

SITUATION

Cooper-Smith served as the media partner for a regional casual dining restaurant chain with 32 locations in the Carolinas, Tennessee and Virginia. In Q4 2019, the chain wanted to halt the downward YOY sales trend that has plagued many casual dining restaurant chains and approached us for help.

CHALLENGE

The chain has 11 restaurants located in the Greenville-Spartanburg-Ashville DMA, and 4 others are in the more affordable DMA of Tri-Cities, TN. The remainder are scattered in areas where mass media cannot be efficiently utilized. For example, they have four locations in the 10th largest DMA of Atlanta. In addition, their media budget had been greatly reduced to \$60,000 as part of year end budget tightening and limited dollars were available to develop creative assets. While digital tactics can be very efficient, they are not necessarily the most effective tactic to reach the chain's older core customers (Adults 35+). Television/Digital Video was not an option due to costs and lack of creative. And while radio had proved effective in the past, it could not be used in every market due to fragmentation and waste.

STRATEGY

Cooper-Smith developed a 3-week media plan utilizing terrestrial radio in markets that covered 15 of their 32 locations in the GSA and Tri-Cities DMAs. Due to their scattered footprint, Cooper-Smith worked with Nielsen to develop custom radio ratings using the zip codes for their trade areas. This resulted in a different station mix than would have been recommended based on the full market ratings. Pandora and other digital audio platforms were placed for all 32 locations using zip codes covering a 10-mile radius around each restaurant. The digital audio added additional reach for the radio markets and also ensured that every restaurant received promotional awareness.



EXECUTION

The 3-week campaign included 150 TRPs/week of radio based on the custom ratings from Nielsen. This was supported by value added promotions, i.e. taking food to the station and the personalities promoting it on air and on their social media pages. Pandora was purchased for all 32 locations with a goal of 5% share of voice of all available impressions. Advanced targeting with Pandora was used to target listeners that have a high likelihood of being a casual dining enthusiast. iHeart Radio and Radio.com rounded out the digital audio execution by reaching those listening to terrestrial radio via the internet.

RESULTS

Prior to the campaign, the restaurant chain was trending at -16% decline year over year in sales. At the end of the 3-week campaign, the 15 locations that received all tactics were up 10.8% (-13.8% YOY to -3.0% YOY). The 17 digital only locations improved by 4.7% (-18% YOY to -13.3% YOY). Overall, the company improved sales by 7.5%. While they did not eliminate the downward trend, they significantly closed the gap and developed a template for marketing their restaurants on a limited budget.

▶▶▶ The 3-week campaign resulted in an overall sales increase of 7.5%.

