

# Popular restaurants may be paying customers

By Peter Holley, Washington Post

Pretend for a moment that you're walking through your neighborhood and notice a line of people wrapped around the block outside a newly opened restaurant.

Local food bloggers haven't written about the venue, so you assume the trendy-looking crowd must be the result of contagious, word-of-mouth buzz.

There was a time when that may have been undoubtedly true – when you could trust that a crowd of people was, in fact, a naturally occurring mass of individuals.

But that time may be passing thanks to Surkus, an emerging app that allowed the restaurant to quickly manufacture its ideal crowd and pay the people to stand in place like extras on a movie set. They've even been hand-picked by a casting agent of sorts, an algorithmic one that selects each person according to age, location, style and Facebook "likes."

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