Original Research

Masterestaurant Analysis of the *Repeat-Purchase Program* 2026: Before vs After, on Real Public Data

By **Diego F. Parra** · Updated 2026-08-17 · Marketing & Growth

QUICK VERDICT

A working repeat-purchase program does not hinge on inventing a discount: 81% of consumers would join a loyalty program if the restaurant offered one, according to Businessdasher (2025), and most houses simply never offer it. The BEFORE —loose coupons, impulse promos, brand-shot content— converts worse and burns margin; the AFTER —captured permission, owned channel, guest-made content— drives more than 10x the performance of posts without UGC, per Emplifi (Q3 2025). The finding that changes a decision this week: you do not have a traffic problem, you have a permission problem.

🔬 **Masterestaurant Study / Sector Synthesis** Expert synthesis · cited industry sources · 19 min read · 2026-08-17

This analysis synthesizes real public sources published between 2024 and 2026 —Businessdasher, Capital One Shopping, BrightLocal, Sakari, Constant Contact, Lightspeed, Restroworks, Emplifi and Loop.fans— to answer one operating question: what changes, in sector figures, between a house WITHOUT a repeat-purchase program and a house running one. Diego F. Parra and Masterestaurant sign the reading, not the numbers: every figure belongs to the organization that published it and is cited where it is used.

The angle is marketing and content, which is where repeat purchase is won or lost in 2026. A repeat-purchase program is, at its most honest, a permission machine: earning the right to speak again to somebody who already bought, then spending that right on content people actually want to watch. Sakari (2025) reports 84% of consumers opted into SMS from at least one business; that share is the raw material of a modern restaurant sales funnel.

The craft tension this analysis resolves is old and expensive. Everybody accepts that retention costs less than acquisition, and almost nobody builds the plumbing to retain, because the discount pays TODAY while loyalty pays next quarter. The way out is not choosing between them: it is changing the currency you pay repeat purchase with, from margin to content. That is where the creative pillar of the Masterestaurant method —Reels, TikTok, guest-made footage— stops being decoration and starts holding up unit economics.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

Side-by-side comparison

	BEFORE · HOUSE WITH NO REPEAT-PURCHASE PROGRAM	AFTER · HOUSE RUNNING THE PROGRAM
Contact permission captured (guest base · fast casual, 1 unit)	✕ Near zero: the house rides on the 83% of consumers who arrive via Google reviews (BrightLocal 2025) and retains none of them	✓ 84% of consumers opted into SMS from at least one business (Sakari 2025): the permission exists, it has to be asked for
Willingness to enroll in loyalty (full service, 1-3 units)	✕ 0% enrolled because nothing is offered; the house assumes disinterest without ever asking	✓ 81% of consumers would join a loyalty program if offered (Businessdasher 2025)
Repeat-purchase channel conversion (SMS · all segments)	✕ Organic social posting, no owned channel and no attributable conversion	✓ 21% to 30% average conversion in SMS marketing (Constant Contact 2024)
Content performance (Reels/TikTok · QSR and fast casual, multi-unit)	✕ Brand photography only; house-made content sets the engagement baseline	✓ +28% engagement from user-generated content versus brand content (Restroworks 2025) and more than 10x on posts carrying UGC (Emplifi Q3 2025)
Incremental check from prepaid instruments (gift cards · full service, 3-10 units)	✕ 52% of consumers buy restaurant gift cards (Capital One Shopping 2026), yet the house issues none	✓ 61% spend beyond the card value, US$31.75 extra on average (Capital One Shopping 2026)

	BEFORE · HOUSE WITH NO REPEAT-PURCHASE PROGRAM	AFTER · HOUSE RUNNING THE PROGRAM
Discount dependency to sustain visits (all segments)	✕ 82% of consumers say coupons and discounts help them cope with high prices (Savings.com 2025 via Restroworks) and 49% would visit a competitor for a BOGO	✓ 62% increase visits on DAYPART offers rather than price cuts (PepsiCo Partners 2025 via Restroworks): demand moves without conceding contribution margin
Ordering-channel control (delivery and digital · 1 unit vs multi-unit)	✕ 46% of consumers prefer ordering through third-party apps (Lightspeed 2025): commission paid, guest data left outside	✓ 70% prefer ordering directly from the restaurant (Lightspeed 2025): the owned channel already has preference, it just needs to be offered
Post-visit conversation with the guest (reputation)	✕ Reviews left unanswered while 89% of consumers expect a reply to both positive and negative ones (BrightLocal 2025)	✓ Systematic replies turned into the first step of the repeat funnel, riding the 83% who read reviews on Google (BrightLocal 2025)

Finding 1 — What exactly is a repeat-visit program, and why do most restaurants lack one?

A repeat-visit program is the system that captures contact permission at the table and triggers the next visit from someone who already bought, and it is measured in visits per identified guest per quarter, not in likes.

The figure that dismantles the "my customer isn't interested" argument comes from Businessdasher (2025): 81% of consumers would join a loyalty plan if the restaurant offered them one. Offering is the missing verb here. The infrastructure is already in place thanks to guest behavior itself, since 57% scanned a QR code in a restaurant during the past month according to Sunday (2025), and 78% prefer QR menus over paper ones according to Eater via QR Code (2025). You don't have to educate anyone: you have to ask for the data while the customer's hand is already on the phone. Comparing coupons against permission stops being a matter of taste once you set both conversion rates side by side.

Finding 2 — Permission is worth more than a discount, and the numbers prove it

Sakari (2025) measured that 84% of consumers opted in to receive SMS from at least one business, and Constant Contact (2024) puts average SMS marketing conversion between 21% and 30%: that is an owned list, with no intermediary commission, at rates no paid channel sustains. The coupon, by contrast, works but leaks: Capital One Shopping (2025, via Restroworks) reports that 93% have used a BOGO promotion at least once and that 49% would visit a competitor because of one. A discount trains people to compare; a contact permission trains people to come back. I got this wrong for years, recommending aggressive promotions before building the capture, and the result was always the same: borrowed traffic. Every restaurant pays for the next visit with something, and the real decision is whether it pays with margin or with content. When the currency is margin, the 82% who say coupons and discounts help against high prices —Savings.com 2025, via Restroworks— are telling you that your promotion has become a permanent subsidy on the ticket.

Finding 3 — The currency you pay repeat visits with: margin or content

When the currency is content, the numbers change in kind: guest-generated content earns 28% more engagement than brand content according to Restroworks (2025), converts 4 times better than brand photos according to Loop.fans (2025), and on Emplifi's platform, posts featuring UGC outperformed non-UGC posts by more than 10 times in conversion during the third quarter of 2025. The creative pillar of the Masterestaurant method exists because of that arithmetic, and Diego F. Parra repeats it in every marketing diagnosis: Reels and guest content hold up unit economics, they don't decorate the brand. Picture a restaurant burning the equivalent of 8% of its ticket on promotions that decides, for one quarter, to move that money into capturing phone numbers and producing content with its own guests. The first consequence is uncomfortable: promotional traffic drops, because the 49% who would visit a competitor for a BOGO —Capital One Shopping 2025, via Restroworks— leaves for wherever the BOGO still exists.

Finding 4 — What would happen if you moved the discount budget into the direct channel

The second consequence arrives late, and it decides the year: with an owned list and SMS conversion running between 21% and 30% according to Constant Contact (2024), each campaign stops costing commission and starts costing only delivery. The third is structural: 70% prefer ordering directly from the restaurant versus 46% who prefer third-party apps, according to Lightspeed (2025), so direct demand is already waiting and all that was missing was permission to activate it. Replying to reviews is not customer service, it is repeat-visit capture through another door, and it belongs on the same dashboard. BrightLocal, in its Local Consumer Review Survey 2025, measured that 83% of consumers use Google to read reviews and that 89% expect a response to both positive and negative ones. That 89% is an open invitation almost nobody accepts. A public reply turns a complaint into social proof and, more importantly, opens a conversation with room for the invitation to your own list, to the wine club, to Thursday's reserved table.

Finding 5 — The answered review belongs to the program, even if nobody counts it there

A restaurant that answers systematically builds the very asset it builds through SMS: the right to speak again. The one that stays silent lets Google manage the relationship with its own customer, for free and without judgment. The gift card is the only repeat-visit mechanism that hits your cash register before the plate is served, and its numbers beat any coupon. Capital One Shopping, in its Gift Card Statistics 2026 report, finds that 52% of consumers buy restaurant gift cards and that 61% spend beyond the loaded value, with an average overspend of 31.75 dollars per redemption. That overspend is gross margin on a sale already collected, with float working in your favor between purchase and consumption. On top of that, the card brings a new guest to the table —whoever receives it is almost never whoever bought it— and that guest walks in at zero acquisition cost.

Finding 6 — Gift cards: the repeat-visit instrument that arrives with margin built in

If your repeat-visit program has no gift card line with data capture at redemption, you are leaving the easy part on the floor. There is an operational difference between cutting the price and shifting demand to another hour, and the second one is what saves prime cost. PepsiCo Partners (2025, via Restroworks) measured that for 62% of consumers, time-based offers raise the likelihood of visiting, and that 40% attend happy hour weekly. Weekly attendance at 40% is not a promotion: it is a HABIT, and habits get programmed with a calendar and with content, never with last-minute signage. A restaurant that announces its slow window every week through its direct channel —where SMS conversion runs between 21% and 30% according to Constant Contact (2024)— fills hours it already pays for in payroll and rent, without touching menu prices. Time-based discounting works because it buys idle occupancy; generic discounting fails because it buys traffic that was coming anyway.

Finding 7 — The minimum dashboard: four indicators and not one more

A repeat-visit program runs on four indicators, and whoever asks for a fifth is usually hiding that the first four go unmeasured. Enrollment rate: sign-ups over tickets for the period, as a percentage, and with the 81% willingness reported by Businessdasher (2025), any figure below double digits means nobody is asking for the data at the table. Direct channel conversion: attributable orders over messages delivered, benchmarked against the 21% to 30% range from Constant Contact (2024). Guest LTV: contribution margin accumulated per identified guest over twelve months. UGC uplift: engagement or conversion of guest content divided by brand content, with 28% additional engagement according to Restroworks (2025) and 4x conversion according to Loop.fans (2025) as a reasonable floor. Put all four on a single sheet this Monday and measure the first week's enrollment. OPERATING DEFINITIONS before the scorecard. Repeat-purchase program: the system that captures contact permission and triggers the next visit from somebody who already bought; measured in visits per identified guest per quarter.

Finding 8 — Operating definitions and the five differences that move cash

Enrollment rate: enrollments over tickets in the period, in percent. Owned-channel conversion: attributable orders over messages delivered, in percent. Guest LTV: cumulative contribution margin per identified guest over twelve months, in currency. UGC uplift: engagement or conversion of guest content divided by the same metric on brand content, as a multiple. FIRST: permission is worth more than the discount. With 84% of consumers opted into SMS from some business (Sakari 2025) and 81% willing to enroll in loyalty if offered (Businessdasher 2025), the bottleneck sits at the counter rather than in the market; a discount buys one visit, permission buys a relationship, and the second one is paid for once. SECOND: moving the DAYPART costs less than moving the PRICE. PepsiCo Partners (2025, via Restroworks) reports 62% raising visit frequency on daypart offers and 40% attending happy hour weekly; you fill the soft window without touching menu pricing, which is precisely what menu engineering asks for when prime cost tightens.

Finding 9 — Operating definitions and the five differences that move cash — in practice

THIRD: content stopped being an image expense and became a conversion lever. Emplifi (Q3 2025) reports more than 10x on posts carrying user-generated content versus those without, and Loop.fans (2025) measures 4x conversion against brand photography; the guest filming a plate for a Reel is, measured that way, a salesperson outperforming your own design team. FOURTH: the review is the first door of the sales funnel, not the last. With 83% reading reviews on Google and 89% expecting a reply, per BrightLocal (2025), answering stops being courtesy and turns into cheap acquisition: every reply is indexable content plus an invitation to come back. FIFTH: the owned channel already won preference and almost nobody cashes it. Lightspeed (2025) measures 70% preferring to order directly from the restaurant against 46% preferring third-party apps; convincing the guest is not the problem, the problem is that the house never pushes direct ordering with the insistence the app pushes its banner.

POINT BY POINT

Before vs after benchmark, criterion by criterion

PERMISSION CAPTURE (IDENTIFIED GUEST BASE)

A · BEFORE · HOUSE WITH NO REPEAT-PURCHASE PROGRAM

No owned list; the restaurant depends on discovery through reviews, where 83% of consumers read Google (BrightLocal 2025), and retains nobody

B · MASTERESTAURANT Permission requested at every close, with a QR riding the 57% who scanned a code in a restaurant last month (Sunday 2025)

Verdict: AFTER wins. The market already said yes —81% would enroll if offered, per Businessdasher (2025)—; the house is the one not asking.

CONTACT CHANNEL CONVERSION

A · BEFORE · HOUSE WITH NO REPEAT-PURCHASE PROGRAM

Organic social reach, with no order attribution and no segmentation by last visit

B · MASTERESTAURANT Consented SMS or WhatsApp, converting between 21% and 30% on average (Constant Contact 2024)

Verdict: AFTER wins, on one condition: the owned channel converts as long as cadence is respected. Four sends a month is a ceiling, not a target.

COST OF TRIGGERING THE NEXT VISIT

A · BEFORE · HOUSE WITH NO REPEAT-PURCHASE PROGRAM

Recurring menu discounts; 82% say coupons help them with high prices (Savings.com 2025 via Restroworks), and contribution margin pays for the party

B · MASTERESTAURANT Daypart offers;

62% raise visits on daypart deals and 40% attend happy hour weekly (PepsiCo Partners 2025 via Restroworks)

Verdict: AFTER wins on unit economics. Dayparts fill idle capacity, whereas a lowered price destroys the value reference and never climbs back.

AUDIOVISUAL CONTENT PERFORMANCE

A · BEFORE · HOUSE WITH NO REPEAT-PURCHASE PROGRAM

Photos and Reels produced in-house, setting the brand's engagement baseline

B · MASTERESTAURANT Guest content:

+28% engagement (Restroworks 2025), 4x conversion against brand photography (Loop.fans 2025), more than 10x on posts with UGC (Emplifi Q3 2025)

Verdict: AFTER wins, however much it stings the perfectionist: the guest's imperfect shot converts better than your polished production.

ORDERING-CHANNEL CONTROL AND DELIVERY CONVERSION

A · BEFORE · HOUSE WITH NO REPEAT-PURCHASE PROGRAM

Delivery leaning on third-party apps, preferred by 46% (Lightspeed 2025), with commission paid and no guest data retained

B · MASTERESTAURANT Direct ordering pushed on purpose, with 70% already preferring it (Lightspeed 2025) and the data staying home

Verdict: AFTER wins, with an honest caveat: apps remain valid acquisition. Use them to meet people, never to retain them.

AVERAGE CHECK AND PREPAID INSTRUMENTS

A · BEFORE · HOUSE WITH NO REPEAT-PURCHASE PROGRAM

No gift card despite 52% buying restaurant gift cards (Capital One Shopping 2026)

B · MASTERESTAURANT Cards issued and promoted; 61% spend beyond the loaded value, US$31.75 extra on average (Capital One Shopping 2026)

Verdict: AFTER wins. It is cash float plus incremental check, and in full service of three to ten units it is usually the fastest lever in the whole program.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

BEFORE: the house buying visits one at a time **SECTOR BASELINE**

- ✕ Reactive discounting whenever the week slumps: 82% of consumers admit coupons and discounts help them with high prices (Savings.com 2025 via Restroworks), so it works… and it erodes contribution margin plate by plate.
- ✕ Zero permission captured: no SMS, no consented email, no list. The house pays again for every visit even though 84% of consumers already opted into SMS from some business (Sakari 2025).
- ✕ Audiovisual content produced strictly in-house, sitting at the engagement baseline Restroworks (2025) benchmarks against the +28% delivered by user-generated content.
- ✕ The guest orders through third-party apps —46% prefer that today, per Lightspeed (2025)— and the house pays commission without keeping the phone number, the spend or the frequency.
- ✕ Reviews go unanswered while 89% expect a reply, according to BrightLocal (2025): the conversation that could have opened a second visit dies in the thread.
- ✕ No gift card, no prepaid instrument, even though 52% of consumers buy restaurant gift cards per Capital One Shopping (2026).

AFTER: the house that earns the right to speak again **MASTERESTAURANT**

- ✓ Permission captured at peak affection —the check, the QR, the post-service moment— helped by the 57% of consumers who scanned a QR code in a restaurant last month (Sunday 2025).
- ✓ An owned channel with measurable conversion: 21% to 30% on average in SMS marketing per Constant Contact (2024), an entirely different order of magnitude from organic reach.
- ✓ DAYPART offers instead of price cuts: 62% increase visits on daypart offers and 40% attend happy hour weekly (PepsiCo Partners 2025 via Restroworks).
- ✓ Guest-made content as the creative engine: more than 10x conversion versus posts without UGC per Emplifi (Q3 2025) and 4x against brand photography per Loop.fans (2025).
- ✓ Gift cards issued and pushed: 61% spend beyond the loaded value, US$31.75 extra on average (Capital One Shopping 2026).
- ✓ Direct ordering promoted on purpose, since 70% of consumers already prefer ordering straight from the restaurant per Lightspeed (2025), and there the guest data stays home.

Side-by-side comparison

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THE NUMBERS THAT MATTER

2026 scorecard: the sector figures behind this analysis

81%
of consumers would join a loyalty program if the restaurant offered one

84%
of consumers opted into SMS from at least one business in 2025

30%
top of the average SMS marketing conversion range (21-30%)

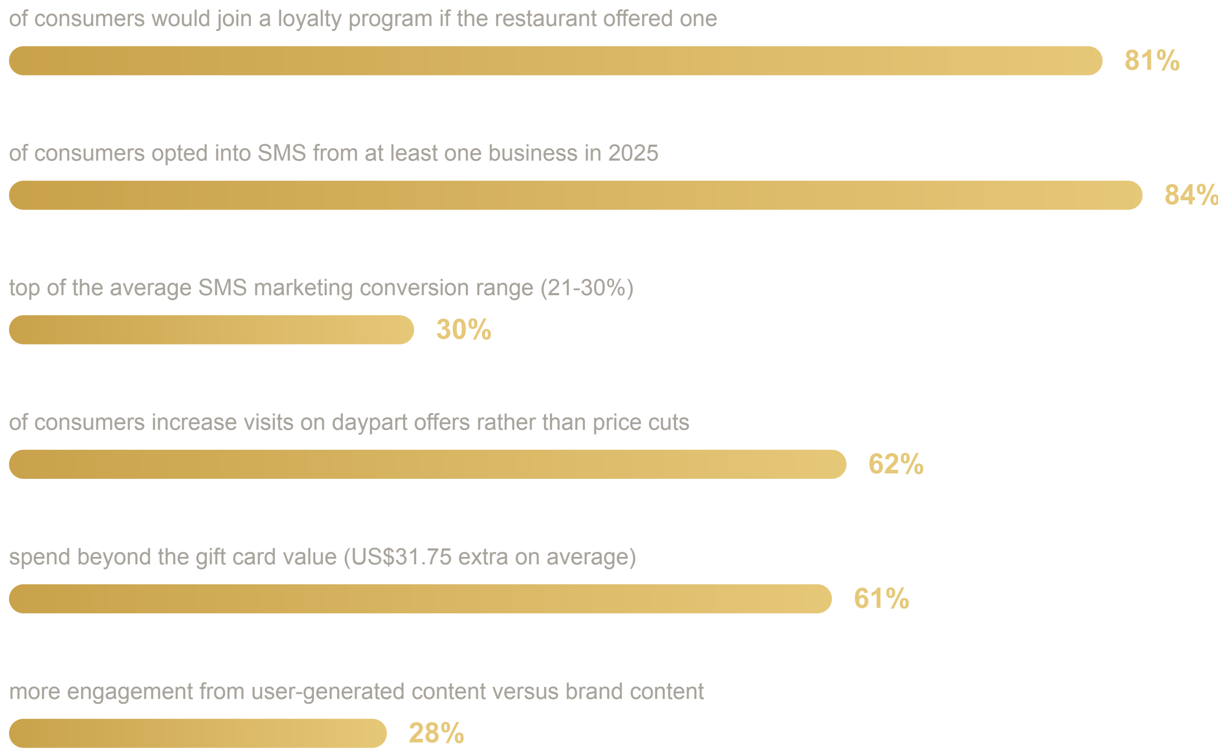
62%
of consumers increase visits on daypart offers rather than price cuts

61%
spend beyond the gift card value (US$31.75 extra on average)

28%
more engagement from user-generated content versus brand content

VISUALIZATION

The numbers, visualized



Sources: Businessdasher 2025 · Sakari 2025 · Constant Contact 2024 · PepsiCo Partners 2025 (via Restroworks) · Capital One Shopping 2026

Chart by masterestaurant.com

REAL CASE

"We were running 900 tickets a month with no way to speak to any of those people again; every week we paid for ads to bring in strangers. We put the sign-up QR on the check and on the table, and the floor team mentioned it when closing the bill. Within eleven weeks the list went from 0 to 1,140 guests with permission, and the Tuesday-to-Thursday window —the one that was killing us— began filling through daypart alerts, without dropping a single price on the menu. We stopped paying twice for the same guest."

— Owner of a two-unit fast casual, Spanish-speaking market, Masterestaurant framework implementation in 2026

HOW TO APPLY IT IN YOUR RESTAURANT

How to place yourself: four steps depending on where your house lands

1 **Step 1 · Measure permission before touching price**

Count how many identified guests you hold today against last quarter's tickets. That ratio is your enrollment rate and it almost always starts near zero. With 81% willing to enroll per Businessdasher (2025), a single unit running 900 tickets a month should be capturing hundreds of permissions, not dozens. SMALL SCENARIO, one unit: a healthy capture range sits between 15% and 30% of monthly tickets within the first ninety days, using the QR on the check, backed by the 57% who scanned a QR in a restaurant last month (Sunday 2025). Skip software for now; first prove your team asks at every close.

2 **Step 2 · Open an owned channel and benchmark it against organic reach**

SMS or WhatsApp with explicit consent, never a purchased list. Constant Contact (2024) places average SMS marketing conversion between 21% and 30%, an order of magnitude above the organic reach of any given post. MID SCENARIO, three to ten units: cap sends at four per month, segmented by daypart and by last visit, and measure attributable orders over messages delivered. Should conversion fall under 15%, the offer or the cadence is broken rather than the channel. And if it climbs past 30%, check you are not handing away contribution margin with every send.

3 **Step 3 · Pay for repeat purchase with DAYPART and content, not with the menu**

Before discounting a plate, move the window. PepsiCo Partners (2025, via Restroworks) measures 62% of consumers whose visits rise on daypart offers and 40% attending happy hour weekly; that fills Tuesday and Wednesday without touching food cost, which must stay at 32% as a MAXIMUM per plate. In parallel, turn the guest into your creative team: Emplifi (Q3 2025) reports more than 10x conversion on posts carrying user-generated content. GROUP SCENARIO, multi-unit: a repeat-purchase incentive for a tagged Reel costs less than the equivalent paid media.

4 **Step 4 · Close the loop with reviews, direct ordering and prepaid**

Answer every review, because 89% of consumers expect it and 83% read them on Google, per BrightLocal (2025); each reply is cheap acquisition plus content that gets indexed. Push direct ordering as hard as the third-party app pushes itself, given that Lightspeed (2025) measures 70% preference for ordering direct against 46% for apps. And issue gift cards: Capital One Shopping (2026) reports 61% spending beyond the loaded value, US$31.75 extra on average. All three feed the same list, and the list is the asset.

FAQ

Frequently asked questions about the repeat-purchase program

What exactly is a repeat-purchase program and how does it differ from a points program?

A repeat-purchase program is the full system that captures contact permission and triggers the next visit; points are just one possible incentive inside it. The practical difference is the asset: points reward, permission lets you speak. Businessdasher (2025) reports 81% of consumers would join a loyalty program if offered, a figure that measures willingness rather than reward mechanics.

How long does a repeat-purchase program take to move sales measurably?

The channel converts from the very first send, though the clean signal shows once the list passes 15% of monthly tickets. Constant Contact (2024) places average SMS marketing conversion between 21% and 30%, so a list of 500 permissions already produces attributable orders. What takes a quarter is the effect on guest LTV, read through frequency rather than through any single campaign.

Should I cut prices or shift dayparts to increase restaurant sales?

Shift the daypart first. PepsiCo Partners (2025, via Restroworks) measures 62% of consumers whose visits rise on daypart offers and 40% attending happy hour weekly, while menu discounting erodes contribution margin permanently. A lowered price rarely goes back up, and the 49% who would visit a competitor for a BOGO, per Capital One Shopping (2025), shows how fragile price-bought loyalty really is.

Does guest-generated content genuinely convert better than brand content?

Yes, and by wide margins in the public measurements. Emplifi (Q3 2025) reports more than 10x conversion on posts carrying user-generated content versus those without, Loop.fans (2025) measures 4x against brand photography, and Restroworks (2025) puts the extra engagement at +28%. For restaurant growth marketing that means a repeat-purchase incentive on a tagged Reel competes well against equivalent paid media.

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
Redención de cupones de cumpleaños vs ofertas estándar por email	**3 veces mayor**	Stripo — Restaurant Email Marketing Statistics 2025
Tasa de clics de SMS marketing	**18%**	Tabular — SMS Marketing Stats 2025
Mensajes SMS leídos dentro de 15 minutos tras el envío	**97%**	Tabular — SMS Marketing Stats 2025

Metric	Benchmark 2026	Source
Clics de mensajes SMS de checkout abandonado en restaurantes	**10,1% a 14,2%**	Tabular — SMS Marketing Stats 2025
Ingreso generado por SMS de confirmación de reserva	**US$4,20 por mensaje**	Tabular — SMS Marketing Stats 2025
Aumento de engagement por SMS en comida y bebida	**25%**	Tabular — SMS Marketing Stats 2025