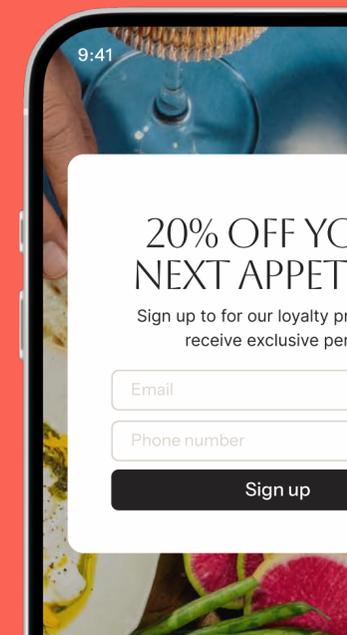




2025 state of restaurant marketing

How restaurants are strengthening their margins through guest loyalty in a year of economic pressure, service challenges, and shifting guest expectations



A new era of restaurant marketing

Margins are shrinking. Costs keep rising. Yet restaurant guests still expect fast, personal, and consistent interactions at every moment.

With more [economic uncertainty](#) looming, the friction between rising internal pressure and guest expectations is forcing restaurants to rethink their approach. Protecting profitability can't come at the cost of the guest experience—so the focus is shifting from simply driving traffic to building long-term guest relationships.

Restaurants pulling ahead of these challenges aren't stuck in a loop of chasing new, one-time diners. They're investing in connected, data-driven systems that turn every interaction into an opportunity to fuel repeat visits. They're aligning marketing and service, unifying data across platforms, and using real-time data to deliver the right message, at the right moment, every time.

In this report, we assess the real-world pressures restaurants face, their key goals and challenges, and the strategies that separate top performers from the rest.



The new economics of restaurant loyalty

Margins have always been tight for the average restaurant, but in 2025, guest expectations are increasing at the exact moment operational capacity and margins are under pressure.

[Rising tariffs](#) and [inflation](#) are expected to push up the cost of ingredients, packaging, and third-party vendor services. At the same time, customer acquisition costs (CACs) are rising alongside consumer expectations. According to Klaviyo's [future of consumer marketing report](#), consumers stay loyal to brands because of consistency, quality, and value, but 74% expect brands to deliver more personalized experiences in 2025.

While many restaurants are bringing in higher-value guests, it's costing them more to do so. Without recalibrating their approach, they risk trading short-term revenue gains for long-term instability.

CACs

are the main challenge for restaurant marketers today

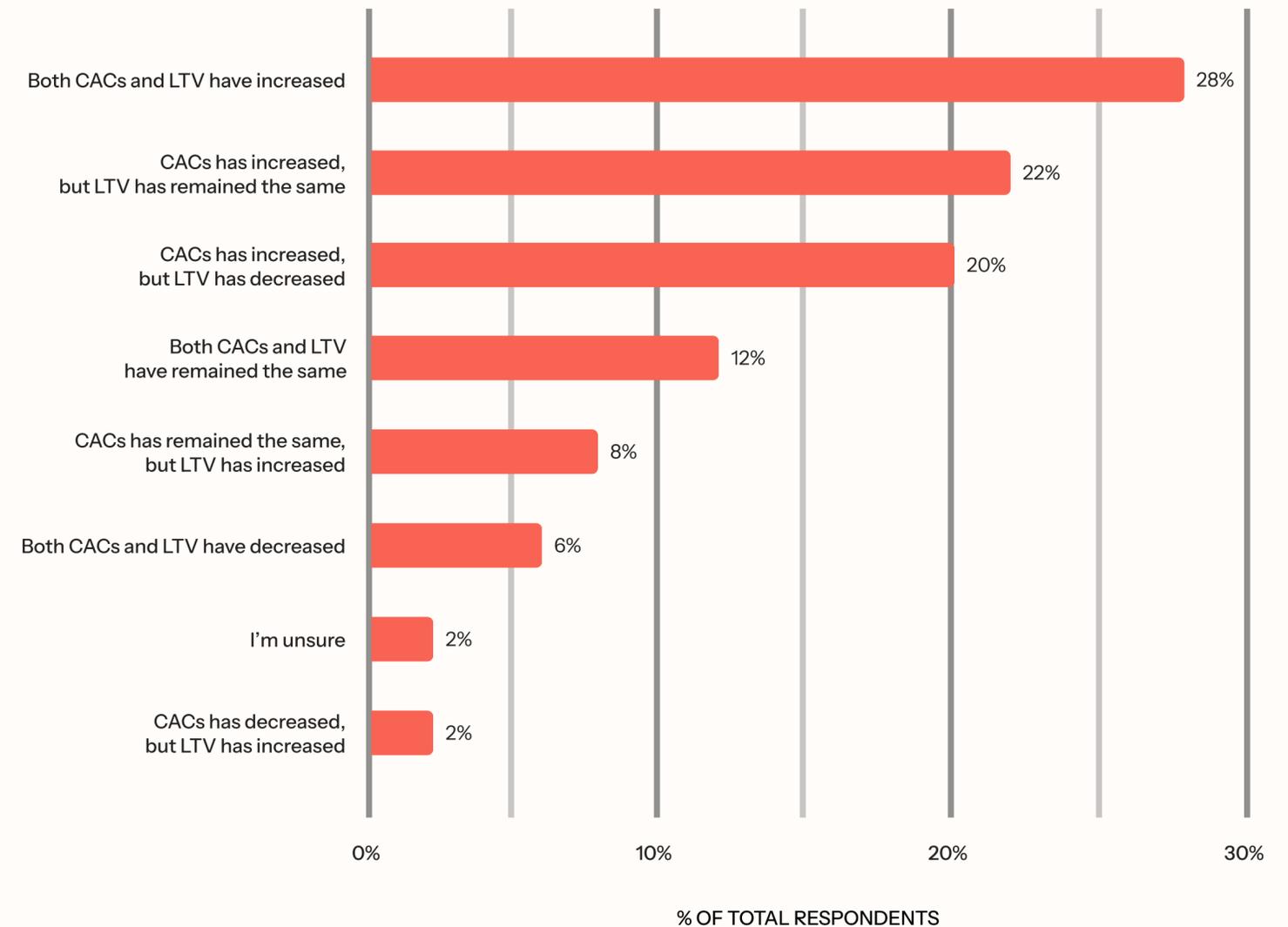
28%

of restaurant marketers report increases in both CACs and lifetime value (LTV)

23%

of restaurant marketers say their most common goal is improving diner retention and loyalty

Which of the following best describes how your restaurant's average CACs and average LTV have changed over the past year?



What restaurant marketers are saying

Behind the scenes, restaurant marketers are navigating a complex mix of priorities and pressures. Here's what the data tells us about their reality:

Retention is the top priority

23% of restaurant marketers say their top goal is improving guest retention and loyalty—the highest across all sectors we surveyed in Klaviyo's state of B2C marketing report.

Restaurants are underperforming against their goals

Only 13% of restaurant marketers say they're significantly exceeding their goals—the lowest among all industries we surveyed.

Marketing teams are handling guest service on top of other responsibilities

98% of restaurant marketing teams now manage some guest service responsibilities..

Physical locations still generate the most revenue

65% of restaurants say in-store or physical locations are their top revenue driver, with websites a close second

Self-service channels are gaining traction

44% of restaurants report that over 41% of guest interactions are managed via self-service tools such as chatbots and AI-powered assistants.

What restaurant marketers should do

Restaurants need to prioritize increasing repeat visits and average order value (AOV) without adding staff or further bloating tech stacks. Instead, they should leverage marketing automation to:

- Reduce guest support volumes and improve efficiency.
- Scale both marketing and service to ease operational strain.
- Align and personalize experiences across channels.

Retention's on the menu— but execution's still in prep.

Retention is the top priority, yet many restaurants aren't hitting their goals. This suggests that although they know retention is key to growth, they're still figuring out how to execute on it. With most revenue from physical locations and growing use of self-service tools, delivering cohesive and personalized experiences across channels is key to building lasting loyalty—and doing so profitably.



Repeat visits and retention start with smarter guest journeys

3 clear themes emerge from the data: retention and loyalty are the biggest priorities driving repeat guest visits, revenue growth remains the primary measure of success, and high CACs are the biggest hurdle standing in the way.

Achieving these goals and overcoming these challenges depends on building lasting relationships. But many restaurants are muddling through with unaligned teams and disjointed technology—an integration gap driving up CACs and holding back growth.

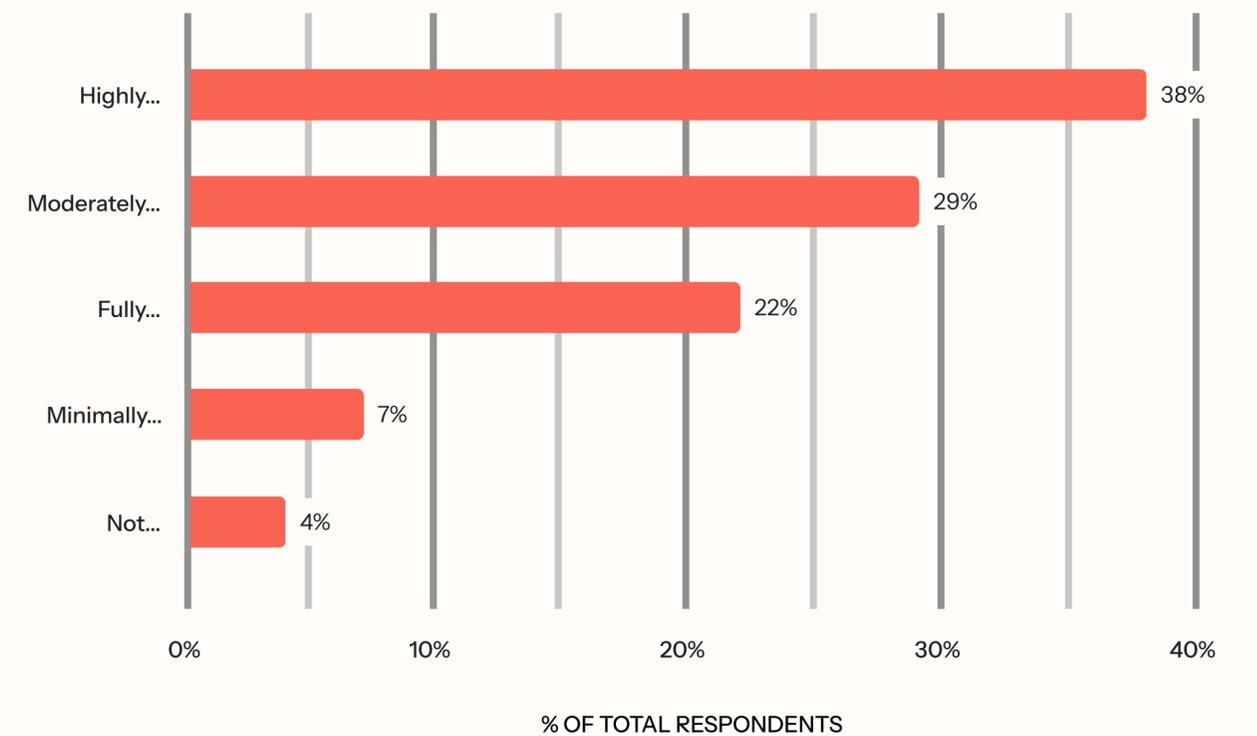
23%

of restaurant marketers say improving retention and loyalty is their biggest goal

31%

of restaurant marketers name revenue growth as their most important KPI

To what extent are your restaurants marketing and service teams currently aligned and integrated?



AI and cross-functional team alignment are key to success

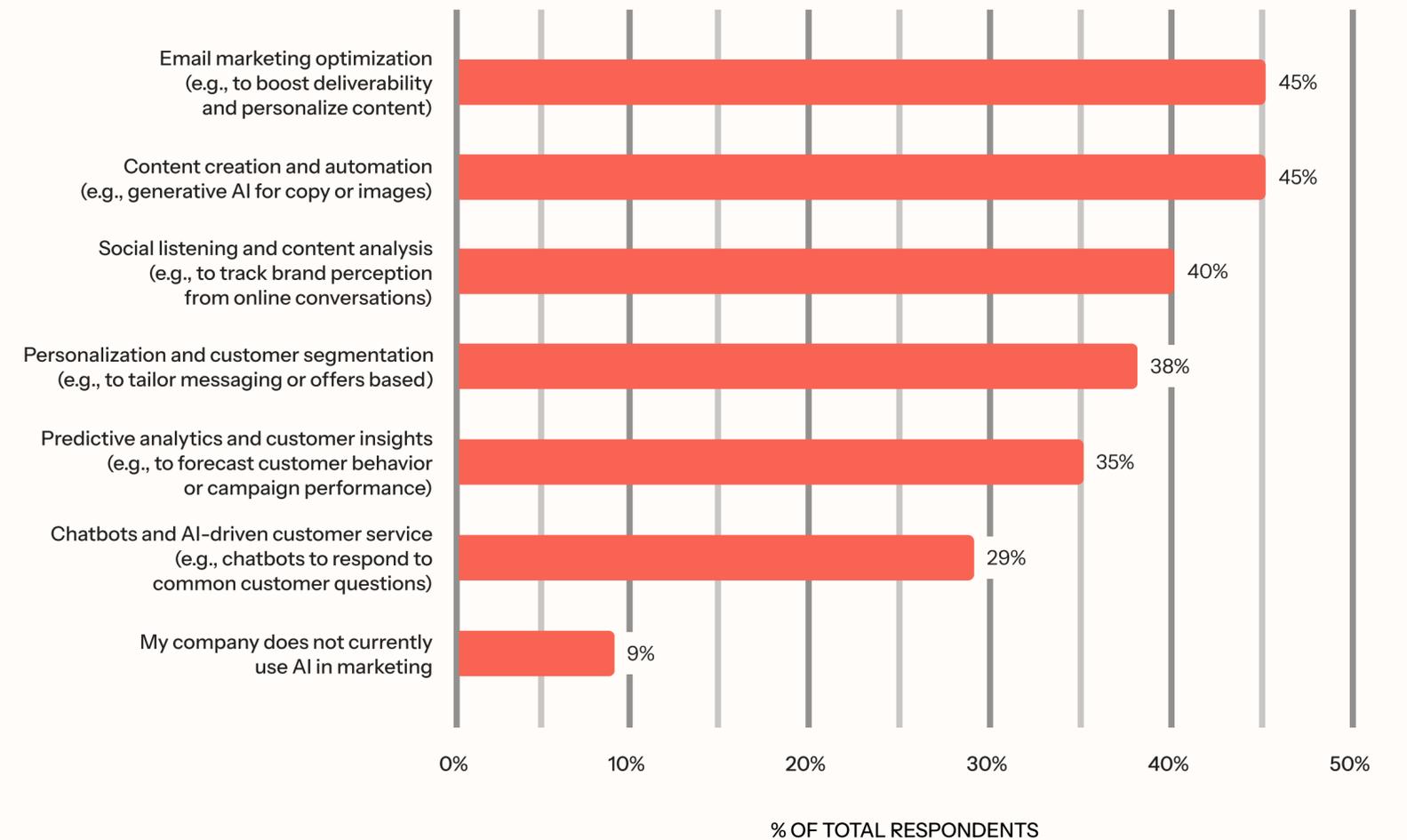
In the restaurant space, top performers—those exceeding their marketing goals and achieving CSAT scores of over 80%—are doing things differently. They’re aligning marketing and guest service to share real-time guest data, such as recent orders/order history, loyalty tier, support cases/issues, or visit frequency.

And while many restaurants are embracing AI for email marketing optimization and content creation, they’re also leveraging it for social listening, personalization, and segmentation—turning data into insights that drive smarter, more targeted guest experiences.

However, while 39% of restaurant marketers say AI improves operational efficiency, only 16% say it has a positive impact on the guest experience. This suggests that marketers primarily see AI as an internal efficiency booster rather than a driver of deeper guest connection.

Restaurants that successfully reorient AI investments toward improving guest journeys can gain a competitive advantage by driving stronger guest loyalty and repeat visits and retention.

Which of the following best describes how your restaurant is currently using AI in marketing and/or service?



What restaurant marketers should do

Restaurants need to move from chasing new guests to nurturing lasting relationships.

Here's how:

- Align guest service and marketing to anticipate diner needs and create a more cohesive experience that considers every guest interaction—from before they place an order to after they sign the bill.
- Leverage AI to refine guest journeys with smarter email and SMS timing, automated loyalty flows, and dynamic segmentation based on order history or visit behavior.
- Use [automated flows](#) that drive loyalty and repeat business, such as:
 - Up-selling or promoting add-ons after reservations
 - [Sending win-backs](#) for guests inactive 30+ days
 - Promoting high-margin dishes and menu pairings
 - Automating service updates, FAQ responses, and post-dining surveys



Campaigns get guests in the door. Experiences keep them full.

Growth and retention don't stem from one-off campaigns but from intelligent, end-to-end relationships driven by marketing and service alignment, data unification, and personalized diner journeys.



Guests expect omnichannel experiences, but tech stacks and teams aren't aligned

Today's diners don't think in separate channels. They expect a consistent brand experience, no matter where they're interacting with your marketing. They move seamlessly between mobile, web, third-party app, and your physical location, and they expect every touchpoint to feel connected, contextual, and personal.

So, what's stopping restaurants from enabling this?

Restaurant marketing teams and tech stacks aren't set up for this level of joined-up interaction.

43%

of restaurants use 11 or more marketing tools, which makes it difficult to unify data and coordinate messaging.

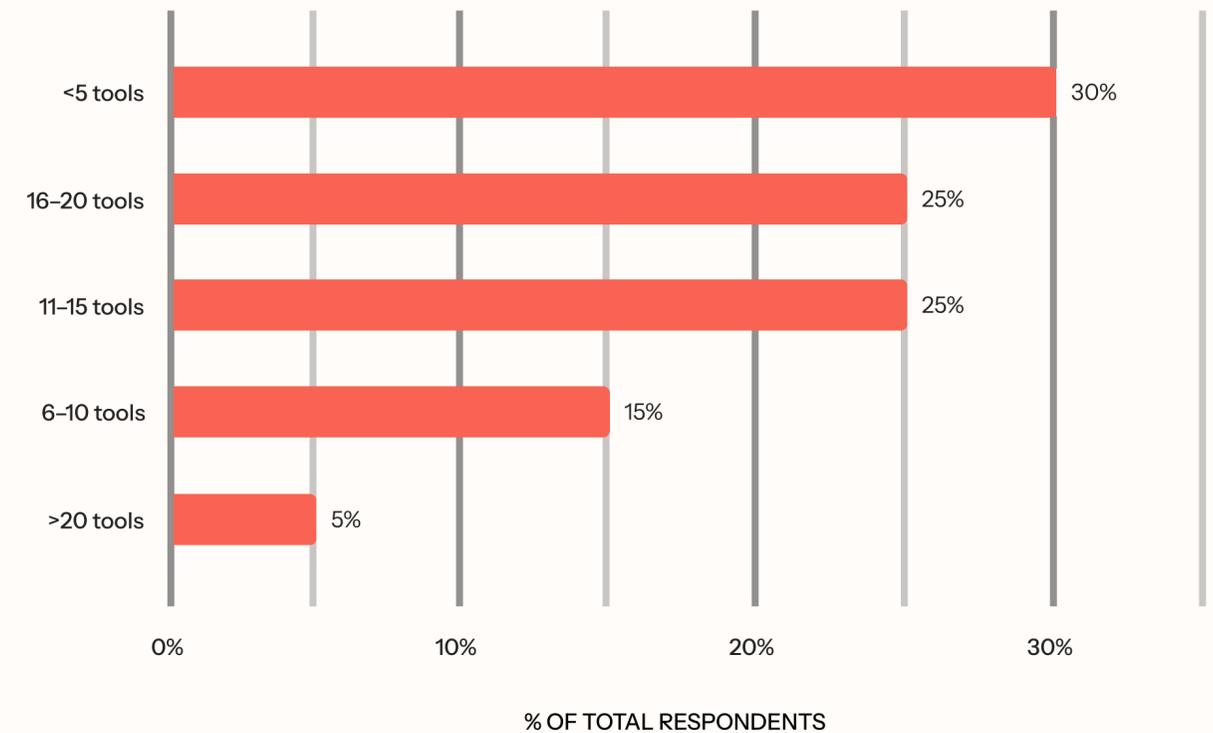
Data

is often siloed in separate platforms (POS, email, delivery, chat, etc).

Only 22%

of restaurants have fully aligned marketing and guest service teams

Which of the following best describes how many tools make up your current marketing tech stack?



Restaurants can't afford to rely on a single-channel strategy or over-focus on one channel

Every interaction with guests—reservation reminders, first-time visit follow-up SMS messages, “welcome back” discounts for top-tier loyalty members—should feel like one continuous experience. But disparate data systems and generic automation mean many restaurants struggle to deliver personalized guest experiences, leading to missed opportunities to build loyalty.

And while guests aren't focused on how you manage campaigns, they do want meaningful, timely conversations—which is challenging when your teams and systems aren't aligned.

When we asked marketers to identify their top 3 sales channels, 65% cited physical locations and 64% cited their website. Clearly, brand touchpoints are blending rapidly. But legacy systems and disjointed tech stacks cannot manage this level of omnichannel coordination. Restaurant marketers need to treat omnichannel as a unified experience, both in-app and in-store.

What restaurant marketers should do

Effective multi-channel strategies begin with unified data. With Klaviyo B2C CRM, restaurant marketers can:

- Unify guest profiles by connecting data across POS, online ordering, reservation, event, and loyalty systems
- Deliver targeted content and offers to guests by segmenting based on location, visit frequency, or loyalty tier
- Reach guests more effectively by automatically messaging via their go-to channels, such as email, SMS, in-app, and WhatsApp
- Identify and nurture frequent guests, high spenders, and unengaged audiences
- Use automated flows for key use cases like first-time guests, follow-up, birthday discounts, and reservation reminders

Just because the kitchen is chaotic doesn't mean your tech stack has to be.

The new omnichannel strategy means fewer silos, not more software. A unified data platform reduces gaps across the guest journey by syncing insights across every channel and system.



The marketing automation strategy restaurants need to drive repeat visits

Too many restaurant marketing tools treat restaurant guests like static data points. But your guests are more than just contacts in your CRM—they're your community, and how you engage them shapes their experience and your bottom line. From first-time visitors to loyal regulars, your tools should reflect their full journey, not just their last interaction.

For restaurant marketers, Klaviyo B2C CRM offers a powerful marketing automation platform to attract new guests, nurture loyalty, and grow and engage lists. By leveraging unified data and predictive insights, Klaviyo helps you deliver personalized experiences across every interaction—driving more orders, protecting margins, and promoting sustainable growth.

These capabilities are essential in an environment where:

- Marketing teams are small but expected to scale quickly and take on responsibility for guest service.
- Guests expect instant, personal responses across channels.
- CACs are rising, and guests' loyalty to restaurants depends on consistency, service quality, affordability, and value for money.

KLAVIYO CAPABILITY	THE PROBLEM IT SOLVES	EXAMPLE USE CASE
Automation-based flows	Reduces manual campaign overload	Automatically follow up with guests who abandon online orders or trigger loyalty rewards for frequent diners
Unified data	Prevents disjointed experiences that frustrate diners	Pause promotional email/SMS if a guest opens a service ticket or submits negative feedback
AI-powered personalization	Prevents over-messaging and boosts engagement	Send a tailored text based on a guest's last visit date or favorite dish
Margin-aware segmentation	Protects margins with precise promotional targeting	Target high-AOV guests by promoting high-margin dishes and menu pairings
Modern messaging (WhatsApp, RCS)	Reaches guests on the channels they actually use	Start two-way conversations with guests who don't open email or SMS

Maximize engagement with an omnichannel marketing hub that helps you coordinate every interaction

Sending more promos or establishing a presence on every channel won't solve your retention issues if your guest experience doesn't feel cohesive.

Klaviyo helps restaurants stay close to their guests across every channel, with less tech and more connection. Restaurant teams can plan and launch connected guest journeys across email, SMS, push, and WhatsApp—all from a single canvas with unified journey logic.

What restaurant marketers can do with Klaviyo's omnichannel campaign builder



Plan better

Access one platform for every interaction

Design and schedule across channels from one unified canvas



Collaborate smarter

Share visibility across marketing and service teams

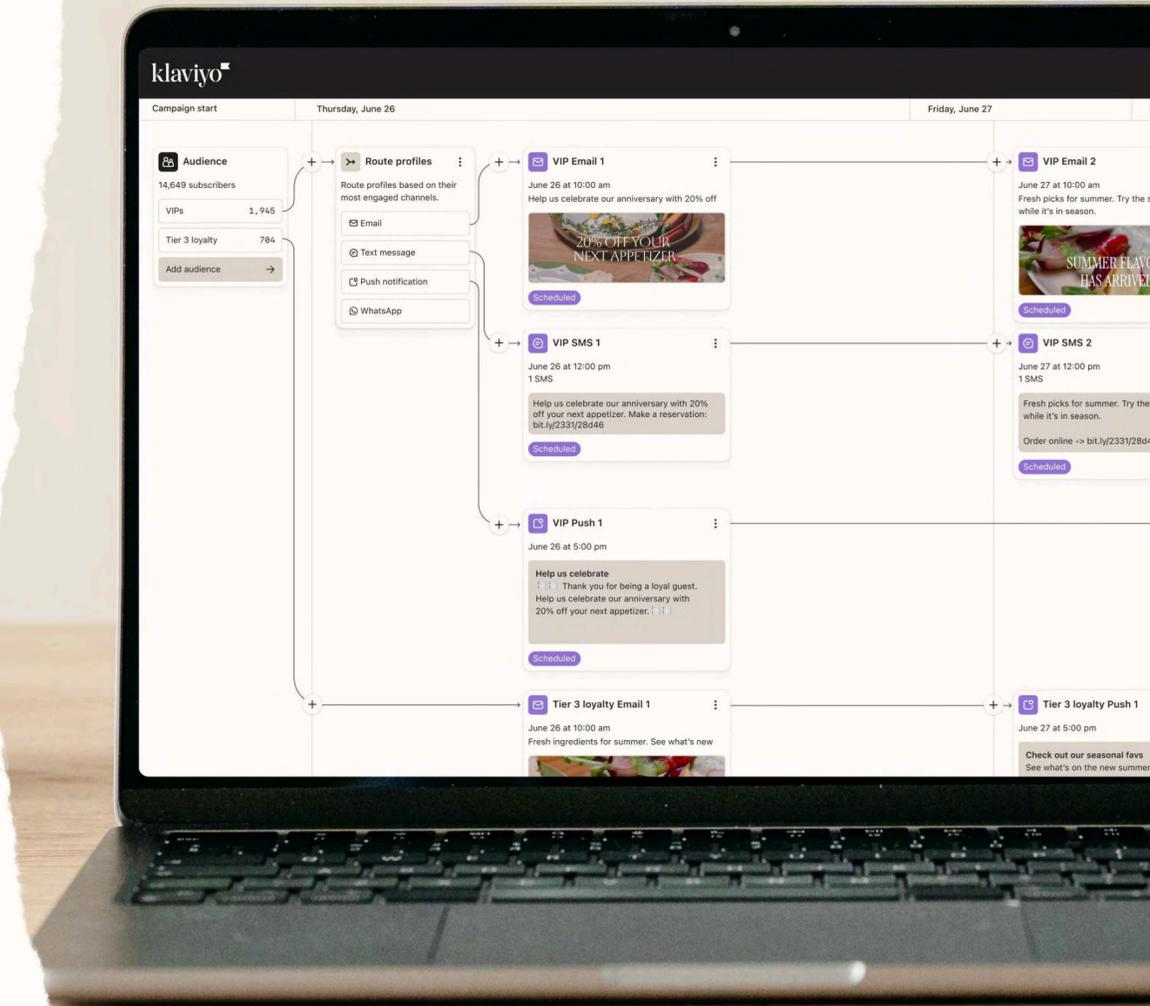
Coordinate campaigns, audiences, and timing together



Connect more meaningfully

Personalize by channel preference and engagement

Automate cross-channel delivery with conditional logic (coming soon)



The restaurant marketing playbook for growth

Restaurant marketers are facing a make-or-break year. With only 13% significantly exceeding their goals and acquisition costs topping the list of challenges, it's clear that the old strategies no longer work. The brands that will thrive and grow are moving fast to align loyalty, efficiency, and guest experience in every interaction.

Here's what you can do now to balance profitability, automation, and the guest experience.

Pro tip: Use what already works. Klaviyo [benchmarking](#) shows what works for top-performing brands, while [pre-built flows](#) let you launch smarter marketing faster and prove ROI right out of the gate.

STRATEGIC NEED

RECOMMENDED ACTION

KLAVIYO SOLUTION

Grow LTV

23% of marketers say retention and loyalty is their top goal

Launch **flows** for loyalty program members, win-backs for lapsed guests, and celebratory offers on special occasions like birthdays and anniversaries

Use **flows to trigger automated messages based on guest behavior**. Track recency, frequency, and spend to tailor your outreach and send the right message at the right moment

Protect margin

Rising CACs are the No. 1 challenge. 28% of marketers report both rising CACs and LTV

Segment campaigns by margin tiers, such as high-AOV guests and low-frequency diners, to refine outreach

Use **smart segmentation** with **flow branching** to dynamically adjust offers based on order history, visit method, or average spend

Predict and personalize guest journeys

98% of marketers handle guest service. Restaurants need ways to predict guest behavior and deliver personalized, winning experiences

Recommend new dishes to returning guests based on their past orders and behavior

Use **Klaviyo AI** to automate A/B testing, dynamic message timing, and channel-specific targeting

Klaviyo for restaurants: turn every guest interaction into a reason to return

Repeat visits that drive growth are the goal. Personalization at scale is how you get there.

In 2025, leading restaurants are creating experiences that bring guests back. That means bringing teams into tight alignment with one system that connects touchpoints, teams, and transactions.

[Klaviyo B2C CRM](#) makes it all possible.

Turn personalization into more visits, stronger loyalty, and more revenue

Data-first, built in

Access all your guest data—from POS to loyalty to reservations—in one real-time, actionable profile.

Cross-channel experiences, fully automated

Maximize revenue by reaching guests when they're ready to act via email, SMS, and mobile.

Marketing and analytics, connected

Unlock the full power of your data.

1:1 personalization without complexity

Deliver relevant messages at every touchpoint.

[Learn more](#)

[Sign up](#)

Methodology

To gain these data points, Klaviyo conducted a survey in March 2025 in collaboration with Datalily with a total of 1,512 marketers across industries in:

- The United States
- The United Kingdom
- Australia
- New Zealand
- Singapore
- Ireland
- Canada
- France
- Belgium
- Germany

Report created in collaboration with Datalily

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The only CRM built for B2C