

Review: So many coupon sites, so little time

February 23 2011, By DANA WOLLMAN , AP Technology Writer



In this screen shot from dailycandy.com, a coupon for Antoine Amrani Chocolates, in Philadelphia, is displayed. (AP Photo/dailycandy.com) NO SALES

(AP) -- If Groupon isn't as ubiquitous as, say, Facebook, it's getting there. The website, which offers daily coupons to local restaurants, bars and other businesses, has 60 million members worldwide, about half of whom live in North America. Those controversial Super Bowl ads surely introduced it to some new customers, too.

Groupon's business model is simple: It posts one deal a day, such as \$10 for \$20 worth of food at a local cafe, or 75 percent off a package of salsa lessons. Visitors have 24 hours to sign up for the deal.

I tested Groupon along with some copycat services. I came away with a handful of [coupons](#) to restaurants - and a temptation to splurge on things I didn't know I needed, like back massages. I learned that while the formula of these sites doesn't change much, the mix of bargains you find does.

Groupon (<http://www.groupon.com>)

What I like: Groupon sometimes offers deals at national chains - say, \$25 for \$50 worth of clothes at The Gap. The site also offers the best variety of deals, mixing things like restaurants, yoga classes and bowling. Many of the deals are good for a year, while others expire after 6 months or so. Each deal needs buy-in from a certain number of visitors to take effect, but because Groupon is well known, it usually does. Groupon has apps for the iPhone, Android and BlackBerrys.

What I don't: Because Groupon has so many members, deals sometimes sell out. People can only buy one coupon for themselves, though they can e-mail others as gifts to include friends in an outing. Other sites, such as Gilt City, let each person purchase up to 5 coupons.

LivingSocial (<http://www.livingsocial.com>)

What I like: True to its name, many of LivingSocial's deals were tailor-made for groups and couples. Buying a prix fixe dinner for two is easier than buying one coupon and giving the other away, as Groupon would have you do. Perhaps because the deals are so activity-focused, you'll see some that you won't on other sites, such as a six-week foreign language class. Its "Escapes" section sells hotel stays in locations as diverse as Cozumel, Mexico, and Cape Cod, Mass. The coupons last for six months to a year. In my testing, I also appreciated that LivingSocial's stores and restaurant deals were specific to my neighborhood in Brooklyn, as opposed to more remote parts of New York City.

What I don't: The only available phone app is for the iPhone. The service could use more restaurant deals. Because of this, I wouldn't subscribe to LivingSocial alone.

Scoutmob (<http://www.scoutmob.com>)

What I like: Scoutmob takes a refreshing approach: the coupon is free. If you see an offer you like, just click a button to receive the coupon via text message or e-mail. You'll only pay when you show up at a cafe, for example, and use it for half-off drinks. You can also claim deals using a free iPhone or [Android](#) app.

The result is a guilt-free experience. Often, I hesitate to pounce on deals from other sites because I worry I won't get around to using the coupons in time, especially if they require schlepping to an out-of-the-way neighborhood. And frankly, buying a coupon for every charming restaurant I see could be an expensive habit.

But with Scoutmob, I can rack up as many coupons as I want and know that I haven't lost anything if I forget to use them.

What I don't: For now, it's only available in New York, San Francisco and Atlanta, though it will soon launch in nine more cities. The deals only last one day, and they aren't as varied as Groupon's and LivingSocial's. With the exception of a day spa, they've all been for restaurants and bars. The deals also expire after about three months, compared to six months to a year for most Groupon offers.

DailyCandy Deals (<http://deals.dailycandy.com>)

What I like: DailyCandy, which sends e-mail newsletters to readers in 12 cities, already curates lists of restaurants, stores, theaters and galleries. So I trust DailyCandy as an arbiter of taste, perhaps even more than

Groupon's persuasively snappy write-ups. As with Groupon, DailyCandy requires that you buy into the deal up front. The deals are good for about six months, which is standard among daily coupon sites.

What I don't: It's only available in New York and Philadelphia, with Los Angeles coming soon.

There is no dedicated phone app.

Some deals, such as a couples-oriented outing at a local ice skating rink that included cups of hot chocolate, expire quickly. I would have had to go ice skating within two weeks of purchasing the coupon. Because DailyCandy targets women, many of the deals are focused on beauty treatments, such as manicures and pedicures. Even I, a regular DailyCandy reader, would have liked to see more food and drink deals along with discounts at tanning salons.

Gilt City (<http://www.giltcity.com>)

What I like: Gilt Groupe is a flash sale website, meaning it holds time-limited sales of small quantities of deeply discounted goods. As such, it's already in the business of selling luxury goods and hotel stays, so it's easy to imagine it hawking three-course dinners and other posh outings as well. Gilt typically lets people buy up to five coupons for each deal, making it easy to share these experiences with other people. And unlike Gilt Groupe, Gilt City doesn't require that you create a password-protected account to browse sales.

What I don't: Only available in a few cities, including New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami and Boston. Even with the discount, some of Gilt's outings are pricey. One example was a \$75 ticket to a wine and cheese tasting, down from \$130. Many of the coupons also expire relatively quickly - in three or four months. Also, I

noticed more instances of deals selling out, much like Gilt Groupe's discounted designer clothing. And, like LivingSocial, the only app is for the [iPhone](#).

If you can tolerate the daily e-mails crowding your inbox, there's no harm in adding yourself to several deal websites' mailing lists. If you're wary of spam overload, Groupon, the pioneer of daily coupon sites, still offers a more balanced selection of [deals](#) than the competition. And do try Scoutmob if you're lucky enough to live in one of the cities it serves; with coupons you don't even have to pay for, there's no risk of buyer's remorse. I can't stop recommending it to my friends.

©2010 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Review: So many coupon sites, so little time (2011, February 23) retrieved 3 July 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-02-coupon-sites.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.