & Foodtech

QUICK VERDICT

Verdict: you increase restaurant sales on Rappi by treating the app as an acquisition CHANNEL with its own menu, its own costing and its own content, never as an extension of the dining room; the operator who uploads the table menu untouched, priced at a 32% food cost calculated for dine-in, hands the entire margin to the commission and ends up selling more while earning less. The real lever is not the discount — it is the product listing: photo, first line of the name, prep time — paired with owned short-form video that drives branded search inside the app. And with only 6% of restaurants using AI to take customer orders according to the National Restaurant Association (2026), the architectural advantage remains unclaimed: whoever organizes their channel data in 2026 competes against a sector that still improvises.

Executive Brief Strategic brief · CEOs, boards & investors · 17 min read · 2026-09-10

A restaurant in the 500 thousand to 1 million USD annual band showed me its Rappi dashboard: 41% of transactions came from the app, and operating profit had fallen over the same period. There was no accounting mystery. It sold the same dish, at the same dine-in price, with a commission stacked on top and packaging nobody had ever costed. The channel grew while the business shrank, which is the precise definition of systemic entropy: activity rising while internal order degrades.

The scale of this shift does not allow anyone to treat it as a side experiment. iFood, the regional benchmark for the model, processed 100 million orders in the single month of August 2024 according to Statista (2024), supported by more than 380,000 partner establishments across over 1,500 Brazilian cities according to iFood (2024). Once a channel reaches that density it stops being a partner and becomes market infrastructure, with the rules any infrastructure imposes: you do not negotiate them, you read them.

This brief is written for the owner who already sells on Rappi and suspects — correctly — that the volume is costing money. It carries no ranking tricks. It carries a decision architecture: what you measure, what price you set, what content you produce, and at what point the owned channel stops being a preference and becomes the only defense your EBITDA has.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

Side-by-side comparison

	TRADITIONAL METHOD (UPLOAD THE MENU AND WAIT)	MASTERESTAURANT METHOD (CHANNEL WITH ITS OWN UNIT ECONOMICS)
Food cost of the delivery dish	✕ Same as dine-in, 28-35% per National Restaurant Association, packaging never costed	✓ Recalculated per channel with packaging included, held under 32% after commission
Contribution margin per order	✕ Unknown: app tickets are never separated from table tickets in the P&L	✓ Measured order by order; any item under 30% contribution leaves the app menu
Menu published in the app	✕ Literal copy of the dining room, 60-90 items, many of them cold on arrival	✓ Trimmed to 18-25 items that travel well, plus high-ticket bundles
AI use in order operations	✕ None, like the 94% of the sector per National Restaurant Association (2026)	✓ AI applied to demand forecasting by daypart and to recommendation shortlists
Short-form video for the channel	✕ Phone photo under kitchen light; zero Reels or TikTok production per dish	✓ 4-6 vertical pieces monthly per anchor product, driving branded search in-app
Marketplace dependency	✕ Rising with no declared ceiling; the owned channel is absent or abandoned	✓ Exposure ceiling set by the board, with deliberate migration to WhatsApp and web

	TRADITIONAL METHOD (UPLOAD THE MENU AND WAIT)	MASTERESTAURANT METHOD (CHANNEL WITH ITS OWN UNIT ECONOMICS)
Cost of promotions	✕ 20-30% discounts funded entirely by the restaurant	✓ Co-funded promotions restricted to items with proven margin
Dark kitchen decision	✕ Opened on trend, using the ~7,606 active US operations as a vague reference	✓ Opened only once the channel sustains its own volume and territory risk is measured

1. Why does volume rise on Rappi while profit falls?

Volume rises and profit falls because the dish enters the app at dining-room price and leaves with a commission on top that eats the entire contribution.

A dish costed at 30% food cost —inside the 28-35% optimal range published by the National Restaurant Association— leaves seventy cents of every dollar to cover everything else; once the channel takes its percentage and the packaging gets paid for without ever being costed, those seventy cents become forty-something, and the break-even point shifts without anyone announcing it. The channel's size no longer allows treating it as a side experiment: iFood processed 100 million orders in a single month in August 2024, according to Statista (2024). The app is not one more table. It is another business, with its own costing, built inside the same kitchen. App pricing gets calculated backwards: you set the contribution you need per dish, add the channel commission and the real packaging cost, and that result becomes the listing price.

2. App pricing is calculated backwards, from the margin

It is not the dining-room price with a friendly surcharge on top. If a dish must yield 4 dollars of contribution and the channel takes its cut of gross sales, the menu price has to absorb that bite BEFORE you celebrate the order. The customer pays without complaint, because they are buying convenience and do not have your dining-room menu open alongside for comparison. The demand is there: Deliveroo recorded a record frequency of 3.5 orders per month per consumer in the UK and Ireland in 2024, according to Deliveroo plc (2024). That frequency is what lets you move price without losing the customer. The app menu gets cut because the platform does not reward variety, it rewards listing conversion. A restaurant with 80 items has 80 mediocre photos and 80 prep times it never meets; one with 22 has 22 produced photos, names that read fully on a phone screen, and times the kitchen sustains at peak.

3. A short menu: 22 produced listings beat 80 improvised ones

Cutting hurts the first month and then it tidies the cash: less mise en place, less waste, fewer dishes that travel badly. With 380,000 partner establishments across more than 1,500 Brazilian cities according to iFood (2024), your competition inside the app is not the restaurant on the corner, it is whoever appears on the same screen. There the winning listing is the one understood in three seconds, not the one offering everything. Below 500 thousand dollars a year the decision is focus: a single app, not three, and twelve items maximum on the listing. Diego F. Parra insists at Masterestaurant that a business in this band has no administrative backbone to reconcile three weekly settlements, and each extra channel adds desk hours nobody is paying for. The threshold is concrete: if the channel does not reach 15% of your total sales within ninety days, shut it off and try again with a different menu.

4. Under 500 thousand USD a year: one channel, twelve listings

And here cash discipline outweighs ambition, because cash flow is the leading cause of financial stress and closure among small businesses according to Inc.; a channel that pays at thirty days while you cover payroll every fifteen is not growth, it is a loan you are making to the platform. Between 500 thousand and 1 million dollars a year the channel stops being an accessory and starts deciding the year's result. This is the band of the restaurant that showed me its dashboard with 41% of transactions in the app and operating profit falling over the same period. The rule here: if the app passes 30% of your transactions, you need differentiated channel pricing and a separate production line in the kitchen, with its own expediter during the two peak hours. Without that, the app order ruins the table's timing and the table ruins the app's timing.

5. From 500 thousand to 1 million: the band where the channel decides EBITDA

The market pushes that way: Southeast Asian delivery spending grew 13% to 19.3 billion dollars in 2024, according to Momentum Works. The volume arrives either way. The question is whether it arrives costed. Past one million dollars a year, the priority shifts from price to OWNERSHIP of the customer. A business in this band already produces enough volume for the platform to profit, and the data on who ordered what and how often stays on the other side of the counter. The decision: a parallel owned channel, with fixed monthly investment in photography and listings, aiming for 20% of delivery orders to come from a channel where you know the customer's phone number. Sector figures explain the urgency: Delivery Hero moved 48.8 billion euros in GMV during 2024, up 8% according to Delivery Hero, and Glovo passed 1 billion euros in annual q-commerce revenue according to EU-Startups (2025).

6. Above 1 million: your own content and the database that is actually yours

That scale is not negotiated from a single restaurant account. Above 5 million dollars a year a different profile appears: the celebrity-chef concept or the large-format themed venue, where the brand is worth more than the dish and the app becomes a storefront carrying reputational risk. A cold order in that profile does not cost one order, it costs a public review that drags down the entire dining room. The decision here is control: a kitchen dedicated to the channel, packaging designed for a thirty-minute trip, and a delivery radius cap you respect even when the platform offers to widen it. Look at the courier infrastructure before stretching that radius, because DoorDash couriers averaged 12.23 dollars an hour in 2024, down 3%, and Uber Eats couriers 14.96 dollars, down 5%, according to Gridwise (2024). Pressure on the courier is pressure on your delivery time. In groups and chains above 10 million dollars a year, the channel is run as a business unit with its own P&L, its manager and its contribution target per location.

7. Groups and chains above 10 million: automate without hollowing out operations

The temptation is to automate everything at once, and a dose of reality helps: only 6% of United States restaurants use AI to take customer orders according to the National Restaurant Association (2026), while Wendy's deploys its FreshAI across 500-600 locations by the end of 2025 according to CNBC (2024). The gap between headline and real adoption is enormous. The threshold I use: automate settlement reconciliation and channel waste control first, which pays for itself in the first quarter, and leave voice ordering for when you have three locations with the same menu and the same times. Start tomorrow by costing the packaging of your five best-selling dishes in the app. CHANNEL PRICING. The costliest error is not the commission, it is accepting it without moving the price. A dish costed for the table at a 30% food cost enters the app and comes out with a commission that eats the entire contribution.

8. The four differences that decide the outcome

App pricing is a different price, calculated backwards from the margin you need, and the delivery customer pays it without protest because they are buying convenience, not comparing your app menu against your dining room. SHORT MENU. The app does not reward variety, it rewards listing conversion. A restaurant with 80 items on Rappi has 80 mediocre photos; one with 22 items can have 22 produced photos, names that read fully on a phone screen and prep times the platform actually honors. The short menu also lowers food cost variance, because fewer ingredients sit dying in the walk-in waiting for an order that arrives twice a week. CONTENT THAT DRIVES BRAND. This is the lever almost nobody pulls. Organic placement inside the app responds to direct searches for the restaurant's name, and that search is manufactured outside: in Reels, in TikTok, in the short-form video a customer watches on Thursday and converts on Friday.

9. The four differences that decide the outcome — in practice

The restaurant producing four vertical pieces a month per anchor product is not doing social media marketing, it is lowering its acquisition cost inside the marketplace. DEPENDENCY CEILING. Any platform bringing you customers today can change the rules tomorrow, raise the commission or prioritize its own virtual brands. A channel carrying more than 45% of your transactions stops being a channel and becomes a corporate governance risk, the kind a buyer spots in the first hour of operational due diligence and discounts from the price.

POINT BY POINT

Scorecard: traditional method versus Masterestaurant method

HOW THE IN-APP DISH PRICE IS SET

A · TRADITIONAL METHOD (UPLOAD THE MENU AND WAIT)	B · MASTERESTAURANT
Identical to dine-in; the commission is deducted from margin with nothing recalculated.	Channel price calculated backwards from target contribution, with commission and packaging inside.

Verdict: The Masterestaurant method wins. With the optimal food cost range at 28-35% per the National Restaurant Association, a table-priced dish cannot carry a commission on top without dropping below the contribution threshold that makes the channel viable.

SIZE OF THE PUBLISHED MENU

A · TRADITIONAL METHOD (UPLOAD THE MENU AND WAIT)

The full dining-room menu, 60-90 items, with uneven photography.

B · MASTERESTAURANT Between 18 and 25 items that travel well, each with a produced listing.

Verdict: The short menu wins outright. Against the 380,000-plus partner establishments iFood (2024) reports on its network, listing conversion carries more weight than catalog breadth.

WHERE IN-APP TRAFFIC COMES FROM

A · TRADITIONAL METHOD (UPLOAD THE MENU AND WAIT)

Whatever the algorithm and self-funded discount promotions deliver.

B · MASTERESTAURANT Branded search manufactured through owned vertical content on Reels and TikTok.

Verdict: Owned content wins. It is the only component of acquisition cost you control, and one the platform cannot raise on you overnight.

USE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN OPERATIONS

A · TRADITIONAL METHOD (UPLOAD THE MENU AND WAIT)

None; production is set by instinct and by what was left over yesterday.

B · MASTERESTAURANT Daypart demand forecasting and AI recommendation shortlists for the customer.

Verdict: The AI-enabled method wins through a closing window. Only 6% of US restaurants use it for order taking according to the National Restaurant Association (2026), so the competitive advantage sits unclaimed.

GOVERNANCE OF DEPENDENCY RISK

A · TRADITIONAL METHOD (UPLOAD THE MENU AND WAIT)

No declared ceiling; the channel grows wherever the app takes it.

B · MASTERESTAURANT Ceiling set by the board with deliberate migration to WhatsApp and owned web.

Verdict: The declared ceiling wins. A GMV of 48.8 billion euros like the one Delivery Hero reported in 2024 confirms these platforms scale with or without you; your defense is having somewhere to take the customer.

WHEN TO OPEN A HIDDEN KITCHEN

A · TRADITIONAL METHOD (UPLOAD THE MENU AND WAIT)

Opened on trend or under pressure from the platform's account executive.

B · MASTERESTAURANT Opened once the channel sustains its own volume and territory risk is measured.

Verdict: Disciplined sequencing wins. With roughly 7,606 active ghost kitchens in the US per OysterLink (2025), the format is proven, but proven does not mean profitable for anyone who has not yet fixed contribution.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

What the traditional operator does on Rappi VOLUME WITHOUT UNIT ECONOMICS

- ✕ Uploads the full dining-room menu and lets the app decide what sells.
- ✕ Accepts every promotion the account executive offers, without calculating the contribution margin left afterward.
- ✕ Charges the dine-in price and absorbs the commission out of the dish's pocket.
- ✕ Never costs the packaging, the bag, the separate sauce or the waste from a badly assembled order.
- ✕ Measures success by order count and star rating, never by channel EBITDA.
- ✕ Shoots on a phone, in the kitchen, under yellow light, and never touches the product listing again.

What the Masterestaurant-method operator does MASTERESTAURANT

- ✓ Splits the P&L: the app channel carries its own revenue line, its commission and its packaging cost.
- ✓ Trims the menu to items that travel well and hold contribution after commission.
- ✓ Sets a channel price with the commission inside, and states it plainly in the product listing.
- ✓ Produces owned vertical content — Reels and TikTok — that pushes BRANDED search inside the app.
- ✓ Measures turnover by daypart and tunes production forecasts with AI tools.
- ✓ Sets a marketplace dependency ceiling and builds the direct WhatsApp and web channel in parallel.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

Side-by-side comparison

	TRADITIONAL METHOD (UPLOAD THE MENU AND WAIT)	MASTERESTAURANT METHOD (CHANNEL WITH ITS OWN UNIT ECONOMICS)
Food cost of the delivery dish	✕ Same as dine-in, 28-35% per National Restaurant Association, packaging never costed	✓ Recalculated per channel with packaging included, held under 32% after commission

	TRADITIONAL METHOD (UPLOAD THE MENU AND WAIT)	MASTERESTAURANT METHOD (CHANNEL WITH ITS OWN UNIT ECONOMICS)
Contribution margin per order	✕ Unknown: app tickets are never separated from table tickets in the P&L	✓ Measured order by order; any item under 30% contribution leaves the app menu
Menu published in the app	✕ Literal copy of the dining room, 60-90 items, many of them cold on arrival	✓ Trimmed to 18-25 items that travel well, plus high-ticket bundles
AI use in order operations	✕ None, like the 94% of the sector per National Restaurant Association (2026)	✓ AI applied to demand forecasting by daypart and to recommendation shortlists
Short-form video for the channel	✕ Phone photo under kitchen light; zero Reels or TikTok production per dish	✓ 4-6 vertical pieces monthly per anchor product, driving branded search in-app
Marketplace dependency	✕ Rising with no declared ceiling; the owned channel is absent or abandoned	✓ Exposure ceiling set by the board, with deliberate migration to WhatsApp and web
Cost of promotions	✕ 20-30% discounts funded entirely by the restaurant	✓ Co-funded promotions restricted to items with proven margin
Dark kitchen decision	✕ Opened on trend, using the ~7,606 active US operations as a vague reference	✓ Opened only once the channel sustains its own volume and territory risk is measured

THE NUMBERS THAT MATTER

The numbers that frame the decision

100 M
orders processed by iFood in a single month (August 2024): the scale of the channel

380 k
iFood partner establishments across 1,500+ cities: what your listing competes against

6 %
of US restaurants use AI to take customer orders: the advantage is still unclaimed

32%

maximum food cost per dish within the sector's optimal 28-35% range

3.5
ORDERS

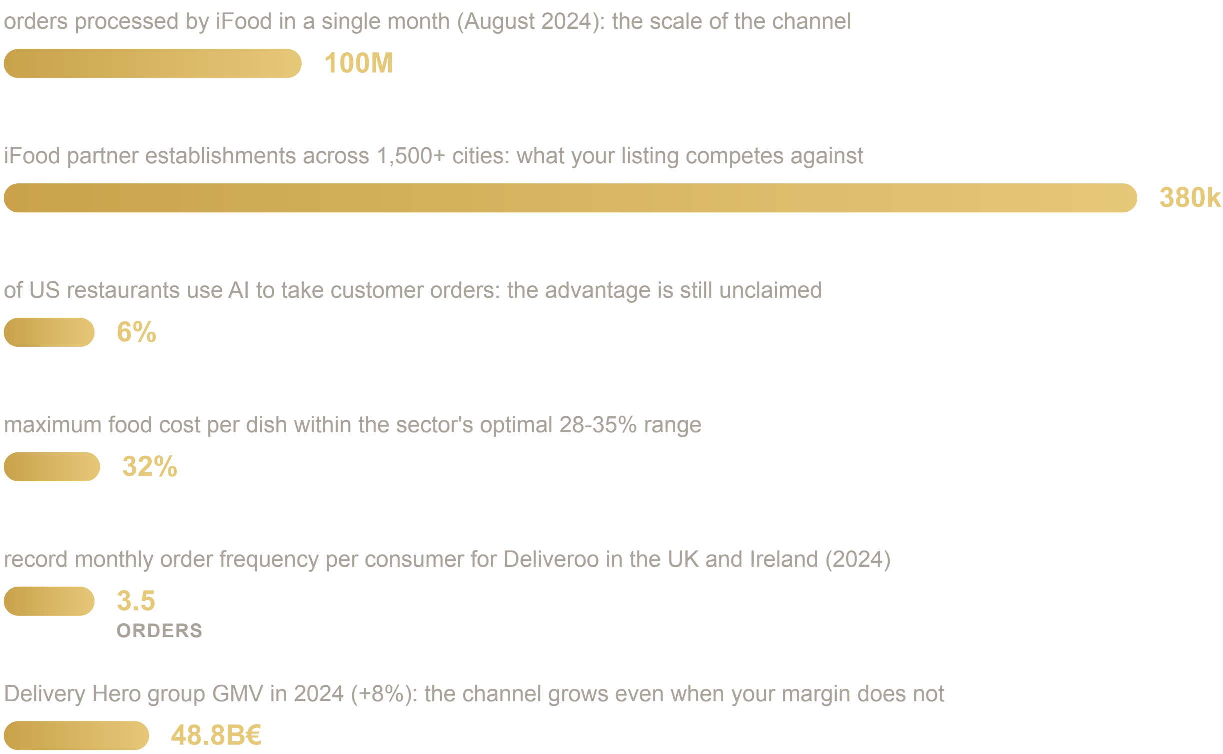
record monthly order frequency per consumer for Deliveroo in the UK and Ireland (2024)

48.8B€

Delivery Hero group GMV in 2024 (+8%): the channel grows even when your margin does not

VISUALIZATION

The numbers, visualized



Sources: iFood / Statista 2024 · iFood 2024 · National Restaurant Association 2026 · Deliveroo plc 2024 · Delivery Hero 2024

Chart by masterestaurant.com

REAL CASE

> *“We had 41% of transactions in the app and profit sliding. We cut the menu from 74 items to 21, raised the channel price 14% with the commission inside, and started shooting four Reels a month of the anchor product. In five months orders dropped 9%, but channel contribution margin went from 21% to 38% and direct searches for our name inside the app became half the volume. We sell less and earn more, which is exactly what Diego told us would happen.”*
>
> **— Operating partner of a 96-seat casual restaurant, 500 thousand to 1 million USD annual band, two locations**

HOW TO APPLY IT IN YOUR RESTAURANT

Three-phase strategic roadmap

1. **Phase 1 · Days 1-30 · Channel due diligence**
Deliverable: a separate P&L for the app channel, with commission, packaging, sauces and waste inside, item by item. Every dish is checked against the 28-35% optimal food cost range published by the National Restaurant Association, and anything above 32% after commission gets flagged red. Success metric: 100% of published items carrying a calculated and signed contribution margin, plus a concrete list of what comes off the menu. Without that number there is no strategy, only opinion, and I have spent twenty years watching boards debate the delivery channel with not a single contribution figure on the table.

2. **Phase 2 · Days 31-75 · Menu redesign and channel pricing**
Deliverable: an app menu trimmed to 18-25 items with menu engineering applied — stars and plowhorses up front, dogs out — a channel price recalculated backwards from the target margin, and rebuilt product listings with produced photography, names legible on a phone screen and honest prep times. Success metric: channel contribution margin above 32% and app average ticket 12% over the starting point. The physical dining-room menu is NOT touched or replaced: it controls the experience, the pace of service and suggestive selling; the digital menu and QR complement the channel, each with its own role.

3. **Phase 3 · Days 76-180 · Content engine and owned channel**
Deliverable: four to six monthly vertical pieces per anchor product — Reels and TikTok with the dish in motion, not animated stills — plus the direct WhatsApp and web channel carrying the same short menu with zero commission. Success metric: 30% of app transactions originating from branded search, and 15% of total volume migrated to the owned channel before month six. This is where dependency breaks: while 94% of the sector still applies no AI to order taking according to the National Restaurant Association (2026), daypart demand forecasting lets you produce against data instead of instinct.

FAQ

Questions an owner asks before signing

What does it cost NOT to act on restaurant sales on Rappi?

It costs the full channel margin, faster than it looks. If the channel carries 40% of transactions at 20% contribution when it should sit above 32%, you are giving away twelve margin points on nearly half the business. In an operation in the 500 thousand to 1 million USD band that is tens of thousands of dollars of annual EBITDA funding the platform's growth rather than yours.

Should I open a dark kitchen to sell more on Rappi?

Only once the channel already sustains its own volume and territory risk has been measured. Roughly 7,606 ghost kitchens operate in the US according to OysterLink (2025), and that figure hides heavy churn in and out. Opening a hidden kitchen to fix a margin problem multiplies the problem: first fix contribution in the kitchen you already run, then replicate what proved it works.

Does raising the in-app price scare customers away?

No, provided the product listing justifies it with produced photography and a precise description. The delivery customer buys convenience and compares inside the app, not against your dining room. Deliveroo reported a record frequency of 3.5 monthly orders per consumer in the UK and Ireland in 2024, which points to a settled habit with lower price elasticity than the average owner fears.

Does a QR menu replace the physical menu if I sell heavily through the app?

No, and this is a firm Masterestaurant recommendation: the physical menu stays ALWAYS. The printed menu controls the in-room experience — pace of service, menu narrative, suggestive selling — while the QR and digital menu cover delivery, accessibility, price changes and consultation analytics. They are two instruments with distinct roles, and dropping one to save on printing costs more in average ticket than it saves in paper.

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
Uso de apps de terceros (third-party)	**46% de los comensales en EE. UU. prefiere apps de terceros; casi 5 pedidos/mes**	DoorDash (Restaurant Business) 2024
Operadores de restaurante que usan IA	**Más del 25% de los operadores ya usa inteligencia artificial**	National Restaurant Association (Restaurant Dive) 2026

Metric	Benchmark 2026	Source
Comodidad de operadores con IA	**86% de los operadores se declara cómodo usando IA (2025)**	Toast 2025
Casos de uso de IA en restaurantes	**Automatización de marketing 28%, insights en tiempo real 27%, optimización de menú 26% (2025)**	Toast 2025
Comisiones de plataformas de terceros	**Comisión típica 15%-30%; costo efectivo hasta 30%-40% por pedido**	Food On Demand 2026
Ticket promedio de pedido de delivery EE. UU.	**USD 20-35 por pedido en 2025**	Lightspeed 2025

Author: Diego F. Parra · **Publisher:** MASTERESTAURANT®

Content created with AI assistance, reviewed by the MASTERESTAURANT editorial team.