

guest XM

by Black Box Intelligence

What Makes Restaurants
— Best-in-Class —
in Customer Experience



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It's a Matter of Choice

Consumers are inundated with choice. Overwhelmed with it, in fact. The act of choosing is now a chore and even mocked in viral social videos of tiffs between couples, friends, parents, and their preteens.

Think about it—try naming another decision that happens more often than **what kind of food to eat and where**.

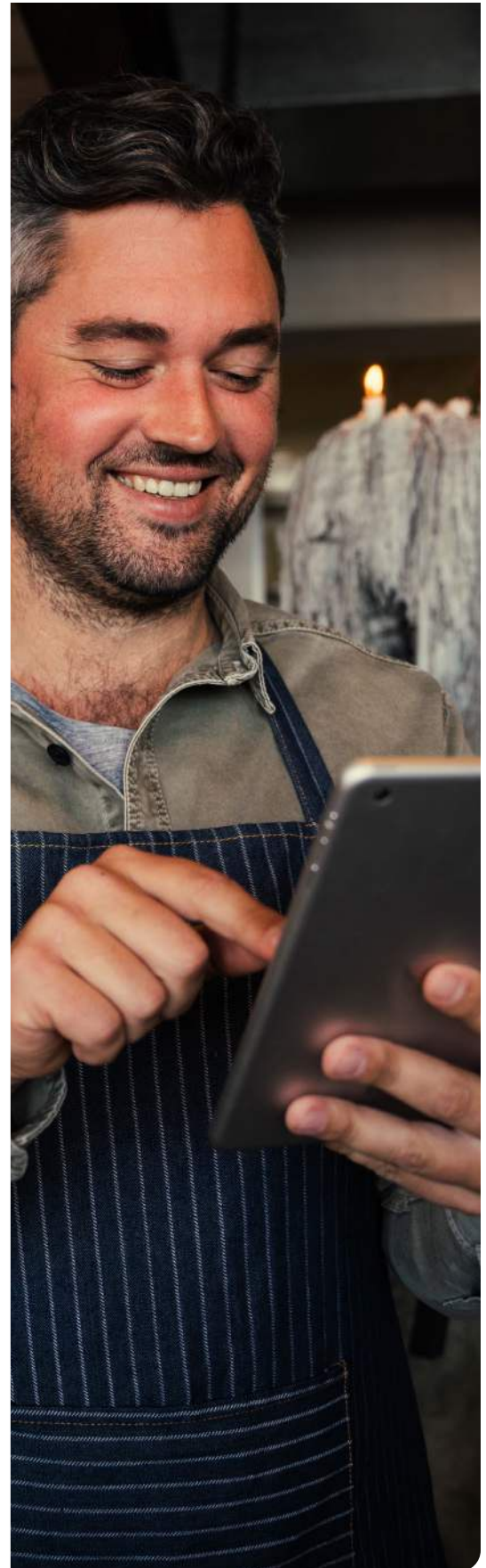
On any given day, during any given daypart, every restaurant is hoping they're considered as the dining spot of choice for new or returning guests. **Today, fighting for and earning that consideration comes down to your guest experience.**

We're not just talking about the minimal level of service from your frontline workforce or the baseline operational bells and whistles that make all of your systems sing in harmony—although, those do count for quite a lot.

We're talking about what it takes in our current restaurant operating environment to attract the right kind of new customers, earn their loyalty, drive repeat visits from returning guests, and create raving fans that spread the word that you're the choice brand.

We're talking about what it takes to be recognized as a restaurant brand with best-in-class customer experience that generates more consistent and higher levels of financial performance compared to your competitors—and how you can do that with more consistency, rigor, and focus in the areas that matter most.

Thankfully, enormous amounts of data exist to help restaurant operators improve their customer experience. And while loyalty programs have become a popular way to collect data, there are plenty of other opportunities to gather valuable data that provides insights into how guests are experiencing your restaurants.



Black Box Intelligence’s Best-in-Class Brands Weigh in

In this guide, we’re proud to introduce two brands tapping into data to improve their guest experiences. Throughout this guide, they’ll weigh in on what it takes to create, maintain, and inspire a best-in-class guest experience and brand.



Destinee Rollins
VP of Marketing



Twin Peaks is an American chain of sports bars and restaurants based in Lewisville, Texas. Best described as the “ultimate sports lodge,” the brand is best known for its made-from-scratch food, signature 29° draft beers, and sports and scenic views from every direction.



Full-Service



Locations: 78



States: 24



Brad Jacobus
CMO



Jim 'N Nick's celebrates the artistry of slow cooked Bar-B-Q with recipes handed down for generations. The brand believes in no freezers and no shortcuts—just slow-smoked Southern goodness . . . the way it ought to be done.



Full-Service



Locations: 42



States: 6



Yesterday's Best Is Today's Table Stakes

Restaurants can no longer rely on the quality and consistency of their food alone to stand out. There are many components that make up the entire guest experience—an experience that now starts before guests even step foot in a physical location and ends well after they leave.

So, what drives choice in today's operating environment? We find that restaurants with a best-in-class customer experience continuously deliver and delight across the customer journey in three main areas:

1. Table Stakes
2. Brand Differentiators
3. Digital Experiences



Table Stakes

As we said before, and you'll surely hear it again and again, what used to differentiate brands in the past is now considered table stakes among modern consumers. We define table stakes as the minimum offering on any aspect of a product or service before it is considered for purchase by a customer. If a consumer is going to consider your restaurant, you must meet these fundamental requirements. The good news is, most brands today—especially operations aiming to establish themselves or hold their positions for the long haul—are able to continuously deliver on the fundamentals.



TABLE STAKES

Table stakes in business refer to the minimum offering on any aspect of a product or service before it is considered for purchase by a customer.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY TABLE STAKES:

- ☑ Menu
- ☑ Staff
- ☑ Operate in convenient locations
- ☑ Taste
- ☑ Safety
- ☑ Practice consistent sanitation & cleanliness
- ☑ Price
- ☑ Deliver a quality product
- ☑ Provide adequate staffing
- ☑ Convenience
- ☑ Create value or perceived value

Table Stakes Still Need Tweaking

Consistently delivering on the fundamentals is an ongoing effort, especially when you're operating above six units and growing. Collecting and analyzing direct and indirect feedback data from a variety of listening channels can help you not only answer these questions but take action faster so that you aren't fumbling on the fundamentals.

MONITOR & MANAGE YOUR FUNDAMENTALS

What questions could you be asking? What answers are you looking for?



Menu

Is your food consistently meeting your target-customer satisfaction levels?



Taste

How are you ranking on freshness overall?



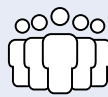
Price

Are your prices still competitive?



Convenience

Do customers complain about parking in a specific location?



Staff

Are you adequately staffing to handle after-school volume?



Safety

How are you ranking on sanitation, cleanliness, and safety overall?



Brand Differentiators

Modern diners are looking for an experience that goes above and beyond table stakes. They want you to **engage them, entertain them, know them, and hear them**. They are looking for brands with a strong internal compass who can articulate their competitive difference in unique, delightful, and even shareable ways.

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY BRAND DIFFERENTIATORS:

- ✔ Strong brand equity
- ✔ Operational excellence
- ✔ Engaging people/staff
- ✔ Competitive across the 4 P's: Product, Price, Place, and Promotion
- ✔ Listening and feedback loops
- ✔ Follow your brand's "North Star"
- ✔ Maintain excellence in operational consistency and efficiency
- ✔ Develop an engaged frontline staff
- ✔ Stay competitive across the 4 P's
- ✔ Create opportunities to review, engage, and provide feedback to your brand

Strong Brand Equity

Having a strong restaurant brand is essential for success. It's your teams' compass, your "North Star" that drives action and decisions when there may not be an operating manual around to tell your team what to do.

More importantly, a strong brand creates an identity that guests can recognize, connect, and engage with before, during, and after they dine with you. Your brand pillars and branding elements should reflect your values, mission, vision, and core values. It should be unique and memorable so that customers can easily distinguish it from other offerings and your competitors. Of course, elements such as messaging, visuals, packaging, and advertising help reinforce the branding and will help you stand out in a crowded market. But once those are solidified, the way you continue to articulate and reinforce your brand pillars to drive new and repeat guests all happens through your guest experience.

JIM 'N NICK'S
COMMUNITY
BAR-B-Q

Data-Driven Experience Improvements Start with Your Brands

"It starts with the emotional benefits of the brand, having those clearly defined, and knowing what those are. Then, it's important to articulate what the data means to your teams—awareness is key."

BRAD JACOBUS
CMO, JIM 'N NICK'S

Operational Excellence

Achieving operational excellence is no small feat, especially as a brand grows and expands. It requires an experienced and knowledgeable team coming together to appreciate and understand their customer journey and how the guest experience is delivered across every touchpoint. Because there are so many touch points across the digital and physical journey of any one of your guests—operations, training, marketing, finance—your culinary and innovations creators and your frontline staff all have to come together to orchestrate each and every shift, with constant and continuous improvement always in mind.

Engaging People

Staff play a critical role in engaging guests at a restaurant. From the moment customers enter to the time they leave, staff must be friendly and welcoming in order to create a lasting hospitable experience.

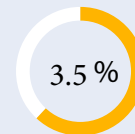
According to research conducted by Black Box Intelligence analysts, restaurants with better workforce retention generate a greater volume of guest traffic. The data also shows that restaurants with better traffic results tend to also receive a larger volume of reviews per location.

After analyzing over 300 restaurant chains, those who capture five times more reviews than their peers experienced a 3.5% increase in guest traffic.



The heart of our team is key to our customer experience success. Our team can't wait to use our latest sentiment insights to better understand how operational changes land with our guests. They want to know their performance over the past day, week, month, or quarter so that they can continue to improve the guest experience.

DESTINEE ROLLINS,
VP OF MARKETING, TWIN PEAKS



Restaurant chains who capture 5X more customer reviews see a 3.5% increase in traffic compared to their peers.

Source: Black Box Intelligence, 2023

PEOPLE FACTORS INFLUENCING EXPERIENCE

Appearance

Authenticity

Accountability

Reliability

Engagement

Ownership

Stay Competitive Across the 4 P's to Drive Loyalty

Staying competitive across the 4 P's, Product, Price, Place, and Promotion, is a juggling act. On one hand, you have your brand pillars, your best-sellers, and your staff—the elements that distinguish your brand and deliver a unique value proposition to the market. On the other hand, you have your competition. And finally, there's a third ball in the air that represents the constantly changing consumer demands and technology influencing product, price, place, and promotional opportunities to drive loyalty and repeat customers. While it's easy to get wrapped up in what your competition is doing (or not doing), or what new technology could be implemented, those decisions should always be made through the eyes of the guests and your ideal customer.

FOCUS ON YOUR CUSTOMERS TO DRIVE EXPERIENTIAL LOYALTY



Destinee Rollins
VP of Marketing
Twin Peaks



Our guests come in and use us for so many different purposes. It could be sports, business lunches, late night, costume parties, national food holidays—we're sprinkling in surprise and delight offers to bring awareness and excitement that brings guests back into the restaurant. For Twin Peaks, the goal is to stay connected and communicate regularly with our guests. There are so many touchpoints that we use to stay in touch and drive that brand equity that isn't necessarily a point system.”





Brad Jacobus
CMO
Jim 'N Nick's



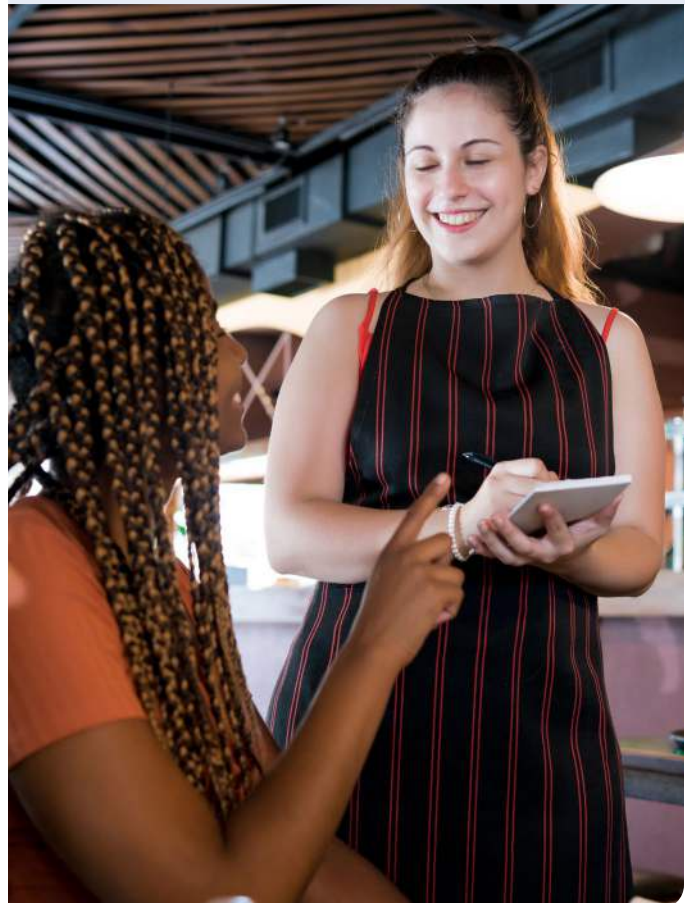
“There’s a lot of data behind the scenes from Black Box Intelligence and some of our brand agency partners. What it allows us to do is (1) finitely understand and define who our consumer is, (2) ask ourselves who is it that we slowly want to introduce the brand to? And, we’re okay with some guests not participating and/or coming back. So it’s making sure those three segments are aligned. Looking at the ‘4 P’s,’ Jim ’N Nick’s is heavily focused on the product side of it—which is where we need to drive value from. It also indicates that discounts or other similar tactics aren’t going to generate the kind of loyalty we ultimately want. For us, loyalty is more about ‘surprise and delight’ through the guest experience.”



Sam Oches
Editorial Director
Informa's Nation's
Restaurant News



“As we go into our post-pandemic future, we get caught up in the bells and whistles available through technology. But don’t forget the hospitality. Customers want a human experience.”



Digital Experience

So much has happened since the explosion of the digital experience over the years—especially after COVID-19. Every restaurant needs a digital toolbelt. There’s so much available to facilitate the digital experience. What’s on a particular restaurant’s toolbelt and how it is utilized across the customer journey to enhance experience and overall performance depends on a variety of factors. Here are two examples of how Twin Peaks and Jim ’N Nick’s have successfully incorporated digital elements into their overall customer journey and guest experience.



Digital Menu Evolution Inspires Guests

“Twin Peaks is known for a lot of things: sports, beer, our Twin Peaks’ girls. Prior to COVID, guests were always shocked at how great our menu and food are for a ‘sports bar.’

Just after COVID, we introduced our digital menus. It's a robust, top-notch digital menu experience. They are immersive with photos and videos. Videos describe the ingredients in our craft cocktails. They even tell you what might pair well with a particular whiskey. These menus are visually inspiring and reinforce for our guests that we’re a made-from-scratch menu.

Our digital menu was the big hero that came out of the pandemic, and it's something we continue to put a lot of muscle behind and continue to manage and innovate so that we’re sharing our food and culinary experience with our guests.”



Conversation Data Fuels Quality Assurance

“Coming out of COVID, the Jim ’N Nick’s brand was quite a bit behind in terms of our digital offerings. We got involved and integrated with Olo to offer third-party delivery to our guests.

But really, for us, it’s actually come back into reputation management. As we’ve experienced growth, and approached that challenge of keeping quality of service and experience consistent, reputation has been a primary driver for us.

We need to be fully aware of how the consumer and team members are talking about us. As we’ve offered more ordering capabilities, it’s created more opportunities for discussions to be taking place that we weren’t necessarily a part of.

We jumped in early with GuestXM™ from Black Box Intelligence to give us the visibility we need around quality assurance.”

Differentiating Through Guest Experience

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY | BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

Table Stakes + Brand Differentiators + Digital Experiences



Understand your customers' journey



Generate and act on customer experience insights



Collect omnichannel feedback from customers



Build an effective guest experience toolbelt

Understand Your Customers' Journey

By gaining insights into the journey customers take from discovering a brand to becoming loyal customers, restaurants can make informed decisions about what types of marketing and promotion efforts are most effective. What's even more critical is the ability to identify potential pain points across that journey and then develop strategies to address them.

While robust documenting is an effort worth embarking on, it's not always necessary to have robust customer journey maps.

Customer journey maps do set you and your teams up with a decent foundation, one that everyone can use as a compass during discussions when data reveals there are areas that need attention, improvement, or radical restructuring.

Analyzing that data to understand the guest and to understand trends, frequencies, and patterns can ultimately show greater care to that guest by being ready specifically for them.



Collect Omnichannel Guest Feedback

Customers aren't shy about sharing feedback with the brands that they interact with. Every experience along the customer journey is an opportunity for a person to comment, complain, criticize, compliment, or even congratulate. Ignoring that feedback isn't an option, especially in today's operating environment.

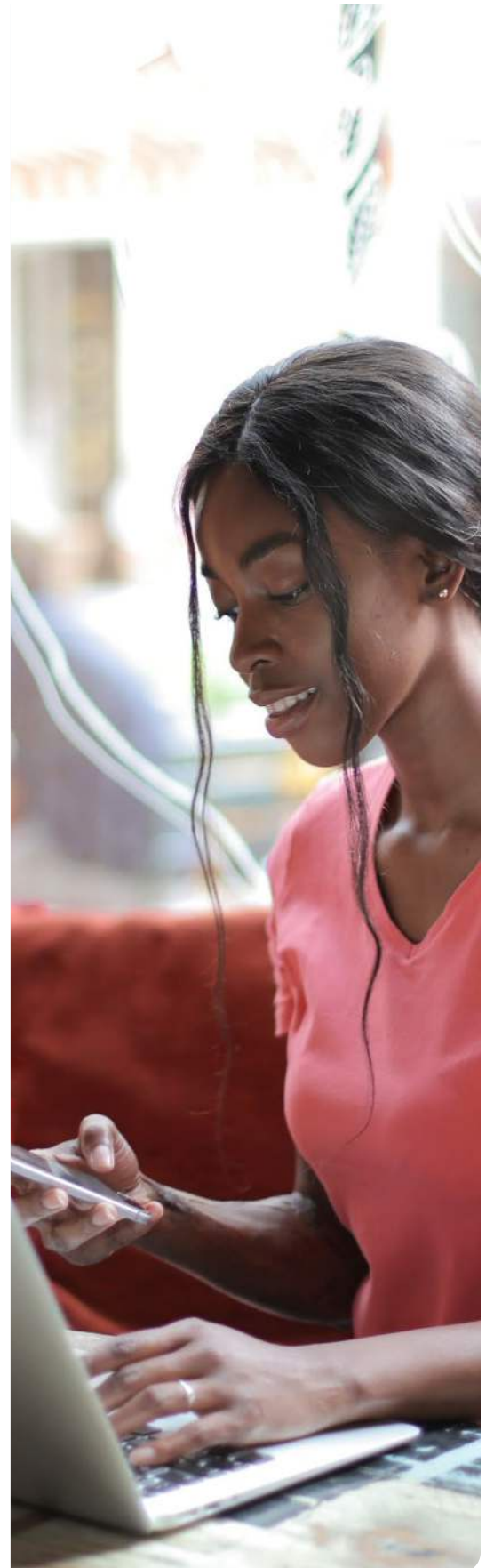
For restaurants just starting to capture, analyze, and act on customer feedback, it's important to know that there are several different forms of feedback loops and that not all of these feedback loops are created equal.

Omnichannel Feedback & Inferred Insights

Gathering omnichannel feedback—in other words, direct and indirect feedback—across multiple touchpoints allows for a comprehensive view of the guest experience. These insights play a crucial part in optimizing a restaurant's omnichannel customer experience, which represents what consumers encounter as they seamlessly move across channels while interacting with a restaurant brand. Restaurants can use this data to improve engagement by providing personalized and timely responses, gain a competitive advantage, and drive guest satisfaction and loyalty by providing a consistent brand experience across all touchpoints.

Every Interaction Counts

Consumers are more demanding than ever before. And restaurants have to deliver to stay competitive. Collecting direct and indirect feedback and inferring insights and operationalizing them is the solution to creating an incredible experience that fosters passionate fans, encourages loyalty, and increases real tangible results for restaurants that want to gain a competitive edge.



Bringing It All Together

How Jim 'N Nick's Leverages Feedback Data to Improve Guest Experience

“It starts with the emotional benefits of the brand, having those clearly defined, and knowing what those are.

Then, as we looked at data and the core values and pillars of the brand—it was up to us to put ‘bumpers up to the bowling alley’ to first and foremost make sure our teams had a clear articulation of what the brand looks like, what we stand for, and what the heartbeat of our organization looks like.

Where the rubber meets the road is in that customer experience. Before GuestXM, we didn’t have a lot of visibility into that experience. And if we did, it wasn’t necessarily actionable data.

With GuestXM, the first thing we did was benchmark our NPS. Then, we went to work integrating Google Review Sites so that (a) we could participate in the conversation and

(b) help our team members understand and become fully aware of what those insights were driving and what it meant.

It was really important that our team understands what the data means. For example, we know that guests won’t even consider a restaurant with 4 stars or less, and we need our teams to be aware of and understand how the experience impacts reviews, which in turn impacts repeat visits.

We’re also listening, analyzing, and reviewing what’s happening along the customer journey and throughout the guest experience. And then we can see the correlation back into sales and traffic. It’s more on the traffic input than it is on the sales output—but there’s still visibility into this triangle of guest experience, traffic, and revenue.”



Bringing It All Together

How Twin Peaks Leverages Experience Insights to Improve Sentiment Scores

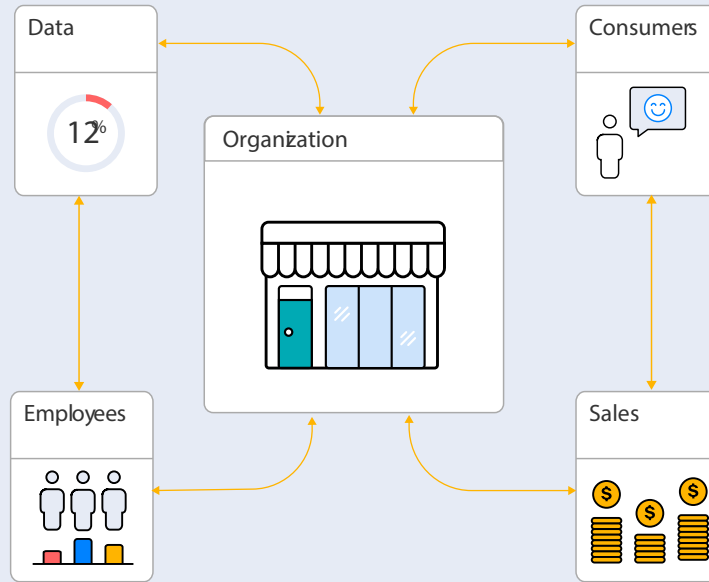
“Our team joneses for the morning, weekly, and monthly experience insights reports. They start their day wanting to know what the guests were saying about us even from just the evening before. It’s incredible to see—because it takes the data and highlights actionable items that our team is able to go out and adjust and fix. As part of the team, I’m always impressed with how our leadership and operations team go out and course correct. I’ll give you an example. Let’s say, the common negative trends may be the fries in Twin Peaks. We’re seeing an uptick in negative remarks about fries within some of our reviews. We dial into the root cause of the issue before it becomes a larger trend.

Is it wait times that are causing issues with the fries? Is it the way we’re batching the fries and it’s an operational task that we need the operations team to come in and retrain staff?

From a culinary, training, and operations standpoint, it’s incredible to see all teams come together around this data—make an actionable game plan, and make a change. And, I will tell you—we’ve had negative insights in the past, but it is no longer an issue or trend on our performance reports.”

*Twin Peaks won the Voice of the Customer Award at Black Box’s 2023 Annual Best Practices Conference for delivering exceptional, top-performing guest experiences.





Helping restaurants deliver best-in-class experiences by transforming the way teams use data and insights to solve everyday problems.

About GuestXM (powered by Black Box Intelligence)

Listen more, analyze it all, and uncover the insights you can act on with GuestXM by Black Box Intelligence — the first customer experience management platform purpose-built for the restaurant industry. Capture, collect, and act on omni-channel customer feedback and deliver incredible guest experiences — every time. Visit [guestxm.com](https://www.guestxm.com) to discover what's possible.

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