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FOOD
KITCHEN

A Balanced Marketing Diet:

How we delivered quick returns and long-term brand growth for True Food Kitchen's private-equity investors

When True Food Kitchen (TFK) approached Leap Group, they had already grown their healthy eatery concept to 43 locations across the U.S., and landed an impressive \$100 million investment led by private-equity firm Centerbridge Partners (former owners of P.F. Chang's).

But now TFK needed a robust marketing communications plan and media strategy that would demonstrate growth to its investors by driving sales at its brick and mortar locations and increasing usage of its online ordering platform.



We knew achieving these goals was crucial to quickly proving business impact for TFK's new investors, but we also knew we'd need to enhance overall brand visibility if we wanted to create long-term brand-building growth. So, our initial creative and media strategy for TKF involved targeting segmented store locations alongside a national audience across all markets.

We developed two distinct campaigns that not only heightened brand visibility but also substantially boosted online orders, and reversed a 5-year declining performance trend. Together, the campaigns exemplified the power of a strategic, multi-channel approach, even in the face of unexpected hurdles, including payment outages that caused ad delivery issues and a literal storm (Hurricane Hilary).

Identifying and engaging our target audience

To engage potential customers at every stage of the consumer funnel within two key markets for True Food Kitchen – Austin, Texas and West Los Angeles, California – we created the Plus-Up Summer Campaign. Within the campaign, we tailored tactics to the unique characteristics of each store, leaning heavily into Google to capture users on their mobile devices and serve them ads across the entire funnel to help push as much foot traffic as possible to TFK locations.

Given our infrastructure and autonomy, our campaign setup was immediately able to measure, optimize, and scale quickly, and went on to demonstrate remarkable resilience, even when unprecedented obstacles arose.

CAMPAIGN TACTICS INCLUDED:



Google Ads

To drive online and foot traffic to True Food Kitchen by targeting health-conscious diners.



Meta (Facebook & Instagram) Ads

designed to engage with visually inclined audiences by highlighting seasonal menu offerings



YouTube Video Content

that drove engagement with True Food Kitchen's audience by showcasing the brand's commitment to nutrition and taste.



iHeartRadio Packages

that included host-read sponsorships and streaming ads to amplify True Food Kitchen's brand message to a broad audience in our key markets.



TikTok Campaign

that was strategically created to tap into the younger demographic and reached more than 1 million users.



Running concurrently with the Plus-Up Summer Campaign, the Always-On Nationwide Campaign incorporated an evergreen strategy focused on brand support for all other locations outside of Austin and West LA.

CAMPAIGN TACTICS INCLUDED:



Google Ads

designed to maintain True Food Kitchen's top-of-mind presence through continued optimization of search ads.



Meta (Facebook & Instagram) Ads

that delivered localized content and highlighted specific menu offerings and events.



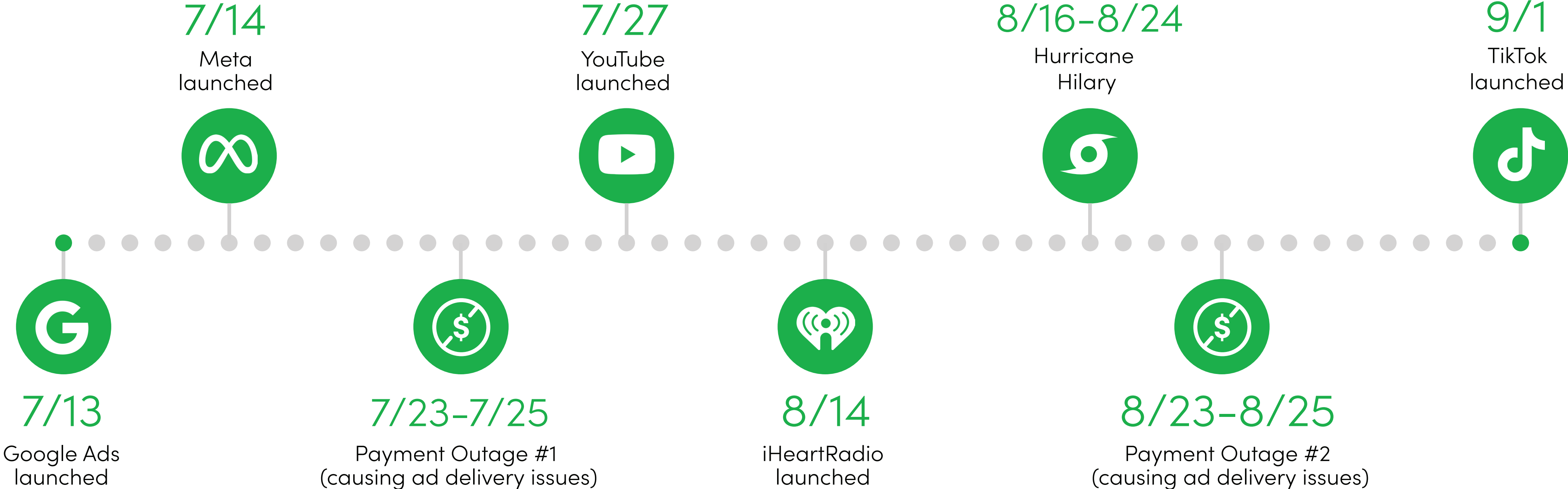
YouTube Video Content

that engaged a broader audience to educate them about True Food Kitchen's commitment to nutrition and taste.



The combined strength of the two integrated campaigns allowed us to overcome multiple obstacles and disruptions that nobody could have predicted (as seen in the campaign timeline below). In the first month alone, we achieved a 3.67 Return on Advertising Spend, indicating an impressive ROI for the Plus-Up Summer Campaign. We maintained that momentum the following month with a 3.78 Return on Advertising Spend, demonstrating consistent success.

TIMELINE:



Sustaining growth through our “Always On, Always Optimizing” approach

Throughout the campaigns, we constantly monitored performance, reporting and analytics so that we could make the adjustments that would maximize spend and optimize performance. But at the end of the campaigns, we had a chance to truly step back and analyze conversions and revenue data to determine how we could pivot our search strategy to support continued growth for TFK.

By Q4 of 2023, we had transitioned solely to focusing on the national audience, maximizing resource efficiency. This audience is made up of a lookalike of engaged users, website visitors, and Hubspot emails.





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At the same time, we also transitioned our social strategy to focus solely on a national audience to maximize resource efficiency. This approach allowed us to provide consistent video viewership at the awareness level, while also enabling us to retarget video viewers, website visitors and email subscribers consistently at the consideration level, keeping TFK top of mind and driving traffic to the website at the lowest cost.

So, in Q4 we executed a media strategy focused on brand engagement, consideration building, and pushing consideration users to the bottom of our conversion funnel. Bottom-funnel media was focused solely on growth in online orders, while upper-funnel media divided our approach between national brand support and plus-up store support. From our strategy pivot point in early November through the year's end, we increased in-store visits by a remarkable 255.8%

A data-based pivot designed to maximize resource efficiency and increase conversion

With the information gleaned from Q4 performance data, we made strategic shifts in our consideration audience segmentation by offers, and enhanced our maps targeting the bottom of the mobile funnel to increase overall conversions and conversion values driven to retail. In Q1, our focus was on maximizing resource efficiency, prioritizing the national audience made up of all markets. We found this approach to be more effective than targeting segmented store locations alongside the national market, spending more efficiently, increasing brand awareness and consideration.



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GET ONE FREE**

Online or in restaurant. Redeemable weekly.*

Use Code: **DM8BGL**

ORDER NOW

*Not valid on third party delivery. One offer per table, cannot be combined with other offers. Must use code DM8BGL to receive offer. Entrée of equal or lesser value is complimentary. Not valid on Starters or Brunch Tower. Offer can be used multiple times. Expires 3/31/24.



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Use Code: **37PC2Y**

ORDER NOW

*Not valid on third party delivery. One offer per table, cannot be combined with other offers. Must use code 37PC2Y to receive offer. Purchase must be \$40 minimum after discount is applied. Offer can be used multiple times. Expires 3/31/24.

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Our answer: Embrace the chaos! With no prior precedence for targeting outside the US, we created an international-to-local funnel, initiating interactions with professionals from the racing circuit on social, and driving them to various Las Vegas-specific offers, including full restaurant buy-outs and large meeting room rentals with demand-based pricing.

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Working in collaboration with the TFK team, we adopted a micro-targeted bottom-funnel strategy in Google that supports both in-store visits and online orders. This refined approach emphasizes TFK's unique value propositions (e.g., Patio Space, Happy Hours, Warm Weather Locations, Online Delivery, Healthy Food), and is an attempt to localize our targeting at the bottom of the acquisition funnel, while also allowing for macro flexibility among our offer set. For example, we utilized the cold January to amplify delivery offers, then moved heavier into brunch as the weather got warmer and we saw increased Google user demand emphasis on patio space. All in all, we have more ability to address similar macro influences on demand in this strategy.

Additionally, we leaned into the Google Performance Max AI ad unit, leveraging audiences from YouTube, Google Display, Partners, and Google Search to drive mobile users to the Google Maps experience in an attempt to steer new users via real-time searches into our locations. Overall, our Google Ads channel strategy is multi-tactical, multi-channel, and is designed to both catch consideration intent from Meta users, YouTube and Display viewers, and to prospect for new local customer conversions from within a 5-mile radius of our store locations.

It's all part of our commitment to quickly driving sales at TFK stores across the country, while also ensuring it's part of a long-term growth strategy that can be sustained for many years to come. Much like True Food Kitchen, we've created a marketing strategy that's not only deliciously appealing to investors, but is healthy for the brand as well.

4.27

ROAS

\$35k

Investment

2 Bar

Buy-outs

Over 73k

Unique impressions

Over 3.5k

Unique engagements

3 Weeklong

Meeting room rentals

35

Incremental reservations

359

Unique store visits

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