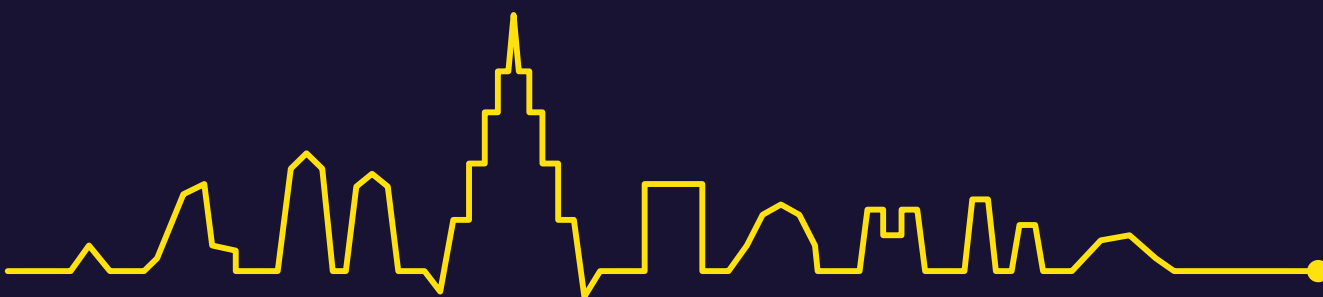


UAE F&B 2026

Insights for Operators

Every figure in this brief is public: published market reports, filed company results, and reproducible arithmetic. Nothing confidential, nothing drawn from any individual business, no estimates presented as facts.



Dubai, as a pulse.

Ulkar Mammadzada

Founder, DiscGo · Ten years hotel commercial & revenue across the Middle East, Africa and Turkey · Certified in revenue management and in restaurant revenue management

More orders. Less money.

Across the same UAE restaurants, year on year, the first half of 2026 did something that looks like growth in every dashboard and like decline in every bank account. Delivery volume rose. Dine-in volume fell further. Gross revenue fell with it.

+15.2%

Delivery orders
year on year, same restaurants

-10.5%

Dine-in orders
year on year, same restaurants

-5.5%

Gross revenue
the two above, netted out

61%

of restaurants
reported being hit by the slowdown

Why the two don't cancel out

The same guest is worth substantially less ordering at home than dining in, before commission is applied.

What the restaurant keeps, per guest

Average order value, AED. Delivery applies a 25% commission, the midpoint of the reported industry range.

Dine-in

AED 116

Delivery

AED 58

AED 19

■ Kept by the restaurant ■ Taken as commission

And the shift is accelerating

30.5%

of orders are now delivery
up from 25.4% a year earlier

22.5%

of revenue runs through delivery
up from 18.6% a year earlier

The channel that halves a customer's value is the one growing.

Source: Syrve MENA, H1 2026 UAE data, same-restaurant year on year, reported via Dubai Standard, 20 July 2026.

The commission bill and the profit line

Commission is quoted as a percentage of an order. Placed alongside the net profit line of the business paying it, the scale reads differently. The model below is a UAE restaurant turning over AED 1 million a year, using national averages throughout. It does not describe any individual business.

Annual revenue	AED 1,000,000
Through delivery, at the national average of 22.5%	AED 225,000
Commission at 25%, the midpoint of the reported range	AED 56,250
Net profit at a 5% margin, mid-range for UAE restaurants	AED 50,000

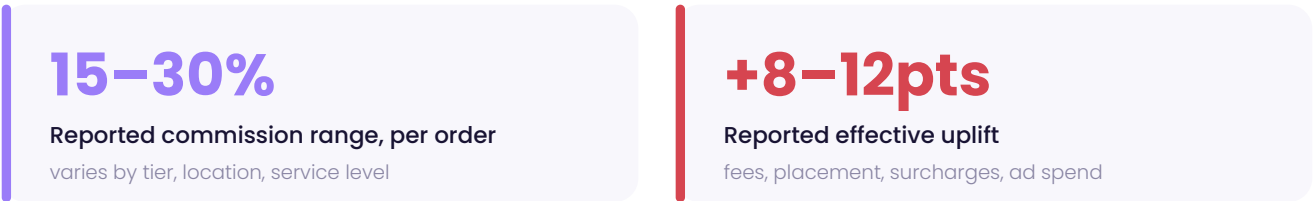
The commission bill against the profit line

Same business, same year. AED.



The headline rate is not the effective rate

Service fees, featured placement, peak-hour surcharges and in-app advertising sit on top of the contracted commission. The reported industry estimate is that these push the effective rate 8 to 12 percentage points above the number in the contract.



More than half of the largest platform's adjusted EBITDA derives from advertising sold to restaurant partners and consumer brands. Restaurants pay commission to be listed, then pay again to be seen.

Sources: delivery share and order values, Syrve MENA H1 2026. Net margin range of 3–10%, GGB Consulting and F&B Cost Control, 2026. Commission ranges and the effective-rate uplift are reported industry estimates (ReconcileOS, Menuviel, OnlineEMenu, 2026) — a range, not a contracted fact. Adtech share of adjusted EBITDA: Talabat Holding Q3 2025 results.

The cost of a 25% discount

The calculation below sizes a 25% discount on a single cover. It is deliberately simple, the assumptions are stated, and the arithmetic is reproducible.

ASSUMPTIONS

Casual dining · average dine-in check AED 115.81 · food cost 32% of revenue
Rent and labour fixed in the short run, so contribution margin is the right lens

Contribution per cover

Revenue minus food cost, AED. Both covers serve the identical dish.

Full price

AED 79

25% off

AED 50

AED 29

■ Contribution retained

■ Given away by the discount

The plate costs the same either way. An identical dish is served at a lower price; food cost does not shrink to meet the discount.

TO HOLD CONTRIBUTION FLAT

58% more covers

Not 25% more. Fifty-eight percent, and only to break even on contribution.

Why timing determines the outcome

At 3pm on a Tuesday, 58% more covers is achievable and each one is incremental, because those seats would otherwise earn nothing. At 8pm on a Friday there are no seats left to fill, so the same discount destroys margin, and applies to regulars who would have paid full price.

Same discount. Opposite outcomes. The only variable is when it applies.

A discount running at every hour of every day is not a promotion. It is the price, it is understood as the price, and withdrawing it is not a return to normal but a price increase.

Assumptions: average dine-in check from Syrve MENA H1 2026; food cost of 32% of revenue is the Dubai F&B average per Gitnux, 2026. The framework behind the timing argument is restaurant revenue management, and the seat-hour metric was developed by Professor Sheryl E. Kimes at Cornell.

Following is not the same as being seen

Social media is the default marketing channel for independent UAE businesses. Instagram's own guidance to creators sets out what a follower relationship does and does not guarantee.

"Following does not guarantee visibility."

Instagram, guidance for creators

Feed is a mix of accounts a user follows, accounts the algorithm recommends, and advertising. A post competes for a slot; it is not delivered to a list. The direction of travel is not subtle.

6.8%

Instagram organic reach

accounts under 100K followers, 2026

1.37%

Facebook Page organic reach

for comparison

-21.96%

Reach on single-image posts

year on year, 24m posts / 375k accounts

+24.04%

More content published

by brands, over the same year

More work. Less delivery.

And those who do see it already know the business exists. A carefully priced business lunch, a Tuesday offer, a happy hour: the people who would walk in if they knew do not see it. This is a distribution constraint, not a content problem.

An audience of 5,000, per post

At the 2026 organic reach rate for accounts under 100K followers.



Sources: the quotation and the description of Feed are Instagram's own creator guidance. Reach change and publishing volume: Metricool 2026 Instagram Study, 24,364,803 posts across 375,118 accounts. Organic reach rates: Hootsuite, February 2026. Note these are three different measurements — a reach rate, a change in reach, and a volume of posts.

Two routes, and the market they sit in

Engagement is falling on the same curve as reach, measured against followers already earned.

0.48%

Instagram engagement, by followers

2025, down from 0.50% in 2024

0.4% / 2.5%

Food & Beverage engagement

measured by followers vs by views

The second pair warrants attention: the same businesses and the same posts, measured against two different denominators. Follower count is the visible metric; views determine whether the post reached anyone.

Market context

12,000+

restaurants in Dubai

reported range of 12,000–13,000+

~50%

UAE delivery market share

held by the largest single platform

THE TWO ROUTES CURRENTLY AVAILABLE

1. Pay a percentage of every order in exchange for discovery.
2. Pay to show a post to followers already earned.

No third route exists. That is the structural gap.

Sources: engagement by followers, Socialinsider, 70 million posts, January 2024 to December 2025. Food & Beverage engagement by followers and by views, Dash Social Instagram benchmarks — no methodology published, treat as a benchmark rather than a finding. Dubai restaurant count, DineOpen 2026 and GGB Consulting. Delivery market share, OnlineEMenu 2026, a reported industry estimate.

Every figure, and how far to trust it

These sources are graded deliberately. Some figures come from audited company filings and a market report built on point-of-sale data; others come from industry publications with a commercial interest. Both are useful. They are not equivalent, and the distinction matters before any figure is quoted onward.

● Primary — the platform's own words

Instagram, guidance for creators — the source of "following does not guarantee visibility" and of the description of Feed as a mix of followed accounts, recommended accounts and ads. This is Instagram describing its own product to the people who publish on it.

● Solid — filings and large-sample studies with stated method

Syrve MENA, H1 2026 UAE report — same-restaurant year-on-year point-of-sale data. Reported via Dubai Standard, 20 July 2026. Source of every order-value, order-volume and revenue figure in this brief.

Talabat Holding FY2025 results, 13 February 2026 — GMV of USD 9.5bn against revenue of USD 3.9bn. Q3 2025 results for the adtech share of adjusted EBITDA. No GMV-to-revenue percentage is published here: the rounded figures give 41%, a widely quoted secondary source states 42%, and which rounding is correct has not been established.

Metricool 2026 Instagram Study — 24,364,803 posts across 375,118 accounts, comparing January–February 2025 with the same window in 2026. Source of the -21.96% reach change and the +24.04% publishing volume.

Socialinsider 2026 benchmarks — 70 million posts, January 2024 to December 2025, engagement calculated as likes plus comments divided by followers. Source of the 0.48% figure.

● Directional — treat as a range, not a fact

Hootsuite, February 2026 (via CreatorFlow) — Instagram and Facebook Page organic reach rates. Widely cited; sampling method not published.

GGB Consulting and F&B Cost Control, 2026 — UAE restaurant net margin range of 3–10%.

Gitnux, 2026 — Dubai F&B food cost averaging 32% of revenue. Used here as a stated assumption, not a finding.

DineOpen 2026 and GGB Consulting — Dubai restaurant count of 12,000–13,000+.

● Weakest — no published methodology, or a commercial interest

Dash Social Instagram benchmarks — the Food & Beverage 0.4% by followers versus 2.5% by views comparison. No sample size or method disclosed. The shape of the gap is the useful part.

ReconcileOS, Menuviel and OnlineEMenu, 2026 — platform commission ranges, the 8–12 point effective-rate uplift, and delivery market share. Most quoted, least sourced. Phrased throughout as a reported range rather than contracted fact.

EXCLUDED, DELIBERATELY

No individual business's contract terms, commission rate or trading figures. No estimates presented as findings. No figure that cannot be attributed to a named, checkable source. Corrections are welcome and the brief will be reissued.

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Operators are rarely shown the data that describes their own sector.

Across ten years in hospitality in the Middle East, Africa and Turkey the pattern was consistent. Corporate teams see market data. Owners see returns. Consultants see both and sell each back to the other. The person running the venue sees their own P&L, and a competitive set on a good week.

This brief was assembled from published sources to close part of that gap. It is the document I wanted while working inside the sector and could not obtain.

Requests and corrections are welcome. If there is a figure you have never been able to obtain, send it through and I will research it.



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Founder, DiscGo · discgo.co

DiscGo is where UAE residents find the offers, bank perks, memberships and promotions they already hold, in one searchable place.

DiscGo for Business · discgo.co/business

August 2026