

Local Delivery Radar 2026: channel mix, tickets and margins of urban fulfillment

By  **Diego F. Parra** · Updated 2026-07-08 · Dark Kitchens & Foodtech

QUICK VERDICT

Verdict (answer-first): urban delivery is NOT profitable by default in 2026; it becomes profitable when the own channel exceeds 34% of the mix. Across the 8,400 P&Ls Masterrestaurant audited, an aggregator order left an average net margin of 4.1% (range -2 to 9%), while an own-channel or membership order left 17.8%. The lever is not selling more through the app: it is shifting the mix from the aggregator (29.4% effective commission) to your own subscription channel, where food cost stays $\leq 32\%$ and commission drops to 3-6%. Anyone below 20% own channel is, in practice, operating to finance someone else's logistics.

 **Original Study / Industry Index** · First-party research · methodology & sample disclosed

 Methodology: n=8,400 · 12 min read · 2026-07-08

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Delivery stopped being a pandemic add-on and became a business line with its own accounting. The problem: most owners still measure delivery by gross revenue, not by contribution margin after commission, packaging and route waste. That's where the number lies.

This Radar does not summarize third-party figures: it synthesizes what Diego F. Parra and the Masterrestaurant team saw across 8,400 audited P&Ls between 2023 and 2026. The question it answers is concrete: how much does each delivery channel really leave, by segment and operation size, and in which sector percentile does your restaurant fall?

The finding that orders everything else: delivery margin does not depend on volume, it depends on the MIX. A restaurant billing less through apps but with 40% own channel and membership earns more net euros than one billing double while chained to a single aggregator at 30% commission.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

Side-by-side comparison

	TRADITIONAL MODEL (AGGREGATOR-DEPENDENT)	MR MODEL (GOVERNED MIX + MEMBERSHIP)
Average effective commission	✗ 29.4% of ticket	✓ 11.2% (weighted mix)
Own-channel share	✗ 12% of orders	✓ 38% of orders
Average delivery ticket	✗ €18.90	✓ €24.60 (+30%)
Channel net margin	✗ 4.1% (range -2 to 9%)	✓ 17.8% (range 12 to 23%)
90-day repurchase	✗ 1.7 orders/customer	✓ 4.3 orders/customer
Effective acquisition cost	✗ €6.80 per new order	✓ €2.10 (amortized in membership)

Finding 1 — Is urban delivery profitable in 2026?

Urban delivery is not profitable by default in 2026: it becomes profitable when the direct channel exceeds 34% of the mix.

Across the 8,400 profit-and-loss statements Masterrestaurant audited between 2023 and 2026, an order placed through an aggregator left an average net margin of 4.1%, while the same dish shipped through the direct channel with a membership reached 17.8%. The gap is not about volume, it is about who keeps the point. A restaurant billing €12,000 a month through an app at 30% commission moves a lot of cash and earns little; another billing €8,000 with 40% direct channel ends up with more net euros in the till. The mistake I see over and over: the owner reads the gross revenue on the aggregator dashboard and thinks he is winning, when contribution margin after commission, packaging and route spoilage already ate the profit.

Finding 2 — Rate commission versus effective commission

The aggregator's effective commission averaged 29.4%, not the 25-30% the published rate advertises. Masterrestaurant broke that number down across 8,400 accounts: on top of the base commission come the forced promotions needed to rank, the in-app advertising you buy almost by obligation, and the commission the aggregator also charges on delivery fees. All of it together pushed the nominal 27% up to a real 29.4%. The direct channel with a payment gateway drops it to 3-6%: just Stripe or Redsys on the amount. That 23-percentage-point gap is practically the entire margin of the delivery business. In till euros: on a €20 ticket, the aggregator takes €5.88 and the direct gateway €0.90. A five-euro difference per order, repeated 900 times a month, is €4,500 that decides whether delivery pays payroll or destroys it. On the aggregator the customer is not yours: he belongs to the aggregator, and that changes the whole repurchase equation.

Finding 3 — Who owns the customer who orders through an app?

You do not have his email, you cannot run remarketing, you do not know what he ordered last time, and every time he returns you pay the full commission again as if he were a cold lead.

The membership turns the diner into an owned asset: in the audited accounts, the direct-channel customer repurchased 4.3 times in 90 days, versus 1.7 times for the aggregator customer. That is a difference of 2.6 orders per head in a quarter. Diego F. Parra sums it up bluntly in the board meetings he chairs: on the aggregator you

rent the customer every month; with a membership you buy him once and keep him forever. The reconquest cost on the aggregator is the eternal 29.4%; on your own base, an email that costs cents. The direct channel's average ticket was €24.60, 30% higher than the aggregator's €18.90.

Finding 4 — The ticket you govern versus the flat ticket

The reason is control, not luck: on your own digital menu you decide the order of dishes, activate cross-recommendations, build 'main + drink + dessert' bundles and apply upsell at checkout. On the aggregator you compete in a flat grid where the customer compares price against 40 restaurants and the algorithm rewards cheap. Masterrestaurant measured that every euro of ticket increase on the direct channel falls almost entirely to margin, because delivery and packaging costs are fixed per order, not per amount. Raising the ticket from €18.90 to €24.60 across 900 orders adds €5,130 in monthly revenue with the same number of routes. That governed ticket is the silent lever: it does not capture new customers, it squeezes more from those who already ordered. Your delivery percentile depends on the channel mix, not on the size of your venue.

Finding 5 — Which sector percentile does your delivery fall into?

In the sample of 8,400 accounts, the top profitability quartile averaged 41% direct channel and a delivery net margin of 15.2%;

the bottom quartile ran on 91% aggregator with margins of -1.8%, meaning it lost money on every home order and covered it with the dining room. The sector median stayed at 22% direct channel and 5.6% margin: it survives, it does not grow. The operational threshold separating winning from losing was sharp: crossing 34% direct channel. Below it, the aggregator runs your accounting; above it, you start setting the rules. Before investing in more in-app advertising, measure your percentile: if you depend on the aggregator for more than two-thirds of your orders, your problem is not marketing, it is structure. Route spoilage ate between 2 and 4 additional margin points that almost no owner records.

Finding 6 — The route spoilage nobody counts

Masterrestaurant broke down the real cost per home order beyond commission: heat-sealed packaging (€0.85), loss of temperature and quality that drives incidents and refunds (1.2% of orders fully reimbursed), and dishes that travel badly and generate negative reviews with reputational cost. Added together, that operational overcost cut 3.1 margin points on average from the aggregator order and only 1.4 from the direct channel, where the restaurant controls delivery radius and dispatch flow. The uncomfortable figure: 8.7% of menu dishes lose money on delivery even though they are profitable in the dining room, because a 30% food cost survives commission but does not survive commission plus spoilage plus packaging. The fix is not raising every price: it is designing a distinct delivery menu, with dishes that travel well and a 68% margin in the recipe costing. Migrating from 22% direct channel (the median) to 34% (the profitable threshold) is a 90-day operation, not an overnight jump.

Finding 7 — How to move from 22% to 34% direct channel

The MASTERRESTAURANT method runs it in four measurable moves: first, capture the email and mobile of every aggregator customer by slipping a QR flyer with a first-direct-order discount into each bag (observed capture rate: 18-24%). Second, build a direct digital menu with a governed ticket and bundles. Third, launch the membership with 90-day repurchase as the single metric. Fourth, reserve the aggregator for acquiring new customers and pull recurring ones off it with a direct incentive. In the accounts that applied the full cycle, the direct channel rose from 22% to 37% in a quarter and delivery net margin went from 5.6% to 12.9%. The close is a

single action: this week, put the QR in the next batch of bags and start buying your customers instead of renting them. Effective vs headline commission. The aggregator advertises 25-30%, but adding forced promotions, in-app advertising and commission on delivery fees, the EFFECTIVE commission Masterrestaurant measured was 29.4% on average.

Finding 8 — The 4 differences that decide fulfillment margin

The own channel with membership drops it to 3-6% of gateway fee. That 23-point gap is almost the entire margin of the business. Owning vs renting the customer. On the aggregator, the customer belongs to the aggregator: no email, no remarketing, you pay again to reconquer them. Membership turns the customer into your own asset: 4.3 repurchases at 90 days versus 1.7 on the aggregator. Governed vs flat ticket. The own channel enables recommendations, upsell and bundles; average ticket rises to €24.60 versus €18.90 on the aggregator. A 30% higher ticket over the same delivery cost multiplies margin per order. Amortizable fixed cost vs eternal variable cost. Membership is an acquisition cost amortized over months of repurchase; aggregator commission is a variable tax you pay on every order, forever, building no asset.

POINT BY POINT

A/B analysis: aggregator-dependent vs governed mix

COMMISSION STRUCTURE

A · TRADITIONAL MODEL (AGGREGATOR-DEPENDENT)

29.4% effective commission on every order, forever

B · MASTERRESTAURANT 3-6% gateway + acquisition cost amortized in membership

Verdict: The MR model turns an eternal variable tax into a fixed cost that amortizes; it wins as soon as repurchase exists.

CUSTOMER OWNERSHIP

A · TRADITIONAL MODEL (AGGREGATOR-DEPENDENT)

The customer belongs to the aggregator; reconquered by paying again

B · MASTERRESTAURANT The customer is your own asset with email and 4.3x repurchase

Verdict: Without customer ownership there is no delivery business, only rented demand.

AVERAGE TICKET

A · TRADITIONAL MODEL (AGGREGATOR-DEPENDENT)

€18.90 with flat ticket and no upsell

B · MASTERRESTAURANT €24.60 with bundles and governed recommendation

Verdict: The +30% ticket over the same delivery cost is pure margin; it decides channel profitability.

MARGIN SCALABILITY

A · TRADITIONAL MODEL (AGGREGATOR-DEPENDENT)

More volume = more commission paid, flat margin

B · MASTERRESTAURANT More own mix = margin growing with each migrated point

Verdict: In the traditional model margin doesn't scale with volume; in the MR model it scales with the mix.

SIDE-BY-SIDE COMPARISON

When aggregator-dependent still makes sense **TRADITIONAL**

- ✗ Recent opening with no owned database or organic traffic: the aggregator buys visibility you don't have yet.
- ✗ Low-density zones where building own delivery never reaches logistical break-even.
- ✗ Virtual brand in test phase: validate demand before investing in an own channel.
- ✗ Single-location operations without capacity to run CRM, membership or in-house logistics.

When the MR governed-mix model wins MASTERESTAURANT

- ✓ Restaurant with proven repurchase: every customer who returned once is a membership candidate.
- ✓ Urban density enough for own delivery or a profitable short radius.
- ✓ Group or multi-unit that can amortize CRM and subscription across locations.
- ✓ Average ticket \geq €20 where aggregator commission eats more than a full plate of margin.

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THE NUMBERS THAT MATTER

The Radar scorecard (proprietary data · n=8,400 P&Ls)

29.4%

average effective aggregator
commission (range 24-34% by city)

4.1%

net margin of an aggregator order (range -2 to 9%)

17.8%

net margin of an own-channel/membership order (range 12-23%)

38%

own-channel share in profitable P&Ls (vs 12% in loss-making ones)

24.6€

own-channel average ticket vs €18.90 aggregator (+30%)

4.3x

90-day repurchase with membership vs 1.7x on the aggregator

VISUALIZATION

The numbers, visualized

average effective aggregator commission (range 24-34% by city)



net margin of an aggregator order (range -2 to 9%)



net margin of an own-channel/membership order (range 12-23%)



own-channel share in profitable P&Ls (vs 12% in loss-making ones)



own-channel average ticket vs €18.90 aggregator (+30%)



90-day repurchase with membership vs 1.7x on the aggregator



Sources: Masterrestaurant internal data

Chart by masterrestaurant.com

REAL CASE

“We billed €41,000 a month in delivery and still couldn't make ends meet. Masterrestaurant's Radar showed us 88% of orders came from a single app at 31% commission. We launched a membership with flat delivery fee and moved the own channel from 12% to 37% in five months. We bill almost the same, €39,500, but delivery net margin went from 3.4% to 16.9%. That's €5,300 more net per month without selling a single extra order.”

— Owner of two Asian-food locations, dense urban area · case audited by Masterrestaurant, 2026

HOW TO APPLY IT IN YOUR RESTAURANT

How to place yourself on the Radar in 4 steps

1

Measure your real mix, not gross

Split delivery orders by channel (each aggregator and your own channel) and compute net margin PER CHANNEL after effective commission, packaging and route waste. Most owners discover here that a channel that looks big is the one draining cash.

2

Compute your effective commission, not the headline

Add forced promotions, in-app advertising and commission on delivery fees to the nominal commission. Divide the total paid to the aggregator by sales through that channel: that real percentage is your honest starting point.

3

Set a mix target and a membership lever

Define the own-channel share you want in 6 months (the healthy range starts at 34%). Launch a membership or subscription with a hard benefit (free delivery, member price) charged only in your channel, to migrate repurchase.

4

Reprice delivery and protect food cost

A delivery dish cannot carry the same price as dine-in if commission eats 30 points. Adjust prices by channel keeping food cost $\leq 32\%$ and add higher-ticket bundles. Review margin monthly against the Radar range.

FAQ

Frequently asked questions about local delivery in 2026

What is a healthy delivery net margin in 2026?

Per the 8,400 P&Ls in Masterrestaurant's Radar, the healthy range for the full channel is 11-18% net margin. Below 5% delivery is subsidizing the aggregator; above 18% usually signals a high own-channel share with membership.

Should I drop the aggregators?

Not all at once. The goal isn't zero aggregator, it's shifting the mix: getting the own channel above 34% of orders. The aggregator stays useful to capture new customers you then migrate to your membership, where commission falls from 29% to 3-6%.

Is a dark kitchen or virtual brand worth it?

Only if it lowers your cost per order without diluting margin. In the Radar, profitable virtual brands share a kitchen to reduce fixed food cost and use the own channel; those that just open new SKUs on the aggregator replicate the same 4% margin.

How does Masterrestaurant measure effective commission?

By dividing everything paid to the aggregator (nominal commission + forced promotions + in-app advertising + commission on delivery) by that channel's sales. The average came out at 29.4%, nearly 5 points above the rate the apps advertise.

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
Mercado global de ghost kitchens	~\$83.5 B en 2026 (CAGR ~10–15%)	Statista
Operación fuera del local	~75% del tráfico	Circana
Tráfico de foodservice	delivery como driver de crecimiento	National Restaurant Association
Foodtech LatAm	delivery y dark kitchens entre los verticales más fundeados de la región	Bloomberg Línea
Comisiones de delivery	15–30% nominal · 30–45% efectivo	Nation's Restaurant News

