

## **Subway and its Powerful Presence in Social Media**

Evan Bodi

### **COMPANY OVERVIEW:**

Doctor's Association Inc. owns Subway, which was founded in 1965 by Fred DeLuca and is currently the world's largest submarine sandwich company and one of the biggest fast-food chains in the world ("Company Summary," n.d.). The company has experienced rapid growth over the past several years, which included record-breaking growth in 2013 due to the company's ability to customize its restaurants to fit the varying floor plans of different locations (PR, N, 2014). The company plans to open an additional 3,000 new locations across the globe in 2014 (PR, N.). In the United States, Doctor's Association continues to thrive by opening new shops in non-traditional locations like the Casino Industry. Doctor's Association Inc. currently operates its restaurants in 29 casino locations and plans to add more Casino locations over the next few years ("Subway looks," 2014). In 2013, Doctor's Association Inc. signed a franchise deal with Sodexo to allow its restaurants to deliver healthy sandwich options in cafeterias across the United States ("Subway plans," 2013).

Outside of the United States, Europe is Doctor's Association Inc.'s fastest-growing market. The company has annually opened up 500 new Subway stores across Europe over the past several years (Savage, 2013). Furthermore, the sandwich maker plans to open an additional 800 to 1,000 new locations across Europe in 2014 (Savage, 2013). These plans also include new openings of 200 and 100 stores in the countries of Russia and France, respectively (Savage). In order to manage its robust European growth, Doctor's Association Inc. appointed Greg Madigan as the company's new development manager for the United Kingdom and Ireland markets ("Subway's Management," 2014). However, despite its successes in globalizing its business,

Doctor's Association Inc. still struggles to expand in markets such as Italy, Denmark and Belgium due to complications in establishing profitable franchises that fuel further growth of the Subway brand ("Subway Plans," 2013). In February 2014, Subway introduced its Flatizza flatbread pizza offerings to the company's menu ("Subway introduces," 2014).

### **SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS:**

Subway's advertisement campaign highlights the features, advantages and benefits of its products. The company makes a strong effort to emphasize freshness, tastefulness, healthiness and value in its ads as the main features of its submarine sandwiches. As a result, the advantages of eating Subway subs include taste satisfaction, affordability, convenience and their ability to support a healthy lifestyle. The benefits of Subway's food offerings include their ability to help people stay fit and enjoy their meals no matter what task individuals are trying to accomplish in their own lives. These significant attributes are communicated to the customer due to Subway's ability to describe the quality of ingredients in its ads campaigns while displaying how active and healthy its customers can be no matter what he or she needs to accomplish in his or her life.

Subway offers a wide variety of subs, salads, breakfast items, flatbread pizzas, salads and kid's menu items. Its new Simple Six menu includes six different types of subs that come with a bag of chips and a 21-ounce fountain drink that are available every day for \$6 ("Menu All," n.d.). This menu gives the customers several affordable options and benefits those who prefer having the same sandwiches available on a consistent basis. Its Fresh Fit Choices options are subs that are low in fat, made with fresh vegetables and are American Heart Association Certified ("Menu All"). Subway's breakfast menu allows its customers to create a breakfast sandwich with his or her favorite toppings, features bacon in all of the sandwiches, and provides a variety of egg flatbread sandwich wraps ("Menu All"). Subway's Flatizza's are flatbread pizzas

that are crispy thin and come in a variety of flavors for meat and veggie lovers (“Menu All”). These offerings cater to pizza lovers and offer the benefit of serving as a meal or a snack at anytime of the day (“Menu All”). Subway also offers a wide range of salads that are chopped and can be customized with different meats and vegetables. The company’s salads are also American Heart Association certified (“Menu All”).

There are several demographic characteristics that describe the individual who is a frequent consumer at a Subway restaurant. Studies show that gender is a differentiator, as males over the age of 18 years old are more likely to order a sandwich or sub at a fast-food restaurant (62%) than females in the same age range (56%) (Mintel, 2014). Age is also relevant, as 73% of adults 18-24 years old are likely to visit a fast-food restaurant to order a sandwich (Mintel). This is a significantly higher percentage than other age ranges, including a 68% probability for individuals aged 25-34 years old, a probability of 61% for 35-44 year-olds, and a 56% probability for 45-54 year-olds (Mintel). Interestingly, income is also correlated to the sandwich purchasing behavior of individuals. Studies show that adults with income between 50,000-74,900 were the most likely income bracket to visit a fast-food restaurant like Subway that serves subs and sandwiches at 62% (Mintel, 2014). Individuals who make 75,000-99,999 were 61% likely to buy a sandwich from a fast-food restaurant. However, when individuals make less than 50,000 or more than 100,000, the percentages of sandwich buyers drop to 58% and 55%, respectively (Mintel).

In conclusion, the prime prospects in the United States that Subway should be marketing to are young males between the ages of 18-24 years old and those who are considered to be middle-class in the income bracket of 50K to 100K, and individuals who are likely to buy sandwiches and subs for their taste and health benefits.

With more than 43,000 locations across the globe, Subway has evolved to command a dominating global presence in various international markets (“Subway History,” n.d.). Subway achieves this success by implementing the dual adaptation method in various markets, which involves tailoring its promotional strategies and product offerings to the local language and culture (Richmond, 2010). Subway has successfully implemented this strategy in Japan, as the company offers products such as the Shrimp Melt and Sausage Roll with Cheese in addition to several sandwiches considered to be American classics (“Japan Subway,” n.d.). Subway also adjusts its promotional strategies to the Japanese culture with Facebook posts promoting women’s projects in agriculture and preserving the agriculture of Japan (“Subway Japan”). The saying, “everyone’s ideas are jammed,” is in a Japanese Subway ad and is an example of Japanese jargon. This is an expression that would not make sense in the United States due to the differences between the two languages.

The dual adaptation strategy also applies in the Brazilian market, as the Subway Brazil website features ads with bright and colorful backgrounds. Furthermore, the Brazilian Twitter page puts an emphasis on the company’s product offerings as opposed to local projects (“Subway Brazil,” n.d.). The headline for one of the Brazilian advertisements, “would only be better if I didn’t have class or work today,” is a reference to Brazil’s more laid-back and family-oriented culture.

The promotional and product differences in the Japanese and Brazilian markets are in stark contrast to the emphasis Subway ads put on sports and celebrities when promoting its products in the United States. The lack of pro-football, pro-baseball, and Taylor Swift references are clear indications of Subway’s savvy understanding of the varying cultures between international markets and the necessity for integrating the dual adaptation strategy into its

business plan. The company's ability to address the needs of foreign markets, while maintaining its identity across the globe, has allowed Subway to score high engagement scores on social media (Badenhausen, 2013). All in all, Subway continues to thrive in the global environment due to its ability to correctly interpret differences in culture and language between international markets and continues to prosper on an international level.

### **COMPETITOR ANALYSIS:**

Subway competes with several different submarine sandwich-making companies in the United States. Its primary American competition includes Jimmy John's, Potbelly and Quiznos (Hoovers, 2014). However, despite recently filing for bankruptcy, Quiznos is still Subway's most formidable competitor due to its menu offerings that equally match Subway in both category and variety. Quiznos' menu includes several varieties of steak, deli, chicken and turkey subs in addition to the option for customers to customize his or her sandwich ("Quiznos Lunch," n.d.). Furthermore, beyond featuring grilled flatbreads, salads and wraps, Quiznos has a comprehensive breakfast menu and kids menu ("Quiznos Lunch"). Likewise, Subway and Quiznos are two of the few fast-food restaurants that offer breakfast sandwiches and lunch sandwiches that consist of healthy ingredients that can be purchased at the same time (Mintel, 2013). Unlike Jimmy John's and Potbelly, Quiznos also has a global presence with franchises in over 30 different countries and territories ("Locations Quiznos," n.d.). Despite being a much smaller company in terms of locations and overall sales, Quiznos' product offerings match Subway's in terms of breadth and depth throughout their menu and both provide similar services that are likely to be sought after by consumers of similar demographics.

### **CREATIVE STRATEGY:**

While Subway is world-renowned for its excellent submarine sandwiches and its ability to make them as equally flavorful as they are nutritious, the Subway marketing team is equally successful at marketing its products. Subway communicates the features, advantages, and benefits of its product lineup through creative advertisements. Subway ads typically feature its submarine sandwiches centered in the middle of the advertisement with the headline either centered at the top or in the top left or bottom right corner. Subway's logo is not usually embedded in a prominent position of an ad, but nonetheless shows up in the ad in subtle ways. Almost every Subway ad shows Subway sandwiches sitting on Subway food wrap paper that includes the Subway logo alongside a soda cup with the Subway logo that includes the company's byline "Eat Fresh."

Beyond the Subway byline "Eat Fresh," many of its ads include catchy headlines that cover the spectrum in terms of emotion. Some headlines are action-based ("feed your belly, feed your lifestyle") while others are humor-based ("need a ham with that?"), empathy-based ("recharge from your all-nighter with a steak, egg & cheese"), promotion-based ("get your hands on an official Star Wars rebels kiosk bag & trading cards with a Subway FRESH FIT for kids meal"), love-based ("the couple that subs together stays together") and psychographic-based ("winning game day starts with a Footlong"). The same trend of theme variation exists in the sub-headlines of Subway ads, as humor is sometimes used ("knowing where your friends want to eat for lunch- no words necessary") and informative sub-headlines are featured in other ads ("in honor of our fans being the best, we're saying thanks with a \$2 6 inch Meatball Marinara or Cold Cut Combo"). These headlines and sub-headlines often encourage the company's customer base to take action and purchase a sub that is not always offered at a low price. Subway ads very

rarely include extensive amplification, as the company chooses to allow the graphics, headlines, and sub-headlines to communicate minimal product details in many of its social media ads.

The graphics included in Subway ads vary based on the theme and purpose of the ad. Subway ads that are introducing a new product or concept usually include more white space in the background, which is evident in the Simple Six ad campaign in November and the Holiday Customer Appreciation ad campaign during December. The Subway ads that are emphasizing the ingredients of the sandwich often feature a close-up shot of the sandwich. An excellent example of this strategy includes the Pastrami sandwich ad that shows the fully cooked pastrami, pickles, mustard and cheese on a sub roll. The submarine sandwich maker often includes green grass backgrounds in its Fresh Fit sandwich ads in the warmer weather months to inspire a healthy lifestyle. An example of a healthy lifestyle ad is the “feed your belly, feed your lifestyle” ad that shows a Subway sandwich being held up in front of a grass background.

Subway frequently displays everyday activities in its ads, such as a person typing on a laptop in an advertisement that is encouraging those who have to get to work early to pick up a flatbread for breakfast. Hash tags, such as #HAPPYLUNCH and #NationalSandwichDay, are also occasionally used in a Subway ad when the company is trying to associate its company as a solution for people who like to eat healthy sandwiches for lunch. Its ads usually feature fonts in green and yellow colors. The color green promotes feelings of tranquility, health and freshness and the color yellow is associated with emotions such as youth, positive feelings, and appetite (Clow & Baack, 2004). These feelings are directly correlated to the company’s byline “Eat Fresh” and assist Subway in keeping its ads competent in terms of its acceptability, uniqueness, and timelessness.

While Subway has the ability to be creative and generate ads with different themes that feature different products, Subway consistently maintains the message that its subs include fresh ingredients, assist people in powering through everyday tasks involving both work and play, and that its subs assist people in keeping fit and promoting a healthy lifestyle. The objectives of the company's "Customer Appreciation" advertisement campaign include improving brand or product reputation and generating sales leads. These objectives are accomplished through the company offering its Cold Cut Combo and Meatball Marinara Subs for only \$2 and stating its appreciation for its customers. Generating sales leads is the main objective in its Simple Six Menu campaign, as the company encourages its customers to visit its locations by consistently highlighting selected sandwiches that are at a low price and are available on a consistent basis. The company's intentions of improving its brand or product reputation are evident in the advertisement campaigns that feature Jared Fogle, the company's infamous spokesperson, and his maintained weight-loss success story due to eating Subway sandwiches. Subway accomplishes its objective of improving perceived product quality through its "Get Your Veggie On" campaign that highlights the quality and freshness of the vegetables the company uses in its products. Subway satisfies its goal of increasing brand awareness through its ad campaigns featuring celebrities Robert Griffin III, Mike Trout and Taylor Swift, as one Subway ad featuring Taylor Swift on Twitter generated 177 re-tweets. In short, Subway has several objectives for its overall ad campaign and is successful at choosing to highlight each objective with different types of ad campaigns that allow the customer to continuously learn new information about the company.

Subway covers the spectrum in terms of creating advertisements that feature different execution styles. Its most frequent execution styles, including slice of life and lifestyle, are



prominent in Subway ads that convey the Subway sandwich as a part of a person's everyday life. These ads are the ones that relate the Subway sandwich to everyday tasks such as working early, staying up late, watching sports and staying active. The second most prominent execution style in Subway's ad campaign is mood or image, as the company does a good job in many ads depicting people looking happy and satisfied while gathered with friends as they eat a delicious sandwich. The Subway ads that demonstrate how the veggies and bread are kept fresh, as well as depict individuals in a Subway shop creating their own custom subs, are examples of ads executed with the demonstration style. The company's ads featuring Robert Griffin III are examples of the spokesperson execution style, while the ads starring Jared Fogle's weight loss success due to eating Subway sandwiches demonstrate the testimonial execution style. Humor is also an element of Subway's ad campaign, as the print ad with the headline "you are my sub-shine," as well as Subway's "Love Bacon" television commercial, invoke laughter and are successfully executed with the humor execution style.

Subway's main appeals in its ads include love, friendship, belonging, endurance and health. Subway is successful at communicating the themes of loving food and loving your health simultaneously. The Sweet Chicken Teriyaki ad from September featured the headline "Eating healthier just got sweeter," and the "We got double vision" ad shows two people eating together with different sandwiches. These ads are examples of how love, friendship, and health are expressed in Subway advertisements. Furthermore, the ad "how much do you love subs" featuring Jared Fogle and the celebration of National Sandwich Day with the sub-headline "subs and hugs" is an example of the belonging appeal due to the ad's ability to make everyone feel worthy of celebrating a product that is a known commodity in many people's lives.

All of Subway's ads communicate that its submarine sandwiches are tasty, affordable and promote a healthy lifestyle. The ads vary in terms of their objectives, yet its main message is consistent and the company is trying to appeal to the segment of the population that is health-conscious. This psychographic segment of the population is responding favorably to Subway, as the company is capturing 76% of health-oriented purchases made at major fast-food restaurants (CustomersDNA, n.d.). This is significantly positive for Subway, as 15% of individuals who eat at fast-food restaurants are making their purchases based on health decisions (CustomersDNA, n.d.).

Furthermore, studies demonstrate that people order sandwiches and subs for their health benefits over other benefits such as price point and customization (Intel, 2013). The company tries to identify with individuals who live an active lifestyle or are trying to become more active, as Subway features athletes in its ads to try to relate sports with healthy eating. Even as the weather gets colder, Subway still tries to market its products to the health-conscious. While the company tends to focus on associating its healthy sandwiches with physical activity and the outdoors in its September and early October ad campaigns, Subway references its healthy sandwiches to everyday activities such as early morning workdays, watching sporting events on the weekends, and recovering from all-nighters during the fall and winter months.

#### **MEDIA OBJECTIVES:**

Subway successfully delivers its creative advertisements to its consumers through both the traditional media vehicle of television, as well as Facebook and Twitter as its social media vehicles. Subway does not have a meaningful presence in print ads, as the only Subway advertisement that showed up in the national newspapers and magazines was an ad in the November 24, 2014 issue of *Sports Illustrated*. Its presence on YouTube is not significant, as

Subway's video posts of its television commercial's do not usually gather more than 100,000 hits. Therefore, this paper addresses the company's significant presence on television and social media.

Subway uses television as its main traditional media vehicle to connect with its customer base and raise awareness of its products. Subway's frequency in television ads is high, as many of Subway's commercial advertisements air nationally at least 1,000 times over a period of several months ("iSpot Subway," 2014). In total, Subway aired eight different commercials on television between September 1, 2014 and November 30, 2014 and six of the commercials achieved over 1,000 national airings ("iSpot Subway"). This is a significant amount of national commercial advertising over a short period of time that increases the company's likelihood of reaching its customer base. Furthermore, Subway's television advertisements are successful in terms of circulation. The company airs its ads during shows with consistently high ratings such as ESPN Primetime College Football, The Daily Show with John Stewart, and regular season National Football League games ("iSpot Subway," 2014). These shows rank high in ratings, as 31,166,000 viewers watched the Patriots/Packers football game on November 30, 2014. This was the highest rated pro-football game on CBS since the Patriots/Broncos game on December 28, 2011 ("Packers Patriots," 2014). Subway aired three ads during this game and was able to circulate its commercials to a high amount of viewers over a short period of time (2014).

As a result of Subway's efforts to increase frequency and promote the circulation of its ads, the company is successfully reaching its customers. Subway often airs its television commercials during primetime hours, which increases the likelihood that those who watch television will be exposed to a Subway ad. According to data collected in 2013, the estimated reach of television for males 18-34 years old who watch primetime television over a three-month

period is 97% (Media Dynamics, 2014). This means that out of 100 18-24 year-old males, 97 of them will have watched at least some television over a three month period. This is significant, as primetime television is aired at the time of day during which males aged 18-34, Subway's main target market, are likely seeing Subway's television commercials. Even more encouraging is the fact that 31% of males 18-34 who watch Primetime television will be reached in just a quarter of an hour and 64% will be reached after a day (Media Dynamics). The same trend holds true for women aged 18-34, which is another important target market for Subway. Companies who advertise during primetime television Monday through Friday reach 35% of this demographic after a quarter of an hour, 68% after a day and 99% after a three-month period (Media Dynamics). These numbers suggest that Subway's choice to air its ads frequently between 3 pm and 9 pm during primetime hours helps Subway increase its reach to its main target markets through television.

Subway is also extremely active in social media, as it uses Facebook and Twitter as its main social media vehicles to distribute its ads. Subway has a high rate of frequency, as the company typically posts on Facebook once every two to three days and tweets on Twitter three to four times a day. The company is fairly consistent in total Facebook posts, as Subway posted 16 ad-related posts in September, 11 in October, and nine in November ("Subway Facebook," 2014). Subway tweeted 94 times on Twitter in September, 106 times in October, and 86 times in November ("Subway Twitter," 2014). The company is getting significant circulation on Facebook, as the company's posts get shared roughly 200-500 times on Facebook and average 1,000-2,000 likes per post ("Subway Facebook"). The same trend holds true on Twitter, as the company's tweets usually get re-tweeted roughly 100 times ("Subway Twitter"). Its reach on Facebook is remarkably high, as Subway's Facebook page has roughly 27.6 million likes and 3.2

million visits (“Subway Facebook”). The company’s reach on Twitter is significant as well, as the company has 2.1 million followers (“Subway Twitter”).

As a result, Subway accurately identifies its target market and successfully reaches its most important customers. Subway minimizes waste, as its media campaign is not being prioritized to individuals outside the company’s target market. Furthermore, Subway meets desirable media criteria by showing a high amount of creativity and innovation in its media campaigns. The company’s media campaigns often have a low amount of message permanence, which increases the importance of Subway using media vehicles such as television and social media instead of print ads so its advertisements are not being reached to consumers when the campaigns have become outdated.

Subway’s media objectives involve both sales promotion and branding. The goal of sales promotions is to raise market share and elevate sales, while branding is when the company desires to focus on the positive image of the company as opposed to emphasizing its product offerings (Clow & Baack, 2004). Subway implements sales promotions that encourage its customers to come to Subway and purchase a sandwich.

Subway uses television and social media as the media vehicle to deliver many of its sales promotion ads. An example of Subway delivering a sales promotion advertisement on television is the television commercial “Customer Appreciation,” as the company encourages its customers to purchase its six-inch Meatball Marinara or Cold Cut sub at a discounted price during the month of December. The discounted price is a sales promotion that is designed to get Subway customers into Subway shops. Subway also uses social media as a media format to deliver sales promotion ads, but the company’s branding media objectives are more prominent on Facebook and Twitter. Several Subway posts on Twitter, such as the “Our Life Mantra” post that

communicates the message of “work out, eat fresh,” emphasize what the Subway brand stands for and how it has a positive effect in the lives of many people (“Subway Twitter,” 2014).

### **FINANCIAL OVERVIEW:**

Doctor’s Association Inc. continues to remain a financially prosperous company, as the company’s sales have maintained an upward trend over the last three years. Doctor’s Association Inc. ranked second in estimated foodservice sales in 2013 at \$12.22 billion behind only McDonald’s, which is a slight improvement from achieving \$12.12 billion in sales during 2012 (“Top 100,” 2014). The company’s sales performance in 2012 represented a significant gain from \$11.4 billion in sales from 2011 (“Top 100”). Subway’s closest competitor, Quiznos, had less impressive sales figures of 486 million (84<sup>th</sup> ranked) (“Top 100”). Doctor’s Associations Inc. is not a publicly traded company and is not required to publish detailed financial earnings. However, the sales estimates depict the continued financial growth of a famous submarine sandwich maker that is easily outpacing its top sandwich competitors financially in terms of total sales.

### **CONCLUSION:**

In conclusion, Subway continues to remain a significant presence in the fast-food industry. Subway continues to prosper due to its ability to continue to develop new submarine sandwiches and effectively advertise its product offerings to its main target market. The company has maintained product development by launching new campaigns and products, such as its Simple Six menu and flatbread pizzas, that deliver healthy products that satisfy the customer’s needs of convenient and healthy fast food. Subway continues to develop new markets by opening several thousand new Subway sandwich shop locations around the world on a yearly basis. The company is successful in market development due to its ability to apply the dual adaptation

strategy in foreign markets, such as Brazil and Japan, to adjust its product and promotional strategies to their respective differences in language and culture. Subway continues to penetrate the healthy fast-food sandwich market segment in the United States, as the psychographic statistics demonstrate that Subway is virtually unchallenged in terms of its ability to provide healthy sandwiches while maintaining the convenience of fast food. No other company successfully connects the idea of a healthy lifestyle with fast food that is convenient the way Subway does.

All of Subway's success is aided by an ambitious and savvy marketing campaign that delivers unique and creative advertisements through both traditional (television) and non-traditional (Facebook and Twitter) media vehicles. Its ads vary in terms of execution styles and appeals, yet they deliver the same consistent message the Subway brand is known for: its sandwiches are healthy, fresh and delicious. Subway sustains financial growth as a business due to maintaining upward sales trends. The company's high-quality sandwich products, combined with an innovative ad campaign that is effectively executed through various media vehicles, makes Subway a profoundly successful brand that should continue to prosper for many years to come.

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