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# SONIC DRIVE-IN FINAL MEDIA PLAN

# Executive Summary

**Sonic is aiming to maintain their continued success and work toward improving to become one of the top restaurant leaders in the U.S.**

- ▶ The target of our campaign is adults ages 25-34 (primarily Indian American). Our strategy will include messaging to expand our reach to those in this category up to age 54.
- ▶ The communications tactics in this plan are designed to increase revenue through increased sales and build further recognition of Sonic in prime spot markets among audiences already familiar with the brand as well as newer markets to expand the Sonic brand.
- ▶ This campaign utilizes a mix of media, with heavy emphasis on prime and daytime slots where the target audience viewership is high.
- ▶ Digital media elements deliver tightly focused messaging to younger target market members who are more active and comfortable with digital communications specified target market and expand to other audiences. Some of these digital elements include targeted sites and social media where the audience usage is high, and some less popular mediums such as general sites and mobile where the audience usage is lower.
- ▶ To expand Sonic's audience, there are also traditional advertising mediums utilized such as direct mail and outdoor mediums.
- ▶ The campaign concentrates heavy messaging in warm weather months more conducive to Sonic's drive-in business model and capitalizes on this nostalgic feature.

# Background

- ▷ Currently, the Sonic Corporation holds the spot of the largest drive-in chain restaurant in the U.S market.
- ▷ Through Sonic's business model, customers order through an intercon from their cars, and their food is delivered by a Sonic employee typically on roller skates. There is also patio seating and a drive-thru lane.
- ▷ Considering Sonic's unique business model, customer loyalty is strong and valued.
- ▷ Sonic's revenue has been increasing since 2008 however there were fewer opportunities for expansion within the last year due to COVID.
- ▷ However, Sonic is hoping to increase company-owned and franchise locations this year.
- ▷ Sonic has 3,493 Drive-in operations as of 2021.
- ▷ Sonic is most popular among the southern states in the U.S according to the revenue streams.

# SWOT Analysis

<p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Unique drive-in culture</li><li>-Well established</li><li>-Strong customer loyalty</li></ul>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Higher prices compared to competition</li><li>-Does not draw consumers who value a dine-in experience</li><li>-Because of the model, this restaurant does not cater well in colder climate months.</li></ul>
<p><b>Opportunities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Can utilize the vintage aesthetic of the restaurant to draw consumers</li><li>-One of the safer dining options open during COVID</li></ul>	<p><b>Threats</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>-Oversaturated market</li><li>-Aging target market</li><li>-Other well-established franchises</li></ul>

# Competitive Analysis

- ▶ Sonic's main advantage amongst other fast food restaurants is the unique customer service style of the restaurant.
- ▶ Sonic's main competitor in terms of food is pizza.
- ▶ Currently ranked fifth in the Top 16 Fast Food Hamburger Chains in the USA based on Number of Locations, specific restaurants that offer competition are McDonald's, Burger King, Wendy's/Arby's, Dairy Queen and more.
- ▶ According to MRI, Sonic performs well among consumers ages 18-24, (index of 128); fast food restaurants in the fast food and drive-in category perform the best with ages 25-44 (index of 103 for ages 25-43, index of 103 with ages 35-44).
- ▶ For contrast with a competitive brand, Asena Arica, writer for Digital Agency Network, reports that what sets McDonald's specifically apart from other fast food restaurants is their pop culture tie-ins and "powerful branding tactics" (Arica).
  - The branding mentioned and other mediums included a mix of traditional and digital marketing.

# Industry Trends

- ▶ According to Grand View Research, “hamburgers are the most popular items in the U.S” ([grandviewresearch.com](https://www.grandviewresearch.com)).
  - “The U.S fast food industry is growing owing factors such as rise in the fast casual dining services, introduction of new products in the menu, and value meal deals by the fast food and quick-service restaurants” ([grandviewresearch.com](https://www.grandviewresearch.com)).
- ▶ According to Team Linchpin, some fast food trends in 2021 include “vegan options...expanded delivery...expanded beverage options...self-ordering” ([linchpinseo.com](https://linchpinseo.com)).

# Profile for the Target Audience

**Target Audience:** Adults ages 25-34, primarily American Indian

- ▶ Data supporting this was found using MRI in the Sonic 2020 Spring Reporter.
  - While the highest index in this category is the 18-24 age range, this campaign is focusing on 25-34 because it also has a high index and because this age group matches the target HHI and occupations.
- ▶ This is the focus of the target market, however, due to the budget given, we expanded the MFP to adults 25-54.

**Demographics:** Primarily American Indian (index 131) adults ages 18-34 who work in natural resources, construction and maintenance (index 138) with a HHI of \$75,000-\$149,999.

# Psychographics

- ▷ Comedy fans (index 143 for *Adult Swim*)
- ▷ Watch kids content (index 139 for *Nickelodean*, 159 for *Universal Kids*)
- ▷ Interest in Texas (index of 225 for *Texas Monthly* magazine)
- ▷ Interest in home improvement (index of 147 for *HGTV* magazine)
- ▷ Budgeting (index of 131 for *priceline.com*, 136 for *msnmoney.com*)
- ▷ Sports fans (index of 165 for *nbcsports.com*)



# Behavioristics

- ▷ STARZ subscribers (index of 122)
- ▷ Social media users, specifically...
  - Tumblr (index of 136)
  - Pinterest (index of 133)
  - Snapchat (index of 134)

# Business Goals

Through this campaign, Sonic intends to continue their existing success rates while also increasing their competitive position in the market.

- ▶ This goal will be met by increasing the spot marketing budget to \$28 million dollars annually.
  - Also, adding 30 new franchise locations.

# Communication Goals

- ▷ Through marketing efforts, Sonic plans to capitalize on the unique nostalgic drive-in style of the restaurant and the quality of the made-to-order food items served.
- ▷ Customer service will be a signature part of the campaign.
- ▷ Convenience will be highlighted, as Sonic is planning the addition of new locations throughout the United States.
- ▷ Emphasis will be placed upon maintaining and strengthening franchise relationships.
- ▷ The campaign will utilize a mix of traditional and digital marketing strategies customized for the highest ranking usage areas of Sonic's target market.

# Creative Strategy

## **Tagline:** Sonic: Your Drive-In Destination

- ▷ This tagline has been conceptualized to highlight the strengths that Sonic brings to the market.
- ▷ Using “your” implies that the experience will be personalized for you; the food is made to order, in contrast with other fast food options that are pre-made and kept in warmers.
- ▷ “Drive-in” highlights Sonic’s hallmark drive up car stall ordering and carhop delivery which sets Sonic apart from regular drive-thru options.
- ▷ “Destination” builds the expectation that Sonic will deliver a dining experience with a variety of food options, numerous beverage combinations and its famous nostalgic atmosphere.

# Timing/Scheduling

**Peak Months:** May, June, July, August

**Intermediate Months:** March, April, September, October

**Low Frequency Months:** January, February, November, December

- ▶ The reasoning for this is due to the style of Sonic being a drive-in carhop service restaurant. According to the presentation slides, “sales are generally lower during Sonic’s second fiscal quarter (the months of December, January and February compared to the other three quarters). This is because of the lower temperatures in the northern climate locations which customers tend to reduce customer visits to those drive-ins.”
- ▶ Also, according to [sonicdrivein.com](http://sonicdrivein.com), many of the products on their drink menu are frozen/chilled beverages and they have a whole section of the menu dedicated to ice cream. These items are more catered to being served in the summer months.

# Media Budget

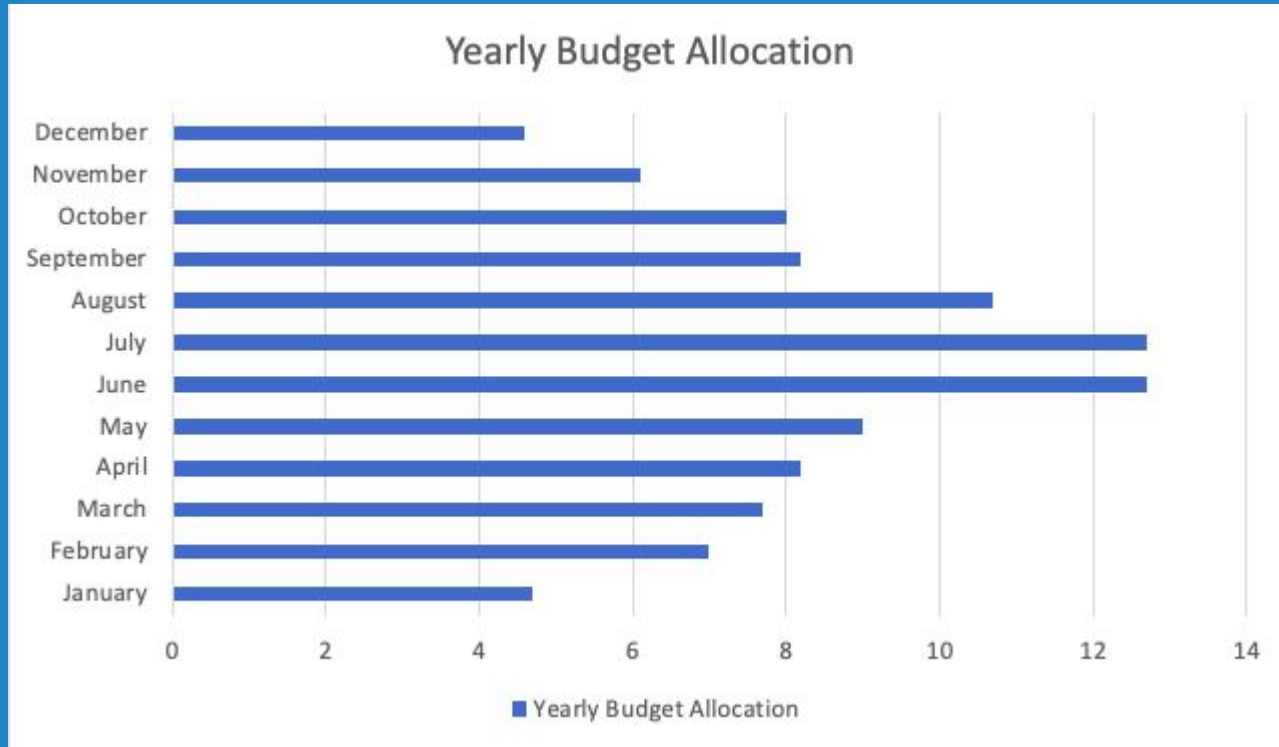
## **\$28 Million Dollar Budget**

- ▷ Most of the budget was utilized for peak revenue months and for a mixture of traditional and digital advertising executions.
- ▷ The media purchased caters to the target audience of adults 25-34.

# Budget Allocation

- ▷ June and July were lent the highest portion of the budget due to these months being summer months.
  - 12% of the budget allocated for June, 12% allocated for July.
- ▷ The lowest portions of the budget were allocated for December and January due to these months lying in the wintertime.
  - Roughly 5% was allocated for December and roughly 5% was allocated for January.
- ▷ The remaining budget focused on months leading up/winding down from the summer season (April, May, August, September).
  - The remaining amount of the budget was relatively even between the remaining months.

# Budget Allocation by Percentage



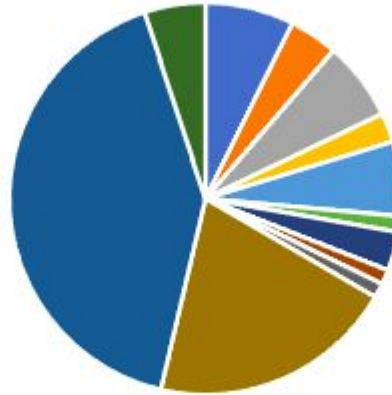


# Media Choice

- ▶ Most of the budget was lent to daytime slots of media.
  - This is due to these times slots having above average indexes (130 for daytime dramas, 108 for daytime talk/variety).
- ▶ Primetime and cable had average indexes so those were also a focus of this campaign.
  - 100 index for any cable.
- ▶ There were below average indexes across the board for morning, evening and late night time slots so these were not given as much budget attention.
  - Index of 73 for early morning news, index of 74 for early evening network news monday-friday, index of 76 for late night network news/info monday-friday.
  - In less advertising-focused months, I allocated slightly more GRPS into these lower mediums to see how they perform in these months and if it draws more customers.
- ▶ According to Mary Story and Simone French, Natural Library of Medicine Published authors, “multiple techniques and channels are used to reach youth, beginning when they are toddlers, to foster brand-building and influence food product purchase behavior. These food marketing channels include television advertising, in-school marketing, product placements, kids clubs, the Internet, toys and products with brand logos, and youth-targeted promotions, such as cross-selling and tie-ins” (French, Story).
  - While this campaign is not focusing on the audience of children, it is using similar advertising techniques to other fast food restaurants such as television and internet.

# Media Mix - Pie Chart

Media Mix by Percentage



- Spot TV - Daytime
- Spot TV - Early Fringe/News
- Spot TV - Prime
- Spot TV - Late Fringe/News
- Spot Cable
- Spot Radio - Morning Drive
- Spot Radio - Daytime
- Spot Radio - Evening Drive
- Spot Radio - Nighttime
- Outdoor
- Direct Mail
- Digital Spot

# Scope

Because national media buying is being handled by a separate agency, this campaign focuses on spot markets only.

This campaign is focusing on 32 spot markets where there are current Sonic locations or there will be Sonic locations built this year. It is important that Sonic is established in these communities in order for revenue to go up.

# Flowchart

Medium	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	Total Across	
Spot TV-Daytime \$(000)	100 434.5	100 219.2	100 219.2	100 434.5	80 175.4	20 43.8	20 86.9	45 195.5	45 195.5	20 43.8	20 43.8	80 175.4	GRPS: COST:	730 2267.6
Spot TV-Early Fringe/News \$(000)	20 107.5	30 81.1	30 81.1	20 54.1	20 54.1	40 108.1	40 215.0	20 107.5	20 107.5	40 108.1	40 108.1	20 54.1	GRPS: COST:	340 1186.3
Spot TV-Prime \$(000)	80 455.3	60 171.3	60 171.3	60 341.5	60 171.3	20 57.1	20 227.6	40 227.6	40 227.6	20 57.1	20 57.1	60 171.3	GRPS: COST:	500 2051.4
Spot TV-Late Fringe/News \$(000)	20 79.1	30 59.9	30 59.9	20 39.9	20 39.9	40 79.8	40 158.2	40 158.2	40 158.2	40 79.8	40 79.8	20 39.9	GRPS: COST:	300 716.2
Spot Cable \$(000)	60 198.6	80 264.8	80 264.8	60 198.6	40 132.4	20 66.2	20 66.2	40 132.4	40 132.4	20 66.2	20 66.2	40 132.4	GRPS: COST:	520 1721.2
Spot Radio-Morning Drive \$(000)	20 20.2	30 30.2	30 30.2	20 20.2	20 20.2	40 40.3	40 40.3	20 20.2	20 20.2	40 40.3	40 40.3	20 20.2	GRPS: COST:	340 353.5
Spot Radio-Daytime \$(000)	100 171.9	100 111.7	100 111.7	100 171.9	80 89.4	20 22.3	20 34.4	40 44.7	40 68.8	20 22.3	20 22.3	80 89.4	GRPS: COST:	720 960.8
Spot Radio-Evening Drive \$(000)	20 20.4	30 30.6	30 30.6	20 20.4	20 20.4	60 61.1	40 40.8	40 40.8	40 40.8	40 40.8	60 61.1	20 20.4	GRPS: COST:	340 346.5
Spot Radio-Nighttime \$(000)	20 33.2	30 32.4	30 32.4	20 21.6	20 21.6	40 43.2	40 66.4	40 66.4	40 66.4	40 43.2	40 43.2	20 21.6	GRPS: COST:	300 359.0
Outdoor \$(000)	1,345 513.8	1,345 513.8	1,345 513.8	1,345 513.8	1,345 513.8	1,345 513.8	1,345 513.8	1,345 513.8	1,345 513.8	1,345 513.8	1,345 513.8	1,345 513.8	GRPS: COST:	14790 5651.4
Direct Mail \$(000)	20 958.3	40 1916.7	40 1916.7	20 958.3	20 958.3	20 958.3	20 958.3	20 958.3	20 958.3	20 958.3	20 958.3	20 958.3	GRPS: COST:	240 11500.1
Digital Spot - Ad Networks - Run Of Network - Ad Networks - Demo Targeted - Video Networks - Publisher Video Sites - Social - Mobile \$(000)	113 136.9	111 115.1	110 138.0	116 233.3	58 108.8	119 239.3	40 48.5	40 42.1	40 42.1	40 48.5	113 160.0	58 88.5	GRPS: COST:	958 1401.0
<b>National Only Area</b> GRPS \$(000) Reach Avg. Freq.													GRPS: Cost:	0 0
<b>Spot Only Area</b> GRPS \$(000) Reach Avg. Freq.	573 3129.7 92.5 6.2	641 3546.8 93.6 6.9	639 3569.6 93.6 6.8	556 3008 92.1 6.0	438 2305.4 90.6 4.8	439 2233.5 89.7 4.9	320 1715.1 85.8 3.7	245 1283.8 80.3 3.1	245 1318.7 80.3 3.1	320 1965.2 85.8 3.7	433 2154.2 89.7 4.8	437 2285.2 90.6 4.8	GRPS: Cost:	5288 28515
<b>Spot + National</b> GRPS \$(000) Reach Avg. Freq.	573 3129.7 92.5 6.2	641 3546.8 93.6 6.9	639 3569.6 93.6 6.8	556 3008 92.1 6.0	438 2305.4 90.6 4.8	439 2233.5 89.7 4.9	320 1715.1 85.8 3.7	245 1283.8 80.3 3.1	245 1318.7 80.3 3.1	320 1965.2 85.8 3.7	433 2154.2 89.7 4.8	437 2285.2 90.6 4.8	GRPS: Cost:	5288 28515

# Year at a Glance

	Reach		Avg Freq		GRPS			\$(000)		
	Goal	Est	Goal	Est	Goal	Est	Balance	Goal	Est	Balance
<b>May</b>	90.0	92.5	6.0	6.2	540	573	-33	2970.5	2523.0	447.5
<b>June</b>	90.0	93.6	7.0	6.9	630	641	-11	3465.6	3546.8	-81.2
<b>July</b>	90.0	93.6	7.0	6.8	630	640	-9	3465.6	3569.6	-104.0
<b>August</b>	90.0	92.1	6.0	6.0	540	556	-16	2970.5	3008.0	-37.4
<b>September</b>	85.0	90.6	5.0	4.8	425	438	-13	2337.9	2305.4	32.5
<b>October</b>	85.0	89.7	5.0	4.9	425	439	-14	2337.9	2233.5	104.4
<b>November</b>	75.0	85.8	4.0	3.7	300	320	-20	1650.3	1715.1	-64.8
<b>December</b>	75.0	80.3	3.0	3.1	225	245	-20	1237.7	1283.8	-46.0
<b>January</b>	75.0	80.3	3.0	3.1	225	245	-20	1237.7	1318.7	-80.9
<b>February</b>	75.0	85.8	4.0	3.7	300	320	-20	1650.3	1965.2	-314.9
<b>March</b>	85.0	89.7	5.0	4.8	425	433	-8	2337.9	2154.2	183.7
<b>April</b>	85.0	90.6	5.0	4.8	425	438	-12	2337.9	2285.2	52.7
<b>Total</b>					5090	5289	-199	28000.0	27908.4	91.6

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