

Applebee's

Problem

How does a restaurant make itself a top-of-mind brand in a highly competitive market?

Solution

Use OOH formats to target potential consumers when they're thinking about meal options.

Background

The majority of Applebee's guests live within 5-10 miles of a restaurant, but according to Applebee's research, most of them don't even know it's that close. When customers are making the decision to dine out, they typically don't decide until 2-4 hours before they walk into the restaurant door. The company needed to make Applebee's a top-of-mind brand for consumers who lived in close proximity to the restaurants.

Objective

In Houston, Applebee's is an overly saturated brand in a sea of competition, trying to break through with a minimal media budget. Although consumers were dining at Applebee's for dinner, they were not considering Applebee's as a lunch destination. Sales and traffic had been tracking steadily negative year-over-year, so the challenge was to generate increased sales and traffic during lunch in the Houston area restaurants.

Strategy

Consumers base their lunch consideration set on what is top-of-mind and convenient. The goal of the campaign was to reach morning commuters in the process of making their lunch decisions, and remind them how conveniently Applebee's is located by being "just around the corner."

Plan Details

The agency identified 30-sheet posters within 7 miles of each Applebee's location. The campaign kept an emphasis on boards that were illuminated to maximize exposure to consumers, while the creative included directional information to each specific restaurant and splashed the \$5.99 Value offer for the Pick n' Pair lunch program.

Results

Year-over-year lunch sales improved by 11% in Houston during the program. That improvement was almost 5% better than other Texas markets who were not utilizing OOH. Similarly, year-over-year traffic increased 12% in Houston, which was nearly 7% better than non-supported Texas markets.

The success of the 2007 campaign led the client to continue and expand this program in 2008.

