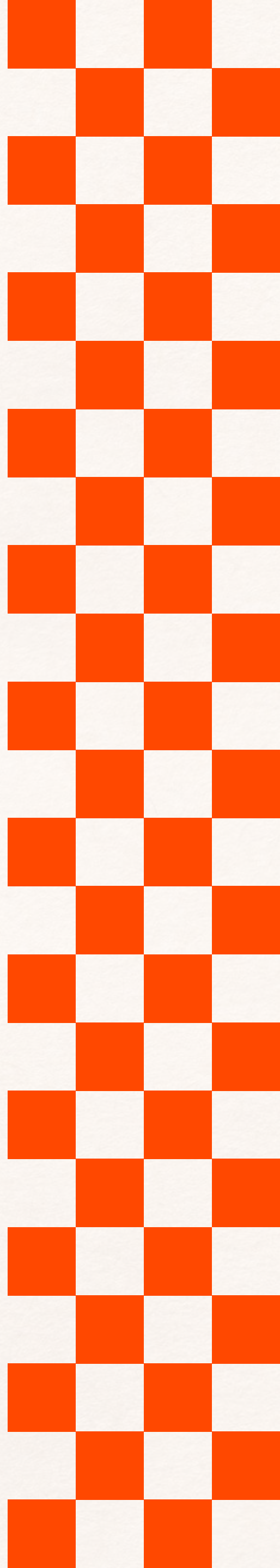
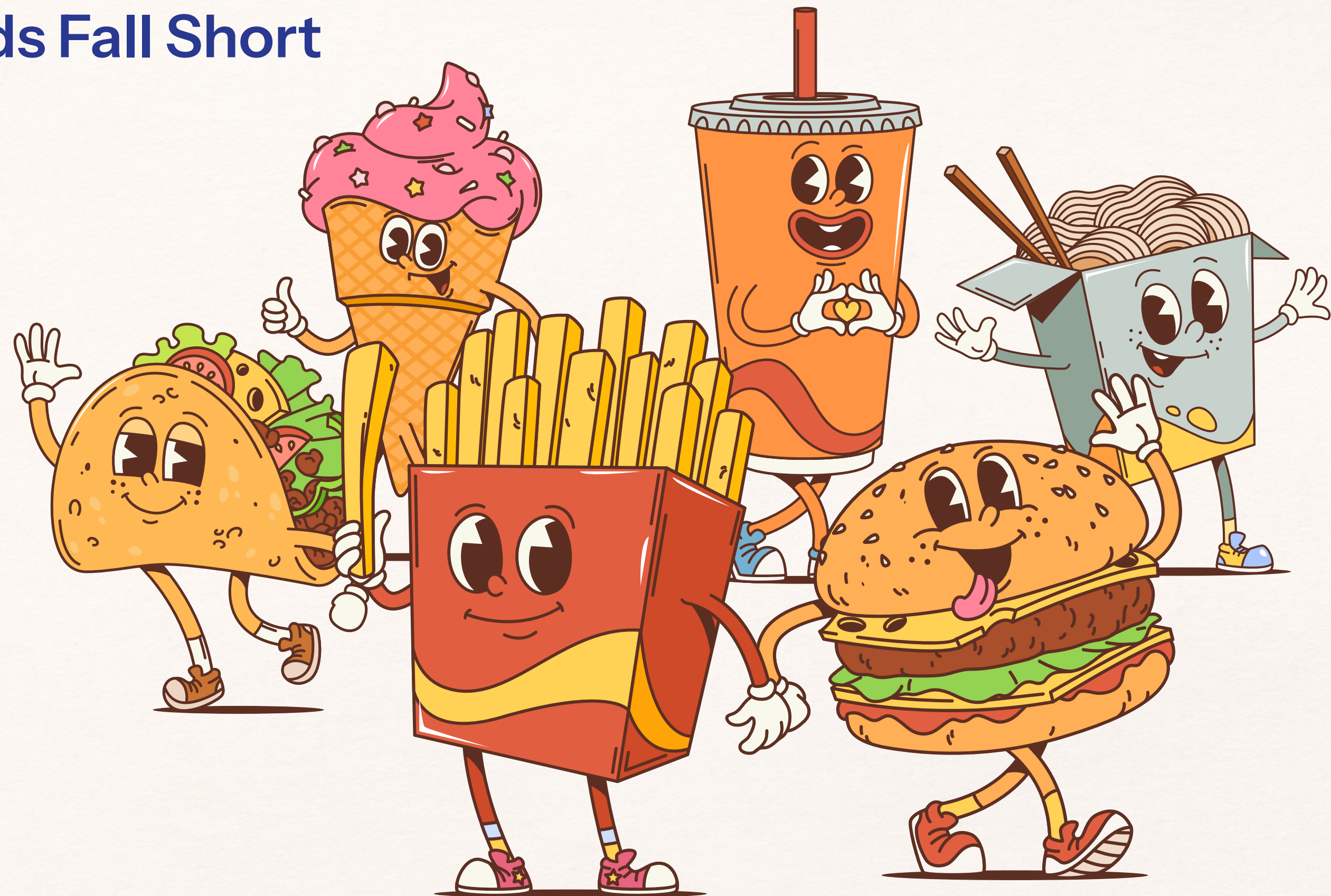


THE 2025 RESTAURANT TECH REPORT

Fast-Food Friction

What Customers Want From QSR
Technology and Where Brands Fall Short





Executive Summary

When they're hungry and short on time, customers choose quick-service restaurants (QSRs) that deliver consistent, easy experiences — whether it's a fast-food mainstay like McDonald's or a counter-service innovator like Chipotle.

The connected restaurant model aims to serve these expectations, integrating point-of-sale systems, self-service kiosks, mobile apps, and kitchen technology to create a seamless customer experience. When the technology supporting that model fails, customers notice.

To better understand what's working and what's causing friction, Canopy surveyed Americans about their experiences with three key QSR technologies: self-service kiosks, AI drive-thrus, and payment systems. The findings reveal both progress and problems — in particular, reliability gaps in the tools that directly impact loyalty.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on a national survey conducted by Canopy in June 2025 to understand consumer perceptions of technology in QSR settings. The survey collected responses from 457 U.S. adults across a mix of geographies, age groups, and employment statuses.

KEY FINDINGS

Technology Makes or Breaks Loyalty

4 out of 5 customers say technology influences where they eat.

Self-Service Kiosks Are Falling Short

The majority of customers (60%) use self-service tech at least occasionally, but 80% have run into problems.

AI Drive-Thrus Show Promise

Only 15% of customers have encountered AI drive-thru, and two-thirds of those users left satisfied by the experience.

Checkout Friction Persists

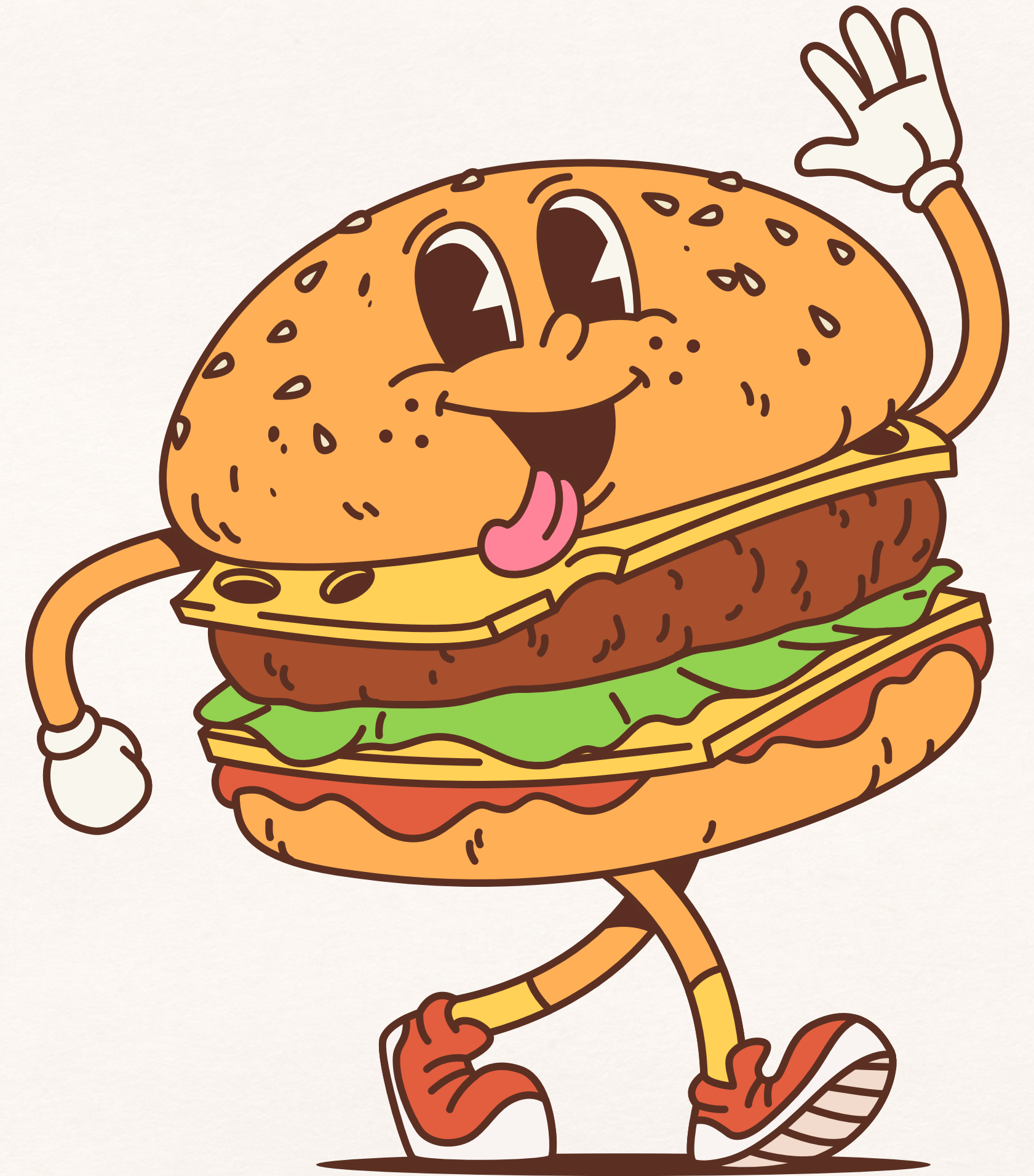
More than three-quarters of customers report payment technology issues; only 23% say it “always” works.

Leaders Are Emerging

McDonald's, Chick-fil-A, and Taco Bell lead in providing the best technology experiences.

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Self-Service Kiosks Are Great... So Long as They Work



Self-Service Kiosks Are Great... So Long as They Work

Customers turn to kiosks for speed and control.

But when they fail, the whole experience falls apart.

Self-service kiosks have become a fixture in the connected restaurant experience. More than 60% of customers use them at least occasionally, and 26% say they use them frequently. The appeal is clear: customers cite faster ordering, easier customization, more time to browse, and greater order accuracy as top reasons for using kiosks.

Still, using a kiosk can be frustrating. Only 20% of customers report that kiosks “always” work. 80% have experienced issues, most commonly with receipt printers, frozen screens, or kiosks that are out of order.

4 in 5

customers have experienced issues, most commonly with receipt printers, frozen screens, or kiosks that are out of order.

Top Reasons for Using Self-Service Kiosks



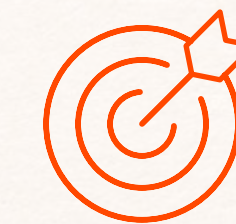
51%
Faster Ordering



36%
More Time To Browse



34%
Easier Customization



28%
More Order Accuracy

Self-Service Kiosks Are Great... So Long as They Work

Different groups' experiences with kiosks reveal both the stakes and the opportunity for QSRs to improve. The most loyal customers — those who visit QSRs three or more times per week — are also the most enthusiastic kiosk users. They rely on kiosks more often and report higher satisfaction.

When kiosks work reliably, they both improve the transaction and build customer loyalty.

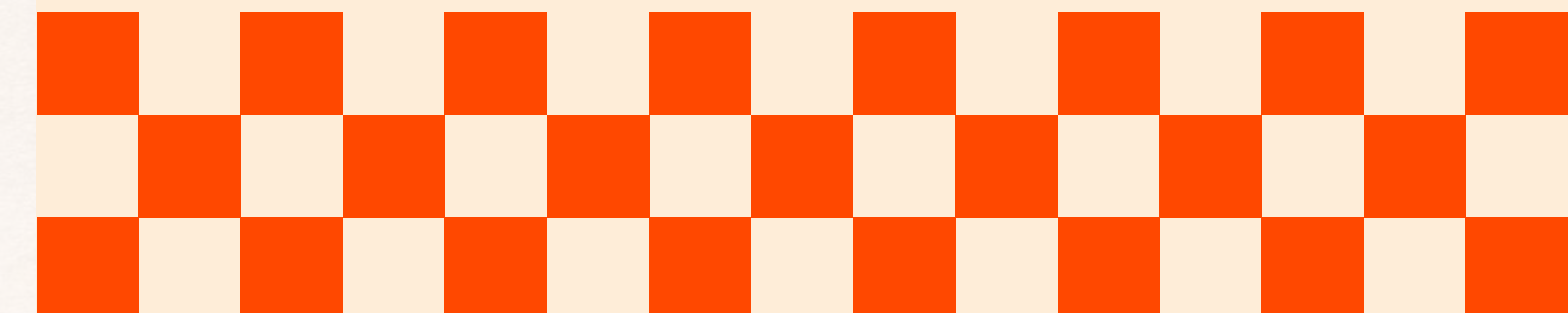
Group orders raise the stakes. Customers ordering for both adults and kids are more likely to choose kiosks for accuracy and easy customization, features that matter even more when orders are large or complex.

Top Reasons for Using Kiosks, Large Groups vs. Solo Customers



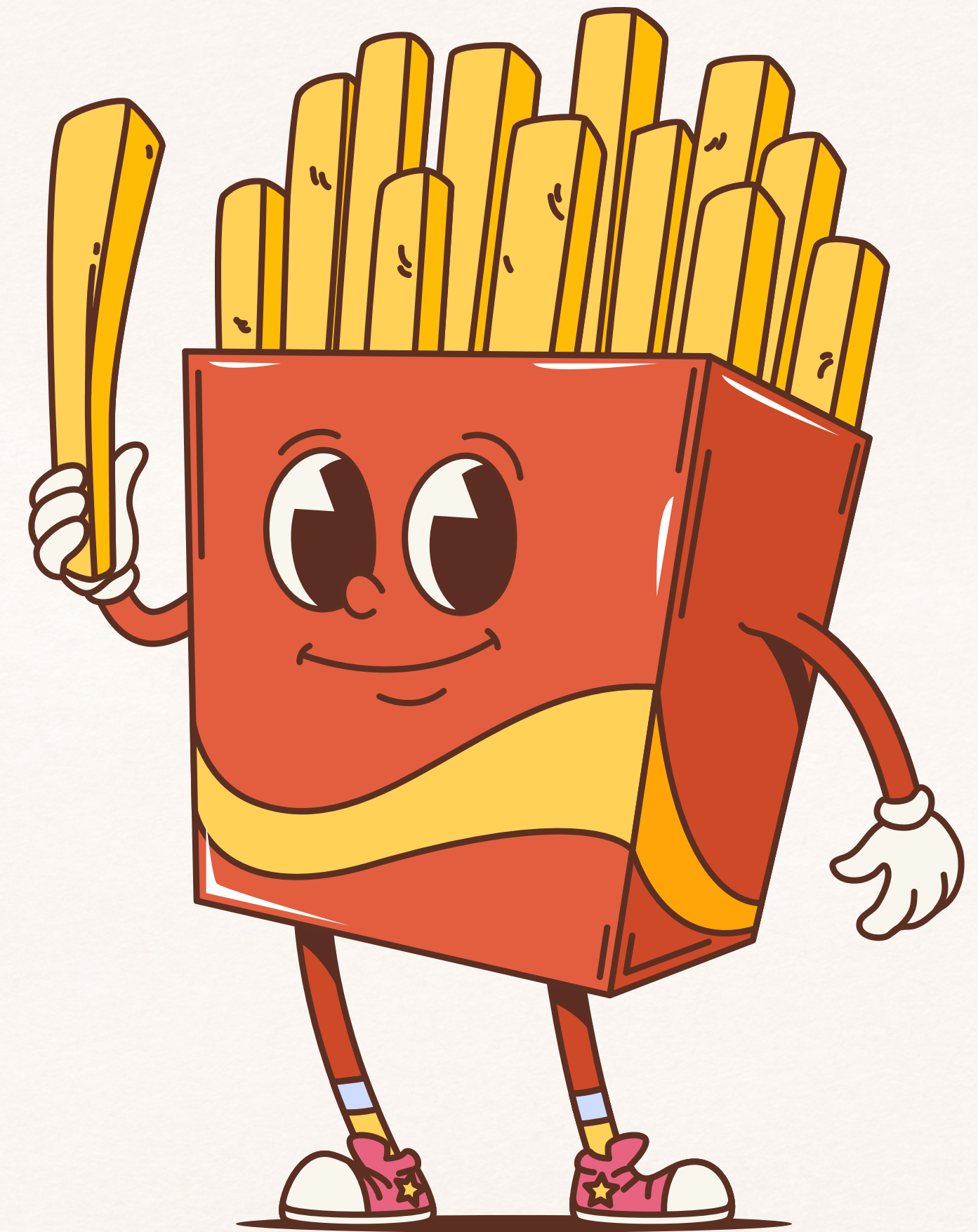
THE Takeout Box

QSR customers with consistent, reliable kiosk experiences are more likely to return, increasing revenue with each order. Yet even minor malfunctions, like a receipt printer glitch, can sour the kiosk experience. As kiosk adoption grows, reliability must improve to keep pace.



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AI Drive-Thrus Deliver for Early Users



Customers see potential in voice automation while accuracy and user experience design still need work.

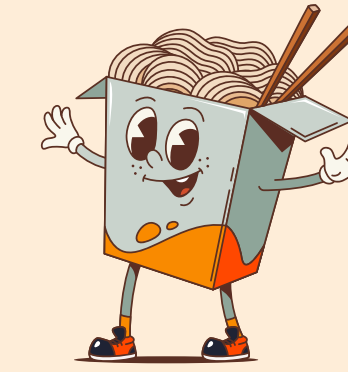
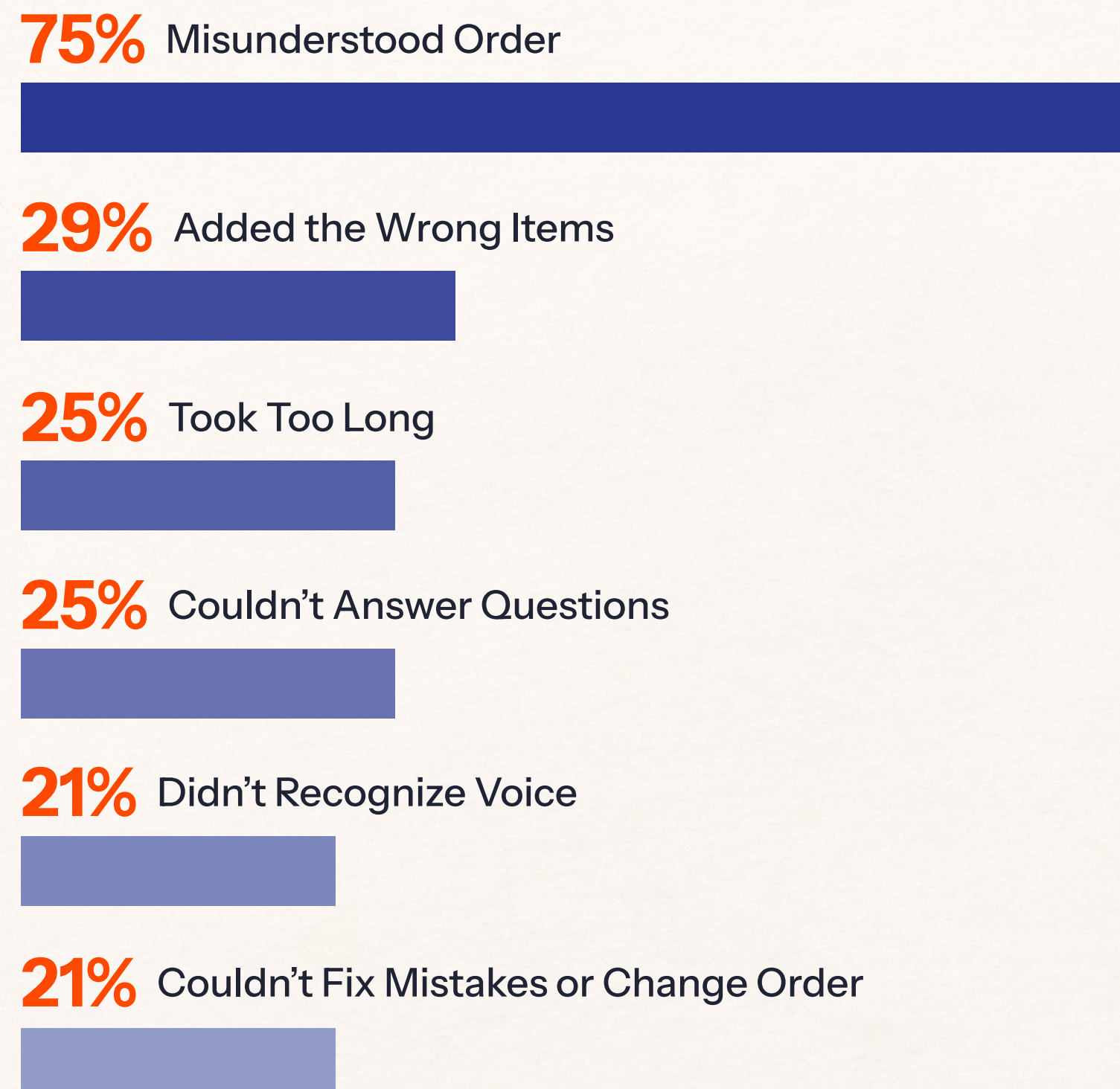
Across QSRs, only 15% of customers have encountered an AI drive-thru so far. Among those who have, two-thirds (66%) said the experience was as good or better than ordering from restaurant staff. That's a strong signal of potential.

However, AI-assisted voice-ordering still needs work. Of the customers who experienced issues, 75% said the AI misunderstood their order. Others reported that the process took too long.

Finally, in open-ended feedback, customers pointed to a key frustration: upselling, which made the interaction feel robotic and inefficient.

So far, the message from early adopters is consistent. Customers are open to automation so long as it is accurate and intuitive. When AI feels quick and responsive — like ordering from a person — the experience works. The novelty wears off quickly when customers feel like they're stuck in a new-fangled tech experiment.

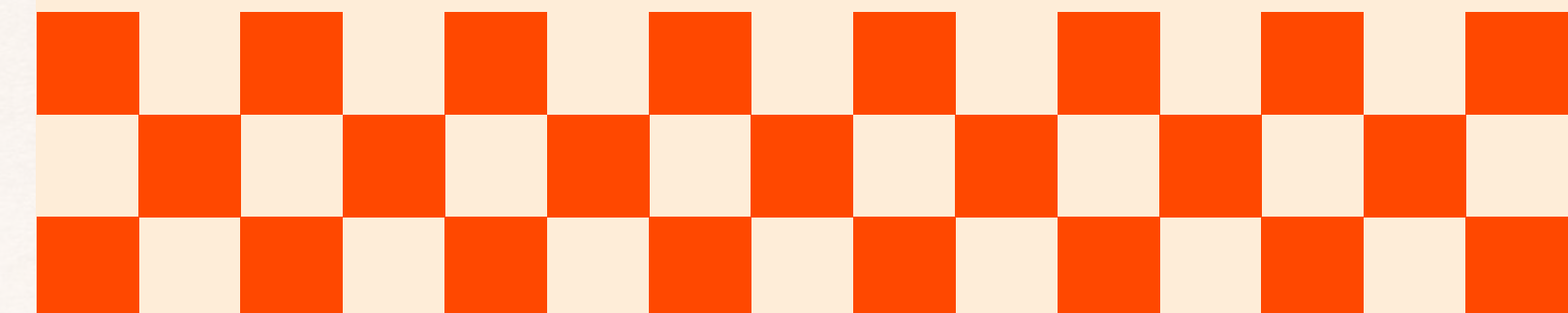
Top Issues With AI Drive-Thrus



THE Takeout Box

AI drive-thrus can meet or even exceed customer expectations when they work well. Small design missteps, like forced upsells or awkward voice flows, can quickly compromise the experience.

Real-time device monitoring and automated troubleshooting and resolution can help QSRs catch and fix technology issues before they damage trust or disrupt the experience.



THE 2025 RESTAURANT TECH REPORT

The Checkout Problem



The Checkout Problem

No matter how they pay, customers keep running into issues at checkout.

And it's costing brand loyalty.

Paying should be the smoothest part of the connected restaurant experience. So why is it the most frustrating for so many customers?

More than three-quarters (76%) of customers say they've run into issues with payment technology, and fewer than one in four say it always works.

The most common complaints? Transactions that require multiple attempts, unresponsive tap devices, chip readers that fail, and slow payment processing. These issues all point to misbehaving point-of-sale (POS) systems.

76%

of customers say they've run into issues with payment technology.

Top Issues With Payment Technology



42%

Requires Multiple Attempts



33%

Tap Device Unresponsive



27%

Chip Reader Unresponsive



23%

Takes Too Long To Process Payment

The Checkout Problem

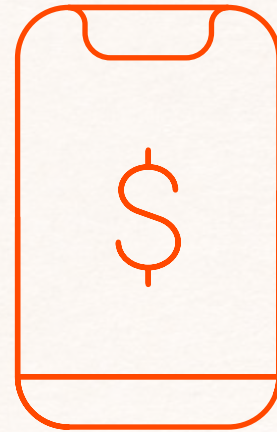
Geographic differences reveal another layer of friction. Suburban customers are twice as likely as rural customers to say payment technology works as expected, which suggests that remote locations may not be getting the same level of service or system support.

Digital wallets like Apple Pay and Google Pay (“Tap to pay”) are becoming more popular, especially among frequent QSR customers. Nearly half (42%) of all customers use digital wallets at least occasionally, and those who do say speed is the top benefit.

Frequent customers are also the heaviest digital wallet users.

Eighteen percent use digital wallets every time they can, and 39% say wallet payments always work. By comparison, just 24% of less-frequent customers say the same.

Digital Wallet Payment Reliability



39%

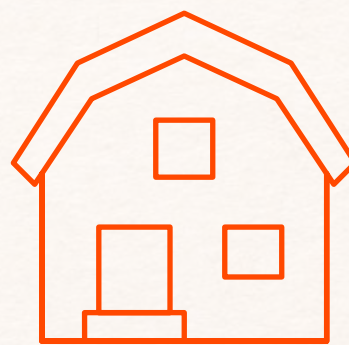
of customers report wallet payments always work

Digital Wallet Payment Reliability by Locations, “Always Works”



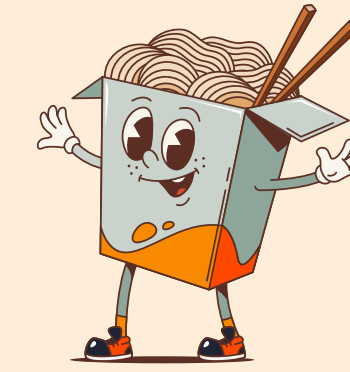
26%

Suburban Customers



13%

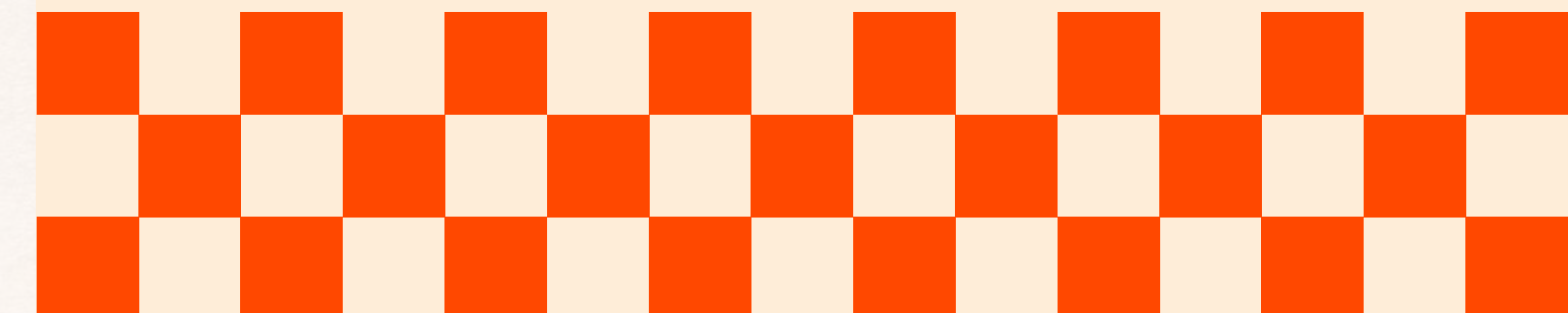
Rural Customers



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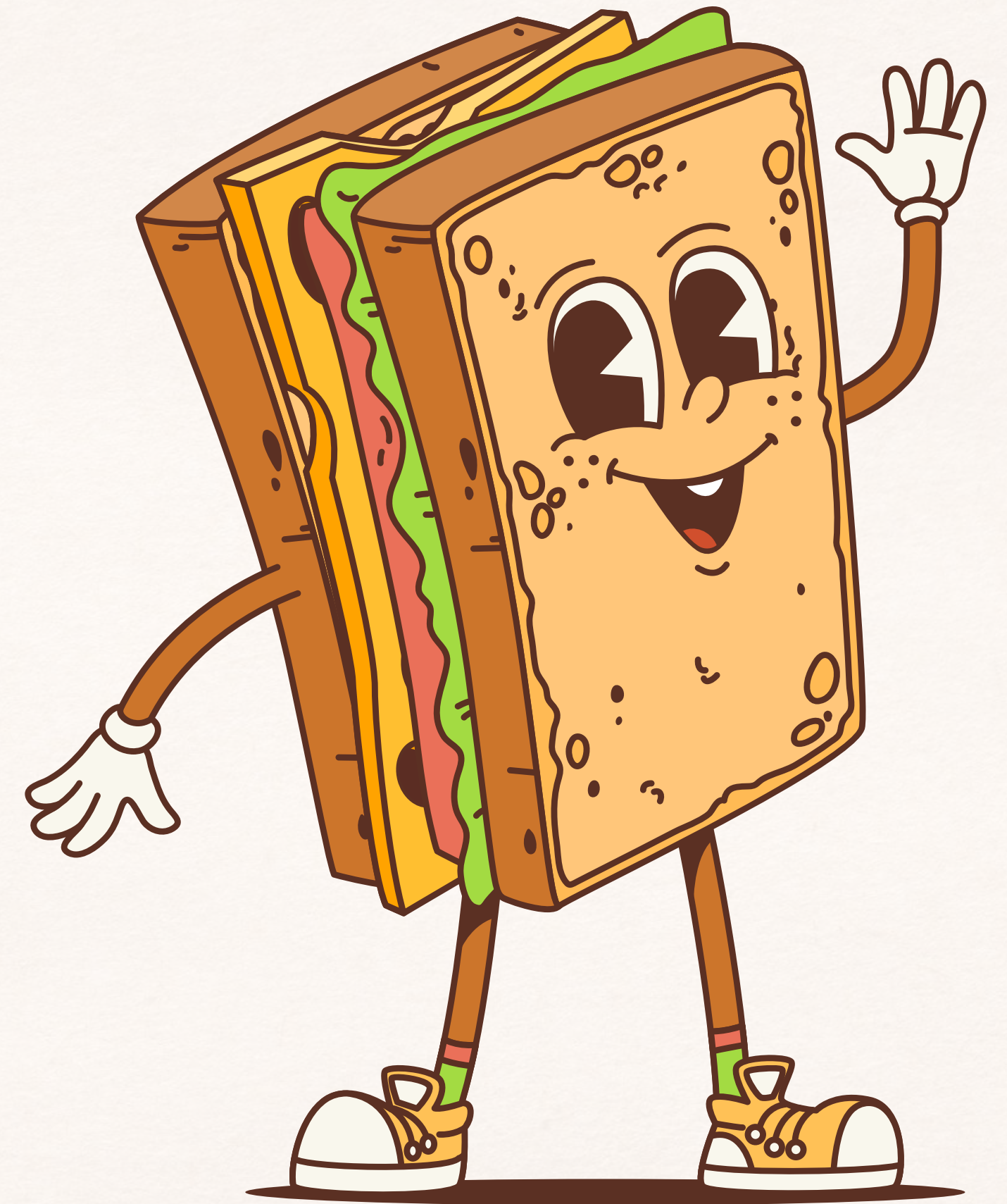
Quick service depends on quick payments. Checking out must work smoothly every time.

For QSRs, delivering a fast and reliable experience requires real-time visibility into payment systems and the ability to resolve issues quickly before they disrupt the customer experience.



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When Technology Drives Loyalty, Restaurants Win

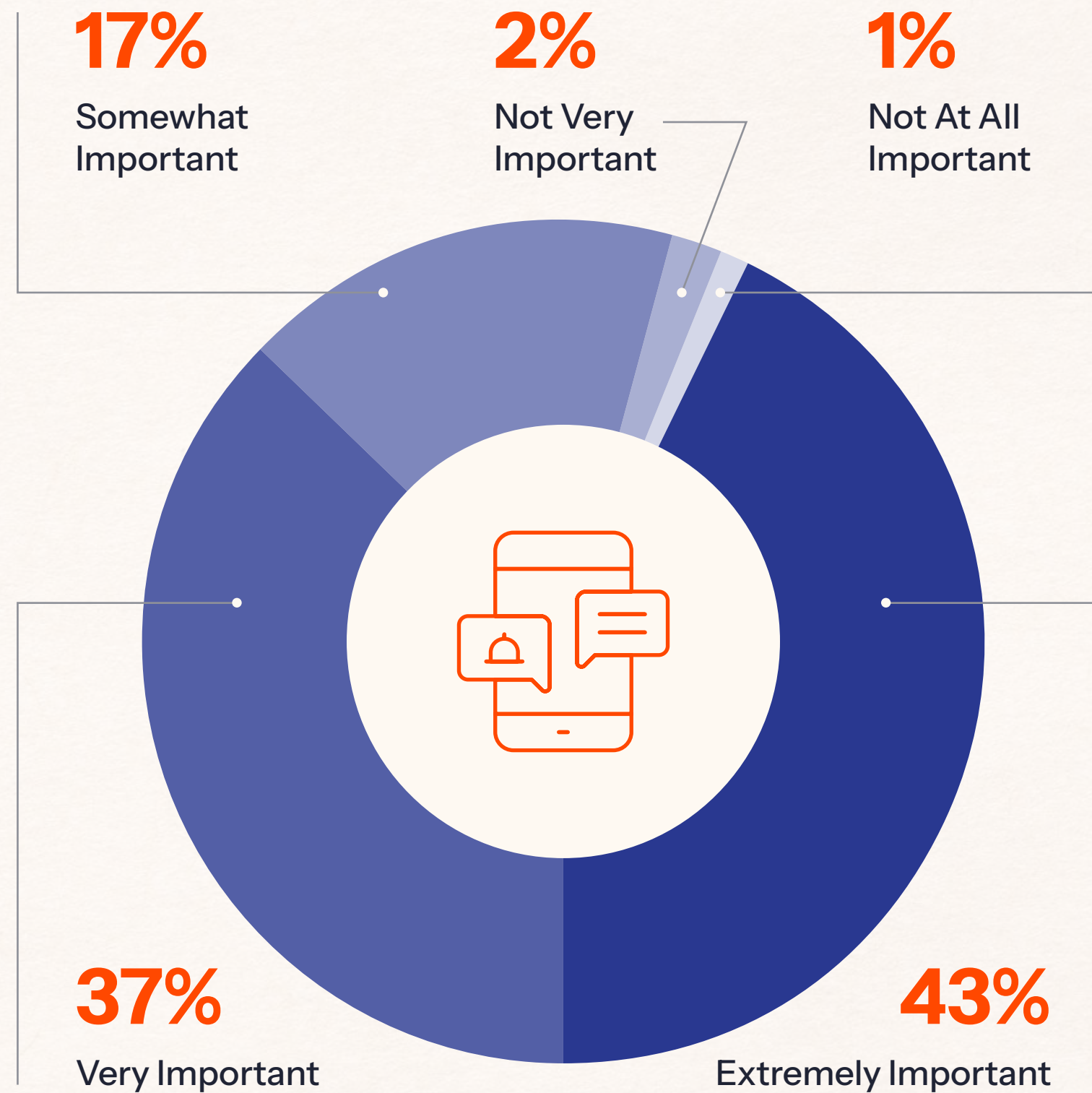


Technology that works well goes unnoticed by customers — and that’s the point.

Customers choose QSRs for a consistent, reliable experience. So long as technology supports that kind of experience, restaurants will benefit. Indeed, 80% of those surveyed say technology influences where they choose to eat with more than two in five (43%) saying tech is extremely important.

Certain brands are already setting the standard. For example, McDonald’s, Chick-fil-A, and Taco Bell earned top marks from customers for the best overall technology experience. What sets these brands apart is consistency. When technology works reliably, it builds trust and brings customers back.

How Important Is a Good Technology Experience When Choosing a QSR?



Top QSR Brands by Technology Experience



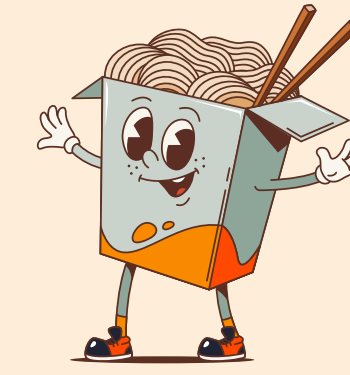
34%



18%



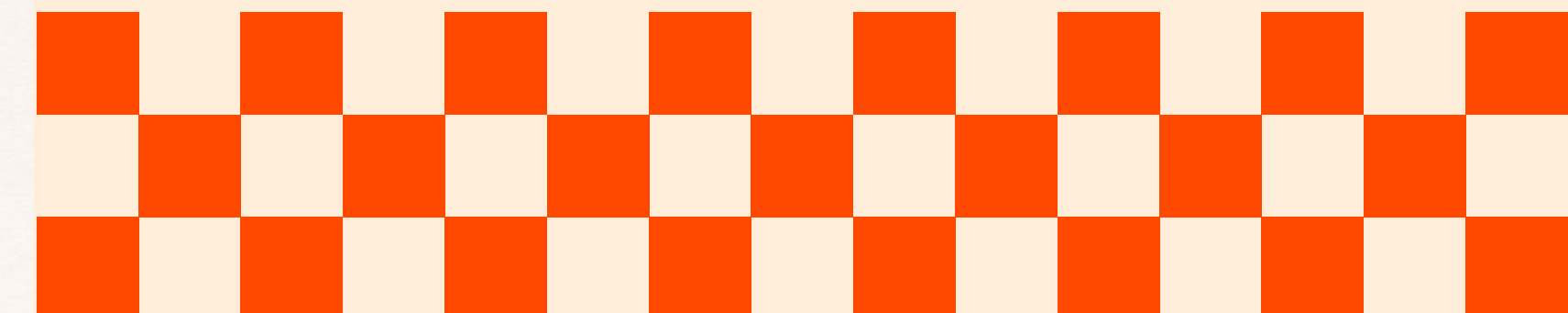
8%



THE Takeout Box

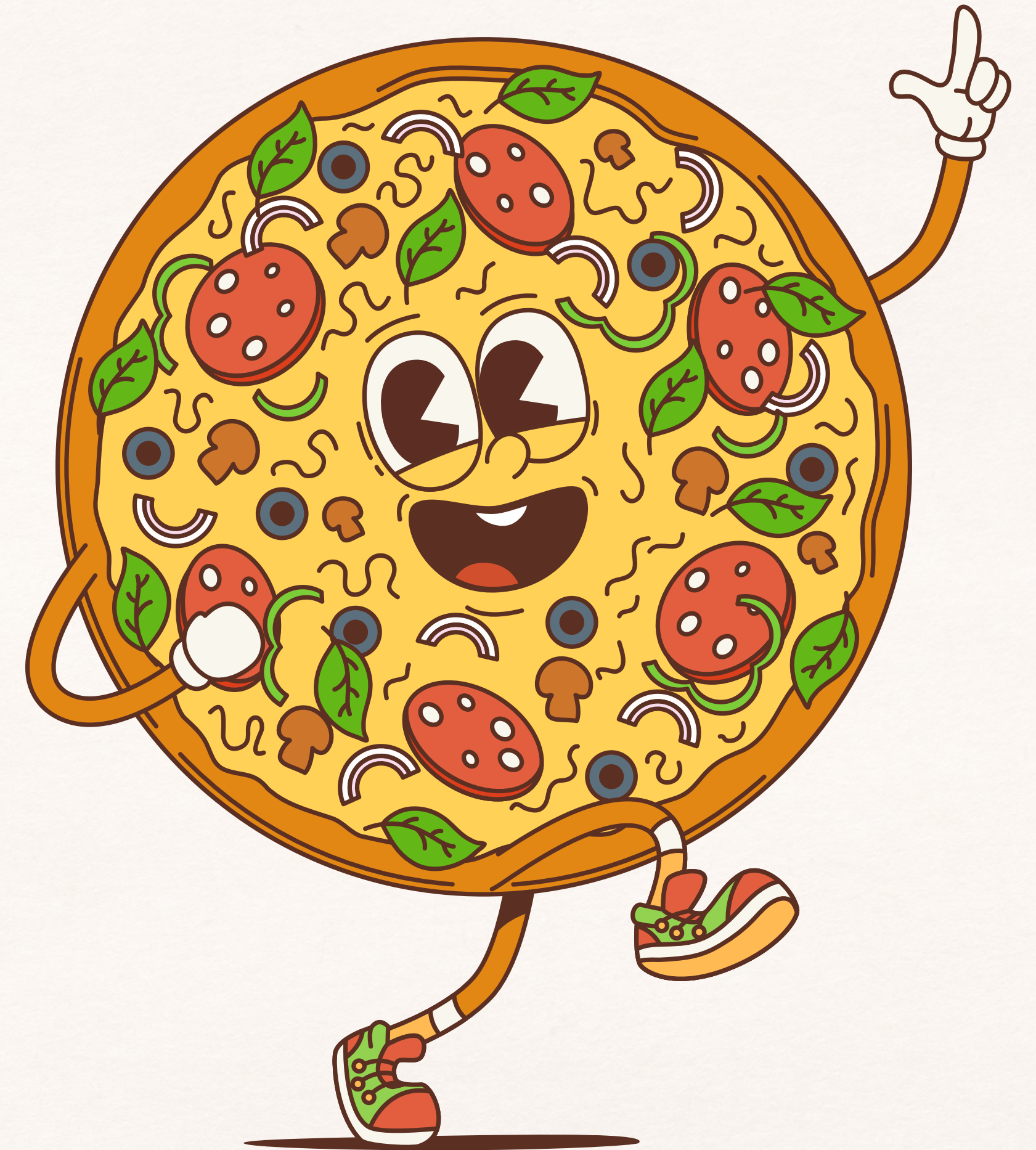
A kiosk that’s out of order, a drive-thru that mishears, or a failed payment all bring friction to an experience that’s supposed to be fast. Technology shortfalls and failures undermine the “quick-service” value proposition. In time, they push customers away rather than reward customers for trusting the restaurant, the franchise, and the brand with their business.

Forward-thinking QSR brands already prioritize the end-to-end integration of technology into the connected restaurant experience. They know reliability is a core part of how they earn trust and build loyalty.



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The Last Bite: Would You Like Action With That?



Restaurant technology plays a defining role in how customers experience quick-service brands. Whether things work smoothly or not, customers remember.

This survey shows that the biggest opportunity comes from making existing systems work every time. The entire connected restaurant ecosystem — from the network stack to self-service kiosks, kitchen display systems to order-ready boards and IP cameras — must perform consistently across locations. Because when restaurant tech fails, customers notice.

Canopy allows QSR operators to centrally monitor and automate the remote management of their full connected restaurant stack, from front-of-house to back-of-house technologies. Our RMM platform gives technical support teams the tools to:



Monitor the real-time health of every connected product and the underlying network infrastructure, from the kiosk to the Wi-Fi access point and kitchen display.



Resolve remote device and endpoint issues before they disrupt service.



Equip field teams with tools to manage deployed restaurant technology quickly, even automatically.



Standardize performance across hundreds or thousands of locations, supporting connected products through onboarding, remote resolutions, and device lifecycle management.

Supporting a connected restaurant takes a forward-thinking approach. Canopy offers end-to-end visibility and management, for both the devices that power the QSR customer experience and the network stack that connects it all together.

When the entire connected restaurant works as expected, from kiosks to payment systems and more, everyone benefits, from customers to staff, driving consistency, customer satisfaction, lower costs, and higher revenues.

Want your QSR technology to work every time?

See how Canopy helps [↗](#)



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