

Restaurants gear up for growth with positive online reviews

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Positive online restaurant reviews and recommendations from customers can be highlighted with Premium listings on TripAdvisor to improve visibility and reputation.

Restaurants gearing up for the end-of-year tourist season should ensure their social media listings and online reviews are optimised in order to boost their visibility and increase trade. Research shows that seven out of ten consumers will leave feedback if asked to and nearly 90% say that online reviews influence their buying decisions.

It's one of the reasons that TripAdvisor has become the world's largest travel platform, used by tourists and business travellers looking for recommendations on where to eat, stay, travel and shop. Every month nearly half a billion people worldwide visit the site which is home to 795 million of their reviews and opinions.

"With Tripadvisor Premium, restaurant owners are able to manage their listings (and reputations) on the popular platform and highlight the good experiences their customers have. They are also able to choose their own images to feature instead of relying on the customer's most recent image," says Ashleigh Wainstein, director of Social Places, TripAdvisor's exclusive partner in Southern Africa.



Ashleigh Wainstein, Director of Social Places

The company is currently offering a 50% discount on Premium TripAdvisor listings. Says Wainstein: "One of the reasons TripAdvisor is so popular and trusted, is that reviews and recommendations come from people who have actually been to the restaurants they comment on. Restaurants are therefore not promoting themselves, but are rather being recommended by the people who have been impressed. There's an authenticity to that which consumers trust and it increases the likelihood of their choice to dine there."

Instead of a regular listing which tends to be static and ordinary, Premium listings contain a range of features that make them stand out when people are searching for recommendations on places to eat.

These include:

- A visual storyboard that switches between artwork of food and the restaurant and highlights positive reviews and reviewer mentions. These high-quality photos and artwork are designed for maximum visual impact. Food images, atmosphere shots, and front-of-store photos give people an immediate visual snapshot of what to expect at the restaurant.
- Top three reasons to eat here – three blocks that appear on the listing with headings, artwork and reviews. Restaurants can choose a review that highlights their defining qualities – for example "Quality Steak" or "Beautiful Views." Everything they opt to highlight strategically, is backed up by positive comments and reviews from customers.
- A pinned review - TripAdvisor reviews appear in chronological order. This feature allows a restaurant to pin a favourite review which will always appear second on the review list.

- Competitor reporting - an easy way to keep track of ranking, review score and the percentage of positive versus negative reviews.

Consumers typically look at two or three review sites before making a decision, so having a restaurant listed on a few trusted sites like TripAdvisor, Google and Facebook is important, particularly as South African tourism is on the rise.

Wainstein says TripAdvisor ads are another good way for restaurants to tightly target audiences and ensure that they appear first on TripAdvisor Rankings for relevant keyword or category searches on the platform, ensuring potential customers view their TripAdvisor listing.

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