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DIRECT ORDERING & REVENUE · 10 MIN READ

The Commission Trap: What a 30% Marketplace Fee Costs

The advertised fee is only the deposit. Mandatory discounts, paid placement, refunds, and lost guest data can push a 30% fee above 40% in real costs.

Nuh Kayran · April 25, 2026

The **30% commission** that every delivery platform puts at the front of its sales deck is the deposit — not the bill. By the time a Friday-night order is settled, you have also paid for **mandatory discounts**, **paid placement**, **refund liability**, and **guest data you will never see again**. The real contribution-margin gap between a delivery platform and **direct ordering** is wider than the advertised number suggests, and it is the most consequential line in the profit-and-loss statement many independent restaurants never calculate honestly.

This is not a call to "turn off Lieferando." Delivery platforms have a genuine role in initial visibility. The question is whether the **repeat-order habit** is built there or on a channel you control yourself — the same consideration as **margin recovery** and **high-return ordering pages**. What follows is the calculation that helps you decide where each channel has earned its commission.

INSIGHT

The commission trap — in one sentence

The **commission trap** is the difference between a platform order's *advertised* commission and its *actual* total cost. The advertised 30% is only the first item — the bill is longer:

Total cost = commission + mandatory discounts + advertising + refunds + lost guest value

→ **The commission trap in the restaurant lexicon**

The advertised commission is the deposit, not the bill

Look at a platform contract. The **commission rate** is printed at the top in large type — 25%, 30%, sometimes 35% for "premium" placement. Below that, in the small print, sit the items restaurant owners actually feel:

- **Base commission:** 20–35%, depending on tier
- **Mandatory discounts:** 10% off, free delivery, "2 for 1" — sometimes optional, often imposed by the platform to remain visible
- **Paid placement / ads:** cost per click on top of commission to appear on the home page
- **Refund liability:** platforms refund guests at their own discretion; many contracts pass the cost back to the restaurant
- **Chargeback risk:** payment disputes are decided against the merchant by default
- **Lost guest data:** no email, no phone number, no link to repeat guests — orders look interchangeable because you cannot see who ordered

In Germany and other mature delivery markets, effective commission rates after discounts and advertising regularly exceed **40%**, according to **Statista**. **Across Europe**, this margin compression hits independent restaurants far harder than large chains (see **Bloomberg**); a single restaurant simply lacks the negotiating power a chain brings.

The point is not that delivery platforms are villains. It is that the **advertised number misleads by omission** — and restaurant owners who run their business by gross sales rather than contribution margin keep paying for it.

DELIVERY PLATFORM VS. DIRECT ORDERING: THE COSTS RESTAURANTS ACTUALLY FEEL		
ITEM	DELIVERY PLATFORM	DIRECT ORDERING
Commission	25–35% advertised, 35–45% effective	Payment processing only (~2.5%)
Discount contribution	Often required for visibility	Optional, fully under your control
Paid placement	Cost per click on top of commission	SEO + your own paid advertising
Guest data	Belongs to the platform	Yours (a complete guest profile)
Refunds	Platform decides, you pay	You decide, you control
Brand at checkout	Platform interface	Your domain, your trust
Repeat-order habit	Trains guests to use the platform	Trains guests to come back to you directly

The calculation on a €30 order

Abstract percentages are easy to ignore. Put one order through both channels and the gap stops being theoretical.

A **€30 order** through a major delivery platform, with 30% commission, a mandatory 10% discount, and a €2 reserve for refunds and chargebacks in a typical week:

- Gross order value: **€30.00**
- Commission (30%): **−€9.00**
- Mandatory discount (10%): **−€3.00**
- Refund/chargeback reserve: **−€2.00**

- Paid placement (variable): **−€1.50**
- Net to the restaurant: **€14.50**

The same €30 order by **direct ordering** on your own website:

- Gross order value: **€30.00**
- Payment processing (~2.5%): **−€0.75**
- Net to the restaurant: **€29.25**

Revenue per €30 order: €14.50 remains through the marketplace; €29.25 through direct ordering.

INSIGHT

The €14.75 question

The same hungry guest. The same kitchen. The same packaging. **€14.75 per order** difference. With 200 orders a week split evenly, you pay €1,475 a week — €76,700 a year — for a visibility channel you could partly own yourself. That is not a fee gap. It is a full kitchen position.

PRO TIP

Calculate with your own numbers

Enter your commission, order volume, and average order value in the **commission calculator** — or download the **Excel calculation template** and see your annual loss in under a minute.

Why the gap grows — and why the “visibility” argument stops holding for repeat orders

The usual counterargument is, “But the platform brings me **visibility** I would not reach otherwise.” That is true for a new guest’s first ten orders. By the hundredth, it barely is.

According to **McKinsey research on platform economics**, a guest who orders from the same restaurant three or more times through a platform is no longer being “discovered.” They are being referred to the restaurant again for full commission, even though the restaurant did the work of making them a regular. Each further platform order means the platform earns from **the brand value you built**.

That calculation is why many restaurants with a deliberate direct business aim for roughly **50/50 within 12 months** and **70/30 within two years** — not because they hate platforms, but because they recognise that the repeat-order habit is the part they can profitably own. New-guest acquisition stays where it is. The repeat-order habit moves.

What this means for Pizzeria Rossi (fictional example)

Let’s make it concrete with a fictional example. Pizzeria Rossi is an invented example restaurant, not a Menuella customer and not a published case study. Assume a family-run business with dine-in trade and growing delivery sales.

INSIGHT

Pizzeria Rossi: fictional before-and-after example

Before: 65% of orders came through delivery platforms — around **€18,000 in monthly sales** through them, with alarmingly little left after effective commission.

After: Following a 90-day migration, the platform share was 42%, while **€27,000 came directly** through the restaurant's own ordering page. The bottom line: **+€2,300 contribution margin per month** — with virtually the same number of guests.

Rossi did not win new guests. Rossi simply stopped paying twice for the same regulars. That is the lever: not more demand, but keeping more from every order.

Where direct ordering recovers margin

Recovery is a gradual plan, not a trench war. The building blocks that move repeat orders onto your domain are well understood:

- **Visibility through SEO**, so the next search ends on your site rather than a platform — see **frictionless checkout as an SEO signal**.
- **Your own short links** on receipts, packaging, and table cards that guide regulars to your address — the case for **restaurant short links**.
- **Loyalty incentives** that reward direct orders with credit, points, or benefits — see how **loyalty rewards** connect to direct ordering.
- **Automated reactivation**, so a guest who ordered once has a reason to order directly next time — covered in **automated customer outreach for restaurants**.
- **Migration guides** for restaurants tied to a particular platform — **leave Lieferando** and **switch from Wolt** without a sales drop.

The connecting thread is **one menu** shared by ordering, marketing, and operations — not a second spreadsheet that breaks apart after a strong Friday. That is the foundation of **direct ordering** and the broader **Menuella ecosystem**.

The 90-day margin-recovery plan

PRO TIP

The migration sequence

- **Weeks 1–2 — Analyse.** Pull a 90-day view by channel: gross sales, effective commission, refunds, advertising budget, and net contribution margin. Most teams find the gap is larger than they thought.
- **Weeks 3–4 — Segment.** Separate first-time guests from regulars (3+ orders in 90 days). Regulars are your recovery target.
- **Weeks 5–8 — Move regulars.** Put your own short link on every receipt, offer loyalty sign-up at checkout, and send re-order links by email. Make the direct route obvious.
- **Weeks 9–10 — Shift advertising.** Move advertising spend from platform ads to your own domain (Google, Meta, local press).
- **Weeks 11–12 — Watch weekly.** Track direct share, average margin, and number of support requests. If complaints rise, slow down — operations need time to grow too.

The discipline is the same as any operational change: **measure weekly, switch steadily, and do not cut off the channel before the replacement is ready**. Hard cuts cause revenue drops. A gradual migration creates growing margin.

Frequently asked questions

Should I leave Lieferando or Wolt completely?

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Almost never. The calculation works when you keep platforms for initial visibility but remove them from the regular-guest loop. A sudden exit creates sales drops the business cannot absorb cleanly.

What is a healthy ratio of direct to platform orders?

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Doesn't a 30% commission cover delivery? +

How quickly can a restaurant move 30% of orders to direct? +

What if my platform orders fall when I start shifting? +

How do I track recovery without losing the platform view? +

Margin is a decision, not a fee schedule

Delivery platforms are not disappearing. They are a genuine distribution layer with real technology and real demand. But treating their advertised rate as the cost of doing business is a planning mistake. **Commission is not the problem. The problem is that it is only the first cost block.** Once mandatory discounts, ads, refunds, and lost guest data are included, the economics of every order change. That is the **commission trap**, and the route out is known: own the repeat-order habit, direct it through your own domain, and let platforms earn commission only for initial visibility.

Build that route on channels you control: **direct ordering** on your own domain, with the **Menuella ecosystem** keeping menu, basket, and loyalty programme in one system. The €14.75 stays in the kitchen.

PRO TIP

Do this now

- **Calculate your true platform costs** with the **commission calculator**.
- **Check your direct-order share** for the last 90 days.
- **Set up a QR link for regulars** that leads to your own ordering page.
- **Activate a loyalty programme** that rewards direct ordering.
- **Only then: explore direct ordering**.

KEEP LEARNING

LEXICON

The commission trap

The concept in one sentence, with formula.

CALCULATOR

Commission calculator

Calculate with your own numbers.

Take back your margin.

Move repeat orders to your own channel. With Menuella, your menu, checkout, guest data, and loyalty programme stay in one system — without platform costs tied to commission.

Explore direct ordering →