



THE HIDDEN IMPACT OF DRIVE-THRU TOTAL TIME ON CUSTOMER LOYALTY AND REVENUE



WHEN DRIVE-THRU UPSETS YOUR BEST CUSTOMERS

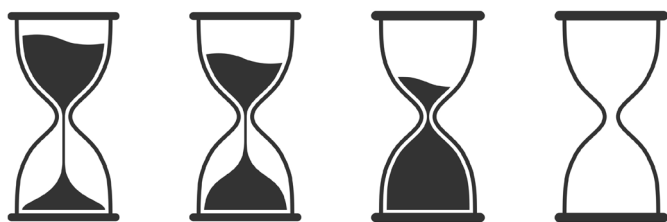
Repeat Visits Fall Off a Cliff After 10-Minute Wait Time



In today's fast-paced world, many customers opt for the drive-thru for its promise of speed and convenience. However, the moment they enter the line, their perception of their experience begins to take shape based on one key factor: **TOTAL TIME**. This refers to the combined time spent from when a customer enters the line until they receive their order and drive off. Every minute spent waiting has a cumulative negative effect on satisfaction.

If customers spend too long waiting in line, they are less likely to return soon. This holds true even for your most loyal repeat customers.

HOW LONG IS TOO LONG?

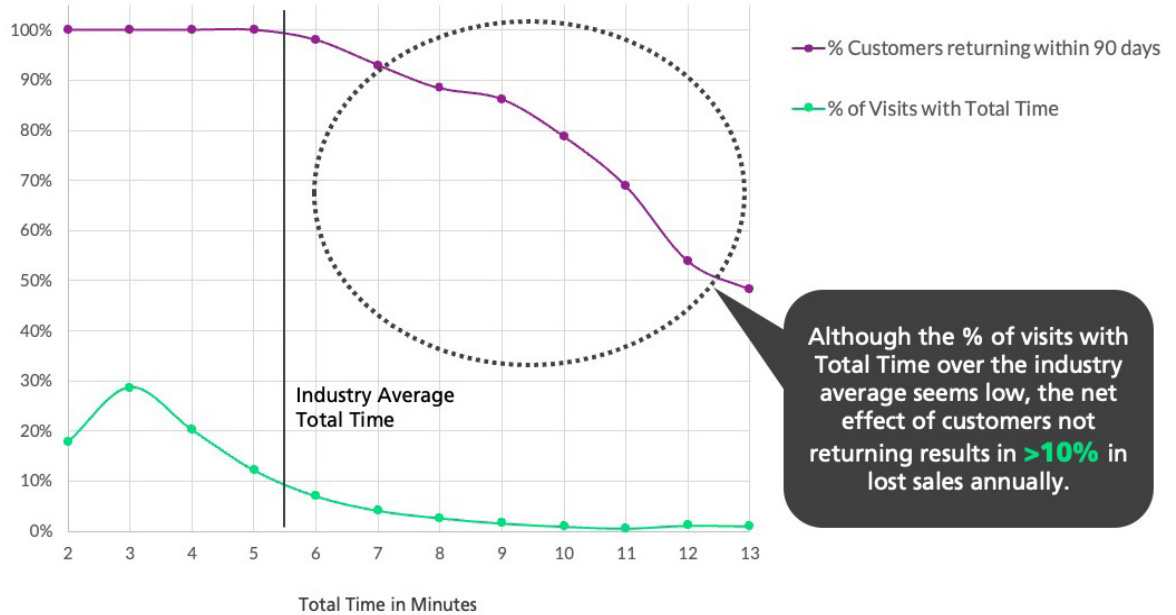


One of the important insights brands get from uKnومي's AI-powered drive-thru technology, is **how total time impacts their repeat customer visits** at every store. The system correlates repeat customer visit frequency with total time in the drive-thru. By combining anonymized data across four different QSR

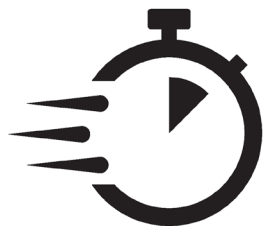
brands, we observed **a steady decrease in customer repeat visits as total time moves beyond 6 minutes, with a sharp decline at around 10 minutes.**

Our data shows that more than **1 in 3 repeat customers will not return within 90 days** if service time exceeds 10 minutes. At 12 minutes, over half of repeat customers will abandon the brand. Although the percentage of visits being impacted

varies by brand and store, the data shows that on the average the impact of total time on customer loyalty translates to around **10% of lost revenue annually**.



SHAVING OFF SECONDS



The relationship between **total time** and **customer returns** is real and undeniable. QSRs have made great strides in reducing overall wait times. For example, **the average total wait time** has decreased from just over 6 minutes to around 5.5 minutes in the last two years, according to Intouch Insight’s Annual QSR Drive-Thru Report.

But improving average speed is only part of the equation. Individual visits matter! Customers are far less likely to return if they experience longer-than-expected wait times, with the key being “longer than expected” and only a couple of bad reviews that mention slow service has a very negative impact. Total time isn’t the only factor at play, though.

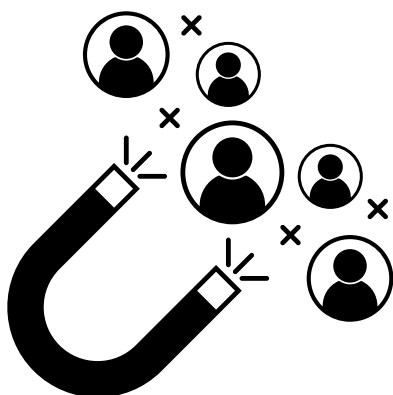
Context matters: is it during the morning rush? Are there a lot of cars in the queue? How much does friendly service or personalization mitigate long wait times? During peak times customers are likely to be more understanding of a longer wait, and if they are the only car in line they may enjoy a friendly conversation at the window. These are critical nuances that need to be accounted for when considering the overall customer experience and key aspects used by uKnomi's AI powered service management module. **The real opportunity lies in retaining repeat customers, who provide greater long-term value than a one-time visitor. By ensuring a fast and friendly experience, QSRs can boost immediate revenue and foster higher retention, which leads to greater brand loyalty.**

THE DATA

The analytics that informs these findings comes from data that considered **118,000 guests and 413,000 drive-thru visits** across four brands in the southwestern United States over a six-month period. Data measured prior to deployment of the uKnomi Service Management and Guest Engagement Technology. This dataset was normalized to account for seasonal fluctuations.



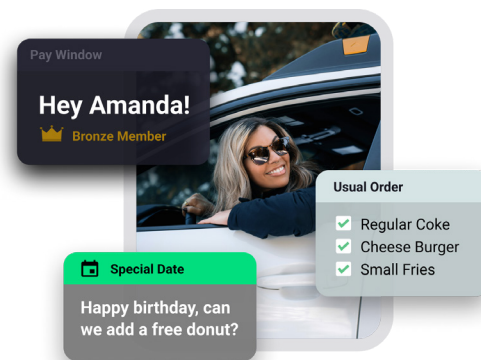
REPEAT CUSTOMERS ARE THE REAL DEAL



While shaving off seconds from service time can increase revenue, **repeat customers** are the true game-changers. Loyal, repeat customers are crucial indicators of a QSR's ability to deliver consistent, positive experiences, driving sustained brand loyalty. These customers are far more likely to spend more, try new menu items, and recommend the brand to others. We've found that **personalization** in the drive-thru significantly enhances customer experience, brand loyalty, and the frequency of repeat visits. **Personalized interactions can increase revenue by as much as 20%.**

IN-THE-MOMENT MARKETING

In addition to improving service speed, QSRs can leverage in-the-moment marketing by using advanced technologies. Our on-premise recognition of drive-thru customers is powered by AI-based cameras and IoT sensors that recognize vehicles and, when customers opt in, their mobile devices. The system gathers valuable data on **customer preferences, purchase history, and promotional offers.**



By using this information, QSRs can:

- **Deliver personalized, real-time engagement:** offer tailored menu suggestions and relevant promotions based on customer preferences and purchase history and interact with contextual messages that resonate.
- **Make the experience frictionless:** elevate the guest and staff experience with a digital drive-thru that seamlessly integrates mobile ordering and other personalized digital interfaces.

CONCLUSION

In the competitive world of QSRs, the drive-thru service experience is crucial to retaining loyal customers. Our research shows that wait times beyond 10 minutes can significantly harm customer loyalty, leading to lost revenue. But beyond just cutting average wait times, QSRs must focus on consistency and ensuring that customers don't experience delays that exceed their expectations. By optimizing service times, leveraging personalization, and addressing operational issues in real time, QSRs can not only improve customer satisfaction but also drive long-term loyalty and sustained revenue growth.

Learn How uKnomi is Impacting Drive-Thru Total Time:
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