# Everything You Need for an Effective Reservations Platform

Key features to drive sales and create repeat customer visits

There is an extensive range of restaurant reservation platforms available on the market today, with many of them touting fancy features and sleek interfaces.

With such overwhelming variety, we've put together a simple guide with 6 key features to look out for when selecting a reservation platform that best suits your needs. These features aim to improve operational efficiency, drive online visibility for your brand, and boost revenue overall.
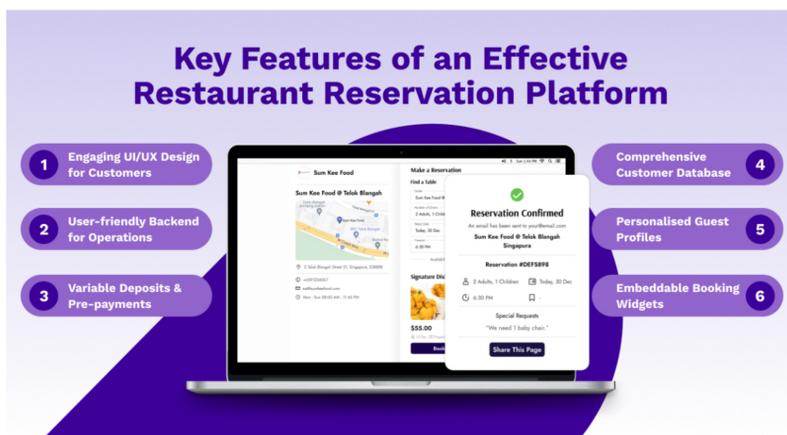
1. Engaging UI/UX Design for a Seamless Customer Experience

The importance of User Interface (UI) and User Experience (UX) in web design cannot be understated. The UI is centered around the visual elements of a page (think buttons, text fields, and checkboxes), while the UX focuses on the user journey and functionality of a website.

Your reservations page might very well be the first impression a customer has of your brand, and a good UI/UX design will spur the customer towards conversion. When choosing a restaurant reservation platform, you might first want to test it out by making bookings with brands that already use the product. Take note of how long it takes to complete a booking—the more seamless the experience, the higher the chance of successful conversion.

2. User-friendly Backend for Effective Operations Management

For many F&B owners, the biggest draw of an online reservations platform is in its efficiency. But if the backend of the system becomes too complicated for your operations team to use, it might be more of a hindrance than a help instead, as precious man hours are wasted trying to troubleshoot.

UI/UX also plays a part here in creating a functional platform that's easy enough for any restaurant operations team to pick up. Your chosen restaurant reservation platform should allow quick access to important details such as guest information, floorplans, and number of covers, especially during peak hours, when time is of the essence.

3. Variable Deposit and Pre-payment Functions to Reduce No-Shows

Reservation no-shows are the bane of the restaurant industry, affecting up to 30% of monthly business in Singapore.

While the idea of deposits and pre-payments used to be unpopular with F&B owners, more and more restaurants are warming up to the concept. In 2018, many cash-strapped businesses in the UK—including mid-range restaurants and independent outlets—began levying a fee for reservations or offering pre-paid meals in a bid to save costs. A similar move was also observed by The Times in 2021. In both cases, the F&B businesses saw distinct improvements in their no-show rates.

When looking for a restaurant reservation platform, therefore, it is best to shortlist those that offer dynamic deposit and pre-payment features. Depending on the type of restaurant(s) you run, you'll then be able to adjust your deposit rates. A token $5 deposit might be enough to encourage turn-up on weekdays, and on weekends or peak periods, this amount can be rightfully raised to cope with demand.

On Oddle Reserve, merchants can collect variable deposit amounts and offer pre-paid set meals via the 'Tickets' function. Transform dining events like a weekday afternoon tea or weekend brunch buffet into first-class experiences for your diners by selling them 'Tickets,' and easily make all your special menus and events bookable to boost sales.

4. Actionable Data Insights to Drive Restaurant Revenue

In today's tech-savvy economy, data is king. It is imperative that your chosen restaurant reservation platform facilitates data collection so you can glean insights from your consumers' dining habits.

For example, knowing the most common occasion for which guests visit your establishment (e.g. birthdays, date nights) might help you work out what kind of special bundles or packages to push to encourage higher spending. Having knowledge of average cover per table could also help you optimise your floorplan. With full control over your database, you can run your own marketing campaigns via emails and ads to promote repeat visits.

5. Guest Profiles to Boost Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

It is much easier to create a personalised experience for all your guests when you have a restaurant reservation platform that allows for individual profiles to be saved. You can note down a customer's allergy information, seating preferences, birthdays, and more. These customer profiles are only visible to your operations team, and help to foster deeper, more meaningful engagements between them and your diners. Such conscientious service also builds brand loyalty, thus keeping your customers returning.

On Oddle Reserve, all guests have their own editable profiles, integrated with an engagement module that enables the restaurant to send automated reservation reminders and thank you messages via SMS or email. Merchants are also able to collect guest sentiment for analysis via customisable customer satisfaction surveys.

6. Embeddable Booking Widgets

A booking widget is a button or application that links a website to your reservations platform. With this function, merchants can easily accept bookings across multiple channels of their own without having to pay extra fees. Having a booking widget on your website also functions as a direct 'call to action' to customers who land on your page, as they're encouraged to make a reservation immediately.

Looking for more tips on restaurant reservation platforms? Read our guide to Reservation Sales Strategies here, or learn about How the Best Restaurants Outperform and Profit.

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