

**Week 7 Writing Assignment: Firehouse Subs IMC Campaign Report**

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IMC 410: Introduction to Integrated Marketing Communications

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October 8, 2025

## **Executive Summary**

This integrated marketing communications plan presents a bold, purpose-driven strategy for Firehouse Subs designed to elevate brand awareness, increase consumer loyalty, and expand the impact of the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation. With a \$20 million media budget, this campaign will leverage the brand's identity—rooted in hearty subs and philanthropic support—to connect with young adults through digital storytelling, relevant partnerships, and interactive experiences that highlight Firehouse Subs' commitment to flavor and fellowship. The campaign's objectives focus on growing brand awareness amongst men aged 18 to 34, increasing Firehouse Subs Rewards membership, and encouraging donations to the Foundation. Through a strategic blend of earned, owned, and paid media methods, this campaign is designed to strengthen Firehouse Subs' presence in the quick-service restaurant space both domestically and internationally. By implementing an omnichannel approach, the plan promises consistency across all brand media. This plan aims to position Firehouse Subs as a leader in cause-driven marketing by demonstrating that community and customer service can work together to allow brands to thrive. Through this consistent and compelling campaign of integrated marketing communication, Firehouse Subs will have leverage to strengthen its market position and establish loyalty and advocacy with new and returning customers.

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## **Background Research and SWOT**

### **Brand Origins and History**

Firehouse Subs was founded in 1994 in Jacksonville, Florida, by brothers Chris and Robin Sorensen. With a family background in both entrepreneurship and civil service, and their own experience as firefighters, the Sorensens built the Firehouse Subs brand identity on a foundation of firehouse culture from the beginning (*Firehouse Subs*, 2025). The restaurant's decor, menu naming conventions, and storytelling all draw from this central theme. Unlike competitors focused on freshness, speed, or simplicity, the Sorensens positioned Firehouse Subs around a culture of service, heroism, and community. This foundation creates a story and brand that carries clearly over into marketing and philanthropy. More than 30 years after its founding, Firehouse Subs has more than 1,300 restaurants across North America (*Ignite Your Future | Firehouse Subs Franchise Opportunities*, 2025). In 2023, Firehouse Subs opened its first overseas location in Zurich, Switzerland (Simpson, 2023). It also has stores in Albania, Mexico, and the United Arab Emirates. There are plans to open hundreds more in Australia, Brazil, and additional locations in Mexico over the next decade (*Firehouse Subs® Accelerates Expansion in Mexico with Plans to Open 100 Restaurants*, 2025).

### **Key Differences and Features**

The biggest difference between Firehouse Subs and its competitors is its tie to first responders and its emphasis on philanthropy. Unlike other sandwich chains, Firehouse Subs' firefighting heritage is embedded in its brand identity and the experience it provides customers with. This connection is reinforced by the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation, founded in 2005 after the Sorensen brothers traveled to Mississippi in the wake of Hurricane Katrina to provide food for survivors and first responders. According to the Foundation's website, it has

granted over \$98 million since its creation to 6,914 public safety organizations across all 50 states and Puerto Rico. It provides funding to hometown heroes for a wide range of potential needs. Funding supports a wide range of first responder equipment needs, such as bulletproof vests, fire hoses, and all-terrain vehicles. The Foundation also assists with disaster relief, prevention education, and financial resources and education for individuals pursuing public safety careers (The Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation, n.d.-a). Compared to competitors like Subway, Jimmy John's, and Jersey Mike's, Firehouse Subs is especially unique in that its cause-driven initiatives through the Foundation are interwoven with the brand (*Photos & Videos* | *Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation*, 2025). A portion of each Firehouse Subs purchase goes to the Foundation.

Although Firehouse Subs is strongly engaged in its philanthropic efforts, it is primarily a sandwich brand. The important differences in food and experience include the use of steam-heated meats and cheeses, firehouse-themed menu names, generous portions, and a baker's dozen of unique hot sauces. Firehouse Subs uses steam to heat its meats and cheeses, which creates a softer texture and more robust flavor compared to cold or toasted subs. Sandwich names pay homage to the firehouse culture the brand is built upon, including the Hook & Ladder, Engineer, and Firehouse Hero. On its "Our Story" page, Firehouse emphasizes hearty portions, stating that it provides customers "a serving that's way over code" (*Firehouse Subs*, 2025). The brand also features 13 distinctive hot sauces for its customers to dress their subs in. These options set Firehouse Subs aside from competitors by delivering a premium experience that emphasizes both quality and flavor. This authenticity has been instrumental in establishing a distinct, memorable brand.

## Competitors

Firehouse Subs operates in a competitive quick-service restaurant environment, especially against other sandwich chains like Subway, Jersey Mike's, and Jimmy John's. Subway is the largest player in the quick-service sandwich category, with a competitive number of over 37,000 locations in over 100 countries worldwide as of June 2024 (World Population Review, 2024). The brand ranks as the fourth largest restaurant chain in the world by number of locations. With a brand built on quick service and fresh ingredients, Subway has established a massive global reputation. Subway built its reputation on freshness and customizability, offering an array of breads, proteins, veggies, and other toppings and subs that customers build completely custom. The brand is known for its subs, but also serves pizza, salads, and bowls at many locations. Despite its expansive worldwide presence, Subway dropped below 20,000 restaurants in the United States for the first time in two decades after hundreds of store closures in 2024 (Valinsky, 2025). Subway has faced backlash and legal scrutiny in recent years. For example, the company was involved in a class-action lawsuit in 2012 that alleged that some restaurants were serving footlongs that were noticeably shorter than advertisements suggested. This controversy continued until a settlement was approved in 2016 and the company agreed to ensure sandwiches were either six or twelve inches long. Against Firehouse Subs, Subway holds its own on menu flexibility and locations but falls behind on portion sizes and brand identity.

Jersey Mike's was founded on the Jersey Shore in 1956 and has established a strong East Coast reputation and cult following with over 3,000 U.S. locations, and it continues to expand steadily (Kelso, 2024). Each restaurant makes its subs to order and slices the meats and cheeses fresh in-store. Jersey Mike's is known for its characteristic "Mike's Way" preparation, which tops their sub with onions, lettuce, tomatoes, oregano, salt, and "The Juice," a blend of red wine

vinegar, olive oil, and vegetable oil. The brand prioritizes fresh presentation, signature options, and a down-to-earth experience. In comparison to Firehouse Subs, Jersey Mike's has a solid reputation for its consistency, fresh-sliced deli meats and cheeses, and a neighborly atmosphere, but Firehouse Subs has a stronger brand connection to service and a solid foundation in hot, steamed ingredients.

Jimmy John's brand identity is built on fresh sandwiches served as quickly as possible, with a slogan of "Freaky Fresh! Freaky Fast!" This is supported by the company's data-driven "Sandwich Delivery Zones" that keep the delivery radius small but ensure food is faster and fresher (*Jimmy Johns Launches National Campaign around "Freaky Fast" Delivery Strategy*, 2019). With 2,600 stores across 43 states, Jimmy John's stands out with delivery supremacy, citing 35% of sales coming from it (*Own a Jimmy John's*, n.d.). Until 2025, Jimmy John's only offered cold subs and a limited menu; in March 2025, the brand launched three new toasted sandwiches (Fink, 2025). Jimmy John's stands up to Firehouse Subs in speed and simplicity, whereas Firehouse Subs excels in taste, hot sandwiches, and atmosphere.

### **Current Marketing**

Firehouse Subs has strengthened its marketing communications by implementing creative promotions and responding to both negative and positive fan feedback. While Firehouse Subs has a recognizable brand identity, its overall brand awareness is lacking in comparison to key quick service competitors. A survey conducted by YouGov in 2025 found that Firehouse Subs ranked 62<sup>nd</sup> on its list of most popular dining brands, compared to Subway in 12<sup>th</sup>, Jersey Mikes in 34<sup>th</sup>, and Jimmy John's in 49<sup>th</sup> (YouGov, 2025). The brand's awareness is improving, but it remains less top-of-mind nationally than competitors. This frames an opportunity for future campaigns to prioritize increasing visibility.

In February 2025, Firehouse Subs ran a “Names of the Day” promotion in honor of the Super Bowl, where customers with certain famous first names from the NFL—such as Tom, Nick, and Peyton—could earn a Buy One Get One sandwich on February 9 with a Firehouse Subs Rewards account. This promotion responded to current events, tapping into the buzz surrounding the NFL prior to the Super Bowl. Later that month, the company ran another BOGO promotion on Valentine’s Day for a free medium sub with the purchase of the medium or large sub combo (Shreeves, 2025). Firehouse Subs also ran a similar promotion for a week in June 2025, sharing featured first names daily on its social channels. This time, it offered 50% off subs with purchase at one of 96 participating locations in Georgia (Fox 5 Atlanta Digital Team, 2025).

In response to the demand of unhappy customers, the brand relaunched its complimentary, 13-sauce Hot Sauce Bar in 2024 after a four-year hiatus following the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. This rollout came with a campaign of three television commercials, billboards, and digital advertisements. It was also characterized by in-store “I Brought It Back” plaques in honor of the fans who provided feedback and inspired its return.

In March 2025, Firehouse Subs partnered with Hot Ones, the celebrity interview series where guests eat hot wings that get progressively spicier. The collaboration released two limited-time variations of the classic Hook & Ladder. The Spicy Dill and milder Zesty Garlic flavors featured the standard toppings with the addition of a dill pickle soaked in Hot Ones’ Last Dab Reaper Edition sauce or garlic chips, mayo, and Hot Ones’ The Classic™ Garlic Fresno Hot Sauce respectively (*Firehouse Subs® and Hot Ones™ Turn up the Heat with Exclusive New Subs - and the Last Dab™ Dill Pickle*, 2025). Hot Ones has become increasingly popular, with short clips commonly featured on social platforms like Instagram and TikTok and memes made of celebrity reactions to spicy wings.



Firehouse Subs has active social media accounts and uses them strategically to promote current, socially relevant campaigns while amplifying limited-time promotions and offers. These timely, responsive moves demonstrate the brand’s ability to adapt to feedback and demand and develop its marketing to remain culturally relevant and engaging.

### SWOT Analysis

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Strengths</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Distinct brand identity</li> <li>● Unique menu items</li> <li>● Philanthropic foundation</li> <li>● Creative marketing and engagement</li> <li>● Global expansion</li> </ul> | <b>Weaknesses</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of health-conscious options</li> <li>● Lower global presence</li> <li>● Premium pricing</li> <li>● Lower brand awareness</li> </ul> |
| <b>Opportunities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Healthier/plant-based options</li> <li>● Increased digital/social engagement</li> <li>● Strategic collaborations</li> <li>● International expansion</li> </ul>           | <b>Threats</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Strong QSR competition</li> <li>● Health trends</li> <li>● Economic decline</li> </ul>  |

### Target Audience, Objectives, and Strategies

#### Target Audience

Based on background research of Firehouse Subs, its primary target audience is young adults—particularly men—aged 18-34. 56% of quick-service restaurant (QSR) customers that visit at least 15 times monthly are male; customers who visit at least five times a month are 53% male. The age range that frequents QSRs the most is 25-34 years old. Additionally, almost 60% of QSR frequenters live in an urban area (Kelso, 2024). However, recent over-index reports indicate that Firehouse Subs is valued the most by adults living in rural areas (The Harris Poll, 2024). This suggests that while the brand has enough of a position to target young urban men, it should not abandon marketing to rural consumers. Notably, customers making under \$50,000 annually only visit QSRs about once monthly, likely due to rising menu prices (Kelso, 2024).

This indicates a weak spot in some of the target market, but also an opportunity for Firehouse Subs to secure more budget-conscious consumers through value-oriented marketing. Due to the heartiness of Firehouse Subs' sandwiches, the target audience is unlikely to be overly health-conscious. For this campaign, the target audience will be white men aged 18-34 with an income between \$50,000 and \$100,000 annually living in or near a metropolitan area. This group is likely to be looking for a cost-effective, quick meal that is filling but not overindulgent.

### **Audience Persona**

Ethan Thompson is a white male who is 29 years old living in Atlanta, Georgia, but is originally from a rural area in the state. He holds a master's degree in public policy from the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech) and works as a policy analyst for a regional nonprofit. He makes around \$60,000 annually and does not frequently see substantial raises. Ethan still drives the car he got in high school, which is a 2005 Honda Civic. In his free time, Ethan takes one vacation under a week in duration annually. When he travels, he opts for a hotel that combines budget with the most walkable location, or one with reliable public transport, so he can get around the area without using a personal vehicle often. As the paternal grandson and nephew of retired firefighters, Ethan values public service and support for his community. He is socially conscious and frequents brands that champion clear, meaningful causes and, as a result, is willing to pay more for their products. Ethan works unpredictable hours at the nonprofit, so an affordable quick-service meal appeals to him the most; he looks for hearty meals to tide him over for longer periods of time, possibly even providing leftovers.

Ethan enjoys attending local sports events, particularly the Atlanta Falcons and Atlanta United. He is a fan of soccer and football, but also uniquely connects to the teams through their designated "Row of Honor" at the shared Mercedes-Benz Stadium, wherein five lower-level

seats are reserved at each home game for members of the Atlanta police and fire departments (Atlanta United Communications, 2017). Due to their strong philanthropic connection and the existence of a location on the Georgia Tech campus, Ethan has started to frequent Firehouse Subs. Knowing that he can receive a meal (or two)—the profits of which support a good cause—Ethan is willing to shell out more on Firehouse Subs in comparison to competing submarine sandwich shops. In June 2025, Ethan watched the Firehouse Subs social channels daily in hopes of securing half off his regular order, the Hook and Ladder.

### **Campaign Objectives**

- Increase brand awareness among young men aged 18-34 by 15% in the next six months, measured by social media impressions and post engagement rate.
- Grow Firehouse Subs Rewards members aged 18-34 by 15% in the next year, measured through monthly registration reports.
- Increase donations to the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation by 10% in the next year, evaluated by an annual report of contribution totals.
- Generate 10% more sales of Limited-Time Offers by partnering with culturally relevant entities, measured by comparison of LTO sales before, during, and after collaboration.
- Increase brand awareness in international markets with Firehouse Subs currently open or in progress by 20% over 18 months, evaluated through international social media reach and brand recognition surveys.

### **Campaign Strategies**

- Leverage collaborations to position Firehouse Subs as a brand that can connect with young adults through culturally relevant social media content and limited time offers.

- Integrate cause-driven messaging to connect awareness of purchase support for the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation.
- Use storytelling to further connect Firehouse Subs with its firefighter heritage and create moving, shareable content.
- Highlight the Firehouse Subs Rewards program through social media and digital content to increase program awareness among young adults looking to save on their purchases.
- Extend promotions like “Name of the Day” internationally.

### Integrated Creative Strategy and Creative Brief

#### Integrated Creative Strategy Statement



#### Rejected Statements

- “Every Firehouse Subs purchase provides comfort for you and impact for the community.”

- “When you choose Firehouse Subs, you aren’t just getting a hearty meal—you’re making an impact.”
- “Firehouse Subs isn’t just a sandwich shop—it’s a place where good food and purpose come together.”

### **Final Creative Strategy Statement**

- “Meals from Firehouse Subs offer value, flavor, and a connection to a larger purpose.”

### **Creative Brief**

Client: Firehouse Subs

Type: Social Media Ad (1080 x 1350px)

Pages: 1

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#### **Why are we advertising?**

To increase brand awareness, drive in-store and online sales, and strengthen social media engagement amongst men aged 18-34. To highlight Firehouse Subs’ bold flavors, limited time offers (LTOs), and community involvement and impact. While the campaign emphasizes convenience, it stands out by highlighting the brand’s strengths—hearty, made-to-order steamed subs with a clear connection to a philanthropic purpose.

#### **Whom are we talking to?**

Young men who eat lunch or grab quick meals at school, work, or while completing other activities. They want a flavorful, filling meal that is convenient and like to support a good cause with their purchases.

#### **What do they currently think?**

Quick-service restaurant sandwiches are convenient but bland and often cold. Firehouse Subs is tasty, but many see it as not designed to be an on-the-go meal. Firehouse Subs does not serve any higher purpose.

#### **What would we like them to think?**

Firehouse Subs is ideal for a quick, warm, and filling meal that can be enjoyed at all times. Every sub is made fresh with steamed meats and cheeses, and it supports a meaningful cause.

#### **What is the single most persuasive idea we can convey?**

Firehouse Subs provides quick, hearty meals that satisfy hunger and directly support first responders.

#### **Why should they believe it?**

Firehouse Subs serves hot, made-to-order (MTO) sandwiches with fresh and steamed ingredients. A portion of each purchase helps to support hometown heroes through the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation, and LTOs keep the menu exciting. This reinforces Firehouse Subs' emphasis on service.

**Are there any creative guidelines?**

Full-size, Instagram and Facebook-compatible social media ad. Use Firehouse Subs brand colors (red, yellow, black, white). Visually feature the fresh, steamed ingredients in the subs. Create an approachable and community-focused tone that communicates value, convenience, and purpose. Include a clear call-to-action.

**Creative Strategy Execution (Mockup)**



## **Paid Media Plan**

### **Measurable Paid Media Objectives**

- Increase foot traffic in participating locations by 10% within 12 months, tracked through geo-targeted digital ads, mobile location tracking, and QR code scanning.
- Achieve 65% reach of men aged 18-34 in target urban and key rural areas through paid media channels over 12 months.
- Boost Firehouse Subs purchases by 10% amongst men aged 18-34 employed in public service over six months.
- Increase Firehouse Subs Rewards sign-ups by 20% through paid social, CTV, out-of-home, and influencer media placements over 12 months.
- Increase social media engagement by 30% amongst men aged 18-34 over 12 months through brand and influencer partnerships.
- Boost international brand awareness of Firehouse Subs by 15% in markets where the brand has recently launched in or plans to through CTV, out-of-home, and digital advertising over 12 months.
- Increase engagement with cause-related advertising by eight percent in six months, measured by ad clicks, view time and video completions, and social engagement.
- Boost purchases of limited-time offers (LTOs) during promotions by 15% through digital ads and relevant partnerships, measured by click-throughs leading to online ordering and ad-driven engagement.
- Increase purchases during football season (September-February) by 20%, measured through engagement and purchase spikes on game days versus baseline days.

## Plan for Paid Media Execution

### Out-of-Home (OOH) – 20% of media spend

- Execution:
  - Digital billboards with rotating LTOs along highways within 3-10 miles of a Firehouse Subs location. Rotating cause, rewards, seasonal, and sports ads.
  - Transit ads (bus shelter posters, bus wraps) on routes near universities, fire/police stations, and sports venues. Each ad should feature a QR code linking to online ordering or Firehouse Rewards sign-ups. Focuses on seasonal/rewards-based marketing.
- Tools/Media Buy: Digital/static billboards and transit advertisement space purchased through OOH vendors such as Lamar, Outfront Media, and Clear Channel Outdoor (JCDecaux, 2025).
- Timing: Year-round with heavier rotation around football season. Heightened promotion of convenience messaging during school finals seasons (December, April-May).
- Justification: There are hundreds of thousands of daily commuters in every major metropolitan area. Outdoor advertising is unavoidable and easily viewed by the populations of these areas. Additionally, OOH advertising comes at a lower cost per impression (ATA Outdoor Advertising, 2021).

### Radio – 10% of media spend

- Execution:
  - :30 spots during commuting hours on ESPN and local sports stations and on streaming services targeted to men who listen to sports-related media (i.e., podcasts)



- :15 ads via streaming and radio services promoting that a portion of each purchase goes to the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation (FSPSF), specifically addressing first responders.
- :15 ads via streaming and radio promoting seasonal/campaign-driven LTO promotions.
- Tools/Media Buy:
  - Local AM/FM purchases through regional stations and iHeartMedia (*Advertising | IHeartMedia*, n.d.).
  - Streaming ad purchases through Spotify/Apple Music/etc.
- Timing: September through April, with increased frequency during October-February.
- Justification: Radio reaches 90% of people 12 and older. Channels allow advertisers to target niche target audiences (Radio Advertising Bureau, 2025). Most major American sports seasons occur fully or partially during this seven-month period. An opinion piece based on this ranks October, March, and February as the top three months for sports-watchers (Sucu, 2018). Many sports teams (such as the Atlanta Falcons and Atlanta United) directly support public servants, which likely trickles down to the fans (Atlanta United Communications, 2017).

#### Connected TV (CTV) and Streaming – 25% of media spend

- Execution:
  - :30 storytelling spots for Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation, emphasizing how food purchases benefit the foundation. Run on Hulu, YouTube TV, ESPN+, etc.

- :30 video advertisements showcasing seasonal/limited-time subs and the rewards program.
- Geo-targeted football-related advertisements to regions with heavy NFL/NCAA attendance and viewership.
- Video advertisements geo-targeted to new international markets.
- Tools/Media Buy:
  - Television streaming service ad platforms
  - CTV platforms such as MNTN (The MNTN Team, 2022).
- Timing: Year-round, with increased promotional emphasis during December to February during NFL playoffs. Strong pushes during new LTO launches.
- Justification: Marketers can reach specific audiences based on viewing habits, demographics, lifestyle, etc. Users of CTV content are less likely to skip advertisements compared to other digital platforms, and “ad-supported tiers account for 46% of subscriptions across major SVOD platforms,” (The MNTN Team, 2022).

#### Paid Social Media – 25% of media spend

- Execution:
  - Instagram/TikTok ads promoting limited-time and seasonal offers with clear CTAs (i.e., “Swipe up to order now!”)
  - Instagram Stories, static post, and Reels/TikTok in-feed ads promoting Firehouse Subs Rewards with clear CTAs (i.e., “20% off first purchase with sign-up!”).

- Meta Ads (Facebook/Instagram) promoting cause marketing with direct links to a custom Foundation landing page. Engagement tracked through shares, saves, and clicks.
- Tools/Media Buy: Meta/TikTok Ads Managers.
- Timing: Year-round for rewards advertising, seasonal/sports-related promotions corresponding with campaign duration. Spikes in convenience promotions during finals seasons. Boost cause marketing during Public Service Recognition Week (first week of May) (National Archives, 2017).
- Justification: 67% of Gen Z uses Instagram as a search engine, and 62% of the 18-24 demographic use TikTok, both of which rank higher than Google (Koetsier, 2024). As of August 2025, the 18-34 age range accounted for 41.9% of Facebook users in the United States (NapoleonCat, 2025).

#### Influencer Marketing – 15% of media spend

- Execution:
  - NIL partnership with collegiate athletes to showcase Firehouse Subs as an ideal post-game meal.
  - Lifestyle microinfluencers in male-dominated niches (gaming, fitness, etc.) creating Instagram/TikTok feed posts promoting Firehouse Subs' premium taste and convenience.
  - International influencers promoting Firehouse Subs in its new locations.
- Tools/Media Buy:
  - NIL marketplaces
  - Influencer agencies

- Timing:
  - NIL partnerships by season (i.e., football contract Aug.-Dec., basketball contract Nov.-March, etc.).
  - Influencer partnerships rotate quarterly.
- Justification: NIL deals with collegiate athletes connect to and build rapport with younger audiences. NIL is a growing marketing tactic, especially in reaching young male consumers (Dudash, 2024). 75% of consumers utilize social media to inform purchases, and 69% of consumers confidently trust influencer recommendations (Digital Marketing Institute, 2025).

### **Earned Media Plan**

#### **Measurable Earned Media Objectives**

- Increase media coverage of the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation and its initiatives by 20% over 12 months, tracked by press mentions and earned media impressions. This is measured against a baseline of 15 Foundation mentions per quarter.
- Secure at least 15 placements in food, lifestyle, and sports media/outlets mentioning Firehouse Subs LTO initiatives and collaborations over 12 months.
- Obtain four influencer or celebrity unpaid mentions/endorsements related to Firehouse Subs or the Foundation over 12 months.
- Increase social sharing of Firehouse Subs seasonal campaigns by 20% over 12 months, measured through engagement analytics. As of 2019, 79% of consumers said user-generated content impacts their buying decisions, compared to eight percent who relied on influencer content (DeGruttola, 2019). The baseline engagement rates for this metric

is based on the prior year of engagement analytics to accurately measure percentage growth.

### **Earned Media Tactics**

- Press Outreach
  - Develop and distribute press releases highlighting the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation initiatives and impact.
  - Pitch human-interest stories to local/regional/national outlets showing how donations directly impact first responders. Outlets with demonstrated human interest such as local outlets and NBC News' "Inspiring America" series will be prioritized.
- Influencer and Celebrity Engagement
  - Build a program where Firehouse Subs sends merchandise or first looks at LTOs to microinfluencers in lifestyle, food, and sports. Microinfluencers were selected for their higher engagement rates.
  - Create opportunities for influencers and local celebrities to attend Foundation events and fundraisers in order to promote organic content creation.
- Digital Campaign Amplification
  - Design campaigns around Foundation initiatives, LTOs, and seasonal promotions that encourage organic sharing (for example, Instagram story templates and TikTok challenges). These launches will correspond with key seasonally and brand-relevant occurrences, such as National Sandwich Day on November 3 or Public Service Recognition Week in May (National Institute of Food and Agriculture, 2022).

- Partner with community organizations, on-campus groups, and local sports teams to boost social sharing.

### **Owned Media Plan**

#### **Measurable Owned Media Objectives**

- Increase Firehouse Subs Rewards sign-ups among men aged 18-34 by 20% over 12 months, tracked through app and website analytics.
- Boost engagement on Firehouse Subs social media channels by 25% over six months, measured by platform analytics. This goal is based on January 2025 engagement rate averages in the dining and hospitality industry being 3.1% on Instagram, two percent on X, and 1.3% on Facebook and TikTok (Mikolajczyk & Hu, 2025).
- Increase international awareness through 10,000 unique visits to localized Firehouse Subs web pages or social channels over nine months. Localization of owned media is shown to substantially increase engagement and awareness, including speaking to customers in their own language (Kelly, 2012).
- Drive 15% more traffic to Firehouse Subs and Foundation landing pages over 18 months, tracked through Google Analytics.

#### **Owned Media Tactics**

- Rewards-Focused
  - Create a monthly content series showcasing the benefits of Firehouse Subs Rewards, including exclusive deals and early seasonal promotion access. Possible executions include email newsletters or short-form videos. Success measured via website and app analytics. This tactic will roll out alongside LTOs when applicable.

- Interactive Seasonal Campaigns
  - Launch owned social media campaigns quarterly or in line with seasonal content to boost engagement on Firehouse Subs social channels. Success measured via native platform analytics, campaign-driven traffic to the website/app, and use of relevant hashtags. For example, fall campaigns will tie into football season, whereas late fall-into-winter campaigns will correspond with the holidays.
- International Content
  - Develop region-specific landing pages featuring culturally relevant messaging and brand storytelling to build an international image for Firehouse Subs. Success measured through unique website visits and conversions related to LTO promotions and Rewards sign-ups. Localized visuals will be tailored to cultural nuances in individual markets.
- Foundation Storytelling
  - Share monthly stories via longer short-form videos on social media channels highlighting Firehouse Subs' firefighting heritage and the Foundation's real-world impact. Success measured through page and video views, click-throughs to donation pages, and completed donations. These videos should follow a consistent posting schedule to maintain routine.

### **IMC Measurement and Evaluation**

This team will evaluate this campaign through both qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure a comprehensive understanding of its impact. Brand awareness will be measured through digital analytics such as social media impressions, engagement rates, and reach metrics in order to assess whether or not the campaign meets its objective of increasing awareness

amongst men aged 18 to 34. This team will conduct pre- and post-campaign surveys to gauge these changes in brand recognition and perception in both domestic and international markets. Firehouse Subs Rewards membership growth will be assessed by monitoring new sign-ups and active current and new users throughout the duration of the campaign. The data collected will help determine if the promotional strategies effectively alter program participation and repeat visitors. Sales data and donation metrics are the key indicators of the success of the campaign's limited-time offers (LTOs) and encouragement of contributions to the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation. Qualitative data gathered from social media monitoring and customer feedback will provide insight into messaging effectiveness and suggest areas for improvement. Altogether, these methods will provide an exhaustive evaluation of how the campaign performs across awareness, loyalty, and engagement metrics to ensure value is delivered across all objectives.

### **Conclusion**

Integrated marketing communications aligns brand messaging across all channels to deliver a cohesive, resonant, and purpose-driven message. This campaign achieves that by combining storytelling, community engagement, and digital content to position Firehouse Subs as a leader in the quick-service restaurant industry and a champion of philanthropy. Central to this campaign is preserving the connection between the Firehouse Subs brand and its efforts through the Public Safety Foundation. This campaign's strategy will emphasize how every purchase supports the Foundation and showcase real stories how these contributions directly benefit hometown heroes. Focused targeting of rural communities and men aged 18 to 34 allows Firehouse Subs to establish multiple touchpoints and deliver relevant content to a wider target audience. Consistent messaging focused on both quality and impact will help build brand loyalty



and awareness while advancing the Firehouse Subs mission-driven purpose. Challenges such as international and regional differences will be addressed through localized strategies that adapt visuals and messaging while aligning with the overall Firehouse Subs brand identity. Through highlighting Firehouse Subs' excellence in flavor, service, and cultural relevance, this campaign aims to strengthen the brand's emotional significance and tie it into the heartiness of a Firehouse Subs sandwich. Ultimately, this campaign will impact Firehouse Subs by reestablishing its position in its market as a destination for convenient, flavorful, and filling meals, but also as a role model for cause-driven marketing.

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