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REVROOM INDUSTRY BRIEF · SINGAPORE F&B · NOVEMBER 2026

Part three of our Singapore series · a follow-up to "Grab Bought Chope"

WhatsApp, not email? What messaging guests really costs Singapore restaurants

WhatsApp is where Singapore guests answer. It is also the channel where a message nobody wanted costs you the most.

8 MIN READ

SINGAPORE F&B OPERATORS

WHATSAPP · COST · CONSENT

Executive summary. This is the third brief in our Singapore series. The first looked at who owns the guest when a delivery platform sits in the middle. The second showed that more guest data now reaches restaurants, through Chope bookings and Grab customers who agree to be contacted. This one asks the next question: once you have a guest's number, which channel should you use to reach them?

WhatsApp looks like the obvious answer. Four in five people in Singapore use it every month, and most prefer it for talking to businesses. Yet few restaurants here use it for marketing. Guests receive booking confirmations on WhatsApp, rarely promotions. There are good reasons for that. Meta charges S$0.0937 for every marketing message it delivers to a Singapore number, with no volume discount. Since 1 October 2026, even replies to guests are billed once a number sends more than 1,000 a month. The Do Not Call rules apply to WhatsApp too.

Those costs and rules make WhatsApp a poor channel for blasts and a strong one for targeted messages. This brief shows what each approach costs, which channel fits which job, and how a CRM keeps the WhatsApp bill down.

01

Guests talk to restaurants on WhatsApp. Restaurants rarely market there.

WhatsApp is Singapore's most-used and most-loved app. We Are Social and Meltwater's *Digital 2026: Singapore* report counts four in five people using it every month, ahead of Facebook and YouTube. The previous edition put monthly use at 80.1% and found that 30.4% of users named WhatsApp as their favourite platform, twice as many as Facebook. Guests also use it to reach businesses: in a 2023 HubSpot and YouGov survey, 67% of Singaporeans said they prefer WhatsApp for communicating with businesses, and 61% prefer it when asking about a product or service.

In restaurants, that traffic mostly runs one way. Guests book, ask about the menu or a table for tonight, and receive confirmations and reminders. Marketing on WhatsApp is much rarer. In practice, diners in Singapore almost never receive a WhatsApp promotion from a restaurant, while booking confirmations are routine. No public study measures this, so treat it as an observation from the field rather than a statistic. The tools exist: reservation and CRM platforms already offer WhatsApp campaigns to restaurants. The reasons restaurants hold back are covered in the next three sections: the cost of each message, Meta's own limits, and the consent rules.

About the "98% open rate": many WhatsApp marketing guides quote an open rate of 98%, or 90 to 98%, for WhatsApp messages. We could not trace this figure to a study with a published method. It is generally attributed to an estimate by the research firm Mobilesquared and repeated without a source. One messaging vendor that measured 13.9 million campaign messages across 382 brands in 2026 found a weighted open rate of 79% on delivered messages, mostly outside Singapore. We found no public data on WhatsApp open rates for Singapore restaurants. Email open rates are hard to compare too, since Apple's Mail Privacy Protection has inflated them since 2021. The safe conclusion: WhatsApp messages are read more than email, by a margin nobody has measured reliably for restaurants in Singapore.

02

What a WhatsApp message costs a Singapore restaurant

Sending a few messages from the WhatsApp Business app on a phone is free. Campaigns sent through the WhatsApp Business Platform, which is what marketing tools and CRMs connect to, are billed by Meta for every message it delivers.

Meta stopped billing per 24-hour conversation on 1 July 2025 and now charges per delivered message. The rate depends on the guest's country code, so every +65 number is billed at Singapore rates, and on the type of message:

MESSAGE TYPE	EXAMPLES	PRICE PER DELIVERED MESSAGE
Marketing	Promotions, new menu, "we miss you", event invitations	S$0.0937
Utility	Booking confirmation, reminder, order update	S$0.0205
Service (replies)	Answering a guest who wrote to you, within 24 hours	First 1,000 per number per month free, then S$0.0205
Free entry point	Replies to a guest who wrote after tapping a Click-to-WhatsApp ad	Free during the window

Meta rate card for Singapore in SGD, effective 1 July 2026, with the 1 October 2026 changes. Excludes GST and any fee charged by your WhatsApp provider.

Three details matter more than the headline rates. First, marketing messages have no volume discount: only utility and authentication messages get cheaper at high volume, and the thresholds start at 150,000 utility messages a month, far above what a restaurant sends. Second, since 1 October 2026, replies to guests are no longer free once a number sends more than 1,000 a month, and utility messages sent while a conversation is open are billed too. Third, the price is charged whether or not the guest reads the message.

How it compares with email. Email platforms usually bill a monthly plan rather than each message. Brevo's entry plan, for example, starts at US$9 a month for 5,000 emails, which works out under 0.2 US cents per email. A WhatsApp marketing message to a Singapore number costs US$0.0732, about 40 times more. WhatsApp can still earn that difference, but only on messages that are worth sending.

03

Blast everyone or pick your guests: what each costs

Take a restaurant with 1,000 guests who agreed to hear from it on WhatsApp and by email. Here is what one month costs if it messages all of them every week, compared with messaging only the guests who have a reason to hear from it.

APPROACH	WHAT IS SENT	WHATSAPP COST
A. Weekly blast	One promotion a week to all 1,000 guests on WhatsApp: 4,000 marketing messages	S$374.80
B. Split by job	Monthly newsletter by email to all 1,000 guests (covered by the email plan)	S$0
	WhatsApp win-back offer to 150 guests not seen in 60 days	S$14.06
	WhatsApp invitation to 100 regulars for a chef's table night	S$9.37
	300 booking reminders on WhatsApp (utility)	S$6.15
Approach B, WhatsApp total		**S$29.58**

Illustrative example using Meta's Singapore rates above. Excludes GST, provider fees and the email plan. Guest replies stay free up to 1,000 per number per month.

Approach B sends fewer WhatsApp messages, and each one has a reason to reach that guest: they have not been back, they are regulars, or they have a booking tomorrow. Approach A costs more than twelve times as much, and it carries a cost that does not appear on the bill.

> **Meta limits blasts on its side too.** Since 2024, WhatsApp has capped how many marketing messages a single user receives from all businesses over a given period. Meta does not publish the cap. It adjusts it to each user's recent engagement, so someone who keeps ignoring promotions gets fewer of them. When the cap is reached, the message is not delivered. Weekly blasts to guests who never respond make it harder for your next message, the one that matters, to get through.

04

The rules: consent before the message

Singapore's Do Not Call (DNC) rules under the Personal Data Protection Act cover marketing messages sent through apps such as WhatsApp when they go to a Singapore number. Before sending a marketing message, a restaurant must either check the number against the DNC Registry within the 21 days before sending, or hold the guest's clear and unambiguous consent in a written or recorded form. The PDPC is explicit that failing to opt out is unlikely to count as consent: the guest has to take some positive action, such as ticking a box or signing up.

There is a narrower exemption for organisations in an ongoing relationship with the recipient, for messages related to that relationship and carrying an opt-out. The PDPC has said that a one-off transaction is not enough to create one. A guest who dined once and left a number at the door is not, on that basis, someone you can put on a promotions list.

Email follows a different law. Under the Spam Control Act, unsolicited commercial emails sent in bulk must carry an unsubscribe facility and the label <ADV> at the start of the subject line. Emails to guests who have asked for them do not need the label. As our second brief noted, using a Chope contact for marketing needs the guest's separate consent, whatever the channel.

Not legal advice: this section summarises the PDPC's published guidance and the Spam Control Act. It is not a substitute for advice on your own consent forms and messaging practices.

05

Which channel for which job

Send it on WhatsApp when...

- It is about a booking: confirmation, reminder, a change (billed at the cheaper utility rate)
- The guest wrote to you first and is waiting for an answer
- It is time-sensitive: a table that opened up tonight, a last-minute event
- It goes to a small, chosen group: lapsed regulars, VIPs, guests who came for a past event

Send it by email when...

- It goes to your whole list: monthly newsletter, new menu, seasonal news
- It is long or visual: a story about your chef, a full menu, event details
- The guest gave an email address but not WhatsApp consent
- Nobody will miss it if it is read next week

Five checks before the next WhatsApp campaign:

1. Does every number on the list have recorded consent, or a DNC check from the last 21 days?
2. Is this message for a segment that has a reason to receive it, or for everyone?
3. Would an email do the same job for a fraction of the cost?
4. Is it really marketing, or a utility message about a booking? Meta classifies the template, and a promotion presented as a booking update can be moved to the marketing rate.
5. What did the last campaign bring back in visits, compared with what it cost to send?

06

How a CRM keeps the WhatsApp bill down

On WhatsApp, the saving comes from the messages you don't send. Deciding which ones those are takes guest data that a phone and a spreadsheet can't handle. Each point below matches a cost covered earlier in this brief.

1. **One profile per guest, across outlets and sources**

   The same guest often appears several times: a Chope booking, a walk-in name at another outlet, a QR sign-up. Merged into one profile, they receive one message, not three.

2. **Consent recorded per guest and per channel**

   Only guests who agreed to WhatsApp messages get them, and the record shows when and how they agreed. That answers the Do Not Call rules in section 04 and removes sends you had no right to make.

3. **Segments built from real visits**

   Last visit, visit frequency and spend decide who gets what. The win-back goes to the 150 guests who have not been back in 60 days, not to all 1,000.

4. **The right channel for each guest**

   WhatsApp for guests who opted in and respond to it, email for everyone else and for the content that does not need to arrive today.

5 **Leaving out guests who don't need the message**

A guest who already booked for Friday, came in this week or never opens your promotions is excluded automatically. Fewer messages also means fewer ignored ones, which keeps Meta's per-user limit from blocking the messages that matter.

6 **Booking messages sent as utility messages**

Confirmations and reminders go out automatically at the utility rate of S$0.0205, not as marketing at S$0.0937.

7 **Return visits measured for each campaign**

Comparing what a campaign cost to send with how many guests came back gives a cost per returning guest. Campaigns that do not bring anyone back can be stopped.

07

What restaurants can do about it

On WhatsApp, every message nobody needed is a line on your Meta bill. The channel is worth paying for when the right guest gets the right message, and few restaurants in Singapore use it that way yet.

RevRoom is built around the list above. It consolidates guest contacts from bookings, POS, direct orders and QR sign-ups into one profile per guest, tags and segments them with AI, and sends each segment the message that fits, on WhatsApp or by email, with analytics on which campaigns brought guests back. WhatsApp messages are billed by Meta directly to the restaurant, so every message RevRoom helps you avoid sending is money you keep.

If you haven't read the first two briefs, on delivery platforms and on Grab's purchase of Chope, you can find them on our resources page.



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Selected RevRoom Industry Briefs

A selection of our briefs. The list isn't exhaustive and isn't updated with every release, so the freshest and most useful ones are always on our resources page.

SINGAPORE	**The hidden cost of delivery platforms** Is GrabFood or foodpanda still worth it for Singapore restaurants?
SINGAPORE	**Grab bought Chope. Here's what actually changed.** What the acquisition means for reservations, delivery and guest data.
SINGAPORE	**WhatsApp, not email? What messaging guests really costs Singapore restaurants** This brief.
THAILAND	**Why LINE OA, not email, is the backbone of restaurant marketing in Thailand** How to use LINE well, what it costs and where it falls short.
THAILAND	**TikTok made it famous: riding (and surviving) Thailand's viral food trends** How to ride a food trend without getting burned.
THAILAND	**No influencers, no TikTok, still full: getting noticed in Thailand without playing the social media game** How restaurants get found without chasing social media.

See the latest briefs at revroom.beehavesoft.com/resources →

Sources & notes:

- WhatsApp reach in Singapore ("four in five people" monthly; most-used and most-loved app): We Are Social and Meltwater, *Digital 2026: Singapore* (published 5 November 2025). 80.1% monthly use and 30.4% favourite platform: *Digital 2025: Singapore*, same publishers, as reported by Marketing-Interactive and LBB Online.
- WhatsApp as the preferred channel for communicating with businesses (67%) and for product or service enquiries (61%): HubSpot and YouGov survey of Singapore consumers, reported by HubSpot APAC and The Drum (May 2023).
- Restaurants rarely sending WhatsApp promotions in Singapore: field observation by our team and restaurant professionals in Singapore; no public study measures it. WhatsApp campaigns offered to restaurants by reservation platforms: e.g. TableCheck, "TableCheck Launches WhatsApp Marketing" (press release).
- "98% open rate": attributed to a Mobilesquared estimate with no published method (go4whatsup, WhatsApp marketing statistics, May 2026). 79% weighted open rate on 13.9M delivered messages from 382 brands: Chatarmin, WhatsApp Benchmark Report 2026, a vendor study.
- Per-message pricing since 1 July 2025, message categories, customer service window and free entry point: Meta, "Pricing on the WhatsApp Business Platform" (developers.facebook.com).
- Singapore rates in SGD (marketing S$0.0937 / US$0.0732; utility and service S$0.0205), volume tiers and the 1 October 2026 changes (1,000 free service messages per number per month; utility templates in the service window billed): Meta's Singapore rate card as reported by Digital Marketing Agency Singapore (September 2026), respond.io, Zoho and Trengo help notes (October 2026).
- Brevo entry plan (US$9 a month for 5,000 emails): Brevo pricing as reported by Moosend, Capterra and Emailtooltester (2026). Prices vary by region and change over time.
- Per-user marketing message limits (since 2024, set by Meta, adjusted to engagement, not published): Twilio error 63049 documentation; YCloud, "Meta's Frequency Capping Explained"; Klaviyo help centre. Template reclassification from utility to marketing: YCloud.
- Do Not Call rules applying to WhatsApp messages to Singapore numbers: Council for Estate Agencies, citing the PDPC's DNC provisions; PDPC, "Do Not Call Registry & Your Business". 21-day validity of DNC checks: PDPC decision, Wee Jing Kai Leon [2023] SGPDPC 8. Clear and unambiguous consent: PDPC Advisory Guidelines on the Do Not Call Provisions, Part III. Ongoing relationship exemption and one-off transactions: PDPC media release, 27 December 2013.
- <ADV> label and unsubscribe facility for unsolicited bulk commercial email: Spam Control Act 2007, Second Schedule; IMDA / DMAS email marketing compliance checklist.
- Chope contacts and marketing consent: see our second brief, "Grab bought Chope. Here's what actually changed."
- RevRoom features (guest profiles, AI tagging and segmentation, consent and channel choice per guest, exclusion rules, booking messages, WhatsApp and email campaigns, campaign analytics, QR sign-up forms): revroom.beehavesoft.com and RevRoom product team. WhatsApp messages sent from RevRoom are billed by Meta to the restaurant.

The month-of-marketing comparison in section 03 is an illustration built from Meta's published Singapore rates, not any restaurant's actual figures. Meta updates WhatsApp prices at the start of each quarter, so check the current rate card before budgeting.

RevRoom is an AI-powered guest marketing and CRM platform for restaurants and bars in Thailand and Singapore. © 2026 RevRoom. A product by Beehavesoft.