

How can you spot a fake online review?

ABC Radio Brisbane By Jessica Hinchliffe

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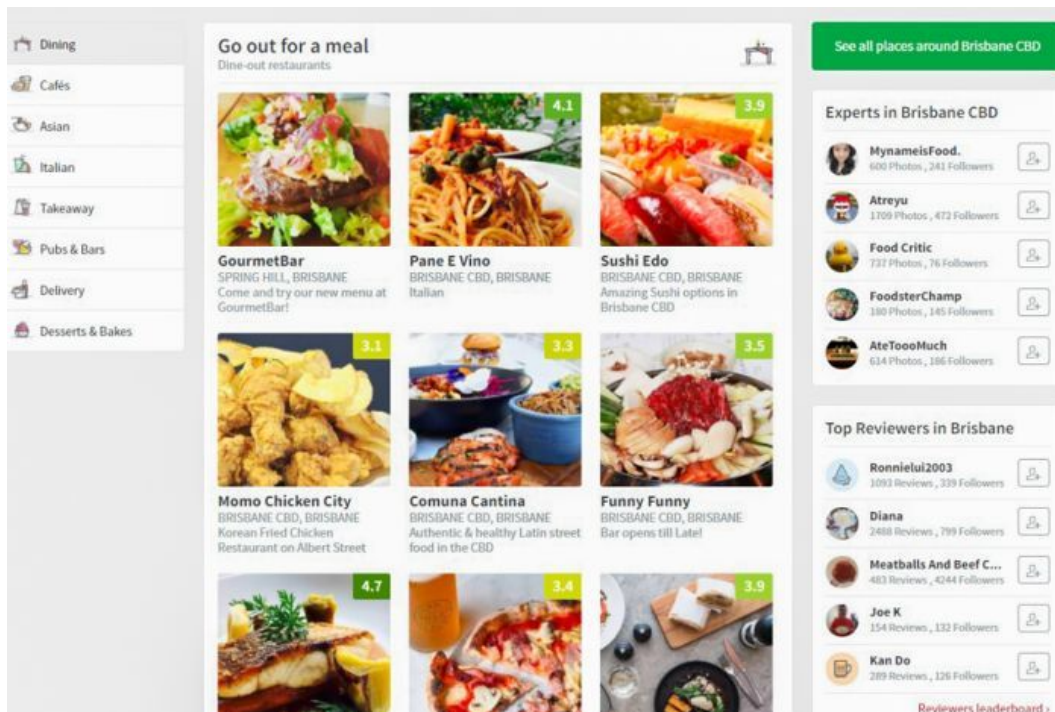


PHOTO: Online reviews play a big role in what consumers decided to purchase. (Zomato)

Before you book a table at a new restaurant, do you look at the reviews online?

From new washing machines to coffee shops, you can now find an online review for most things — but are they genuine?

Adrian Camilleri, a consumer psychologist at RMIT, said assurance came from using both consumer and expert advice.

"Recent surveys in Australia and the US show that 70 to 80 per cent of online consumers look at reviews before purchasing a product or service," he said.

"People put a lot of faith into consumer reviews."

In 2015, consumer group Choice found that 15 per cent of reviews online were fake.

"It's a real concern as these reviews are often written to benefit a company or be hostile against another company," Mr Camilleri told ABC Radio Brisbane's Kelly Higgins-Devine.

"Places like Amazon have new algorithms that look to eliminate the fake reviews, that look for words and accounts posting in a certain way."

Mr Camilleri said consumers needed to understand that many reviews were coming from fellow shoppers.

"It's good to compare reviews to what experts are saying like Choice," he said.

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Tips on how to spot a fake review

1. Check reviews about the same business from different sources
2. Keep an eye out for tell-tale signs of fakery (increase in positive or negative reviews over a short time frame)

"Many experts base their evaluations on objective criteria while consumers base theirs on brands and popularity.

"You want to use all the information you have at your fingertips before using a review."

3. Beware of reviews that are allegedly from different people but are suspiciously similar in tone and style

Source: Choice

What reviews are good to use?

Mr Camilleri said an important factor to look for was the number of people who had reviewed a product.

"Many people might see an average review score on a small sample and you can't put too much faith in that.



PHOTO: Consumers make choices from online peer and expert reviews. (ABC Radio Brisbane: Jessica Hinchliffe)

"You might only be hearing the opinions of a small minority and some of those with an extreme opinion either moan or brag about their experience.

"Most of the time people have an OK experience and they are not usually motivated to leave a review."

He suggested websites such as Fakespot.com and Reviewmeta.com which analyse reviews to provide an adjusted review score.

Mr Camilleri said although the amount of fake reviews was increasing, more detailed reviews could help consumers make better decisions.

"We need more information about who has left the review so consumers can look for reviewers similar to themselves.

"It's a good thing if we can get more people leaving reviews as we will get a greater sample."

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