



PANERA BREAD, Meredith South Residence Hall Digital Marketing Report

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Executive Summary

For our ad campaign, we partnered with Panera Bread at Meredith South Residence Hall to create awareness about their new menu. We conducted an A/B test on 2 elements by creating 4 ad variants using Google Ads. The goal was to test the impact of brand familiarity and visual sensory cues on content engagement. The campaign ran from April 19 to April 28, 2025, for 10 days. The report outlines our hypothesis, explores how behavioral theories influence consumer engagement, discusses the constraints we faced, and presents our recommendations based on the analysis.

Company

Panera Bread, Meredith South Residence Hall, Purdue University

Panera Bread at Purdue University's Meredith Hall offers a convenient dining option for students, faculty, and visitors. Known for its fresh, high-quality ingredients, it serves a variety of sandwiches, salads, soups, and bakery items. The location provides a cozy atmosphere with ample seating, making it a great spot for studying or socializing. It also features quick-service options using dining dollars, catering to the busy schedules of Purdue students. With a focus on healthy and flavorful meals, Panera at Meredith Hall is a popular choice for those looking for nutritious and satisfying dining on campus.

Campaign Goal

The goal of our campaigns is to promote and create awareness about Panera Bread's new menu at its Meredith Hall location near the Co-Rec. Through targeted advertising, we aim to highlight fresh, flavorful, and nutritious meal options available to students and faculty. The campaign will emphasize convenience, variety, and quality, encouraging the Purdue community to explore the updated offerings. By leveraging digital marketing, we aim to run a Google Ad campaign to optimize engagement and drive customer interest.

Target Segment

Panera Bread's target audience includes customers who are health-conscious, primarily young professionals. The target group's age range is 24-35 and has a higher-than-average income. Also, the brand is skewed toward women and Asian Americans in general. Based on the positioning of Panera Bread in the market, the target audience for our campaign will include the health-conscious students at Purdue who are regular visitors to the Co-rec. Regular students to Co-rec may look for quick bite options after their workout, and Panera Bread is just a 5-minute walk away from Co-rec. Also, usually fitness-oriented people have a routine and thus are more likely to become regular customers for Panera Bread.

Campaign Details

Campaign Timeline

Date	Task
March 31	Select an organization and obtain the necessary permissions
April 1 - April 10	Design ads for the campaign
April 10 – April 18	Obtain approval for the designed ads
April 19 - April 28	Run campaign
April 28 - April 30	Analyze data and prepare the report

Method

To assess the efficacy of visual design elements in digital marketing for Panera Bread in Meredith South Residence Hall, we used a 2x2 A/B testing methodology. Two independent variables—brand color (Panera green versus brown neutral) and vegetable-containing food (veggies versus no veggies) were tested. We could distinguish and measure the separate and combined effects of these two visual components on ad performance through this 2x2 factorial experiment. For an effective comparison, every other factor, including ad copy, design, targeting, and budget, was treated equally.

Type of Promotion and Targeting

Google Ads targeted users according to their location and areas of interest to promote the campaign. Users looking for convenient and healthful food on campus were targeted with specific keywords such as "Purdue," "Meredith Hall," "Panera," "sandwiches," "soup," and "healthy lunch." The target demographic, which included students, faculty, and visitors in and around the Purdue campus, was defined as those between the ages of 18 and 65. We chose a broader age bracket to test which age group engages more with our content.

Because of its powerful targeting capabilities and relevance to our audience's search behavior, Google Ads was chosen. The advertisements were scheduled to run from April 19 to April 28 for ten days.

To better understand the psychology underlying users' reactions, the campaign was grounded in consumer behavior theory:

1. Sensory Marketing: We will test how Panera's brand color and fresh ingredients drive customer engagement through visual appeal.
2. Mere Exposure Effect: We will use this theory to test if the brand-consistent elements in our visual ads (color and ingredients) increase click-through rates by reinforcing familiarity and positive associations.

Message

The goal of our Ad campaign was to promote Panera Bread's new menu at Meredith South; we created four ad versions to learn how changing small design factors influences user engagement. The fundamental objective in all four advertisements was to assess how different visual elements in the ad drive consumer engagement. Since Panera Bread is a common fast-food chain, the ads contain the Panera logo and the location tag "Meredith South" to underline the specific location targeted by the campaign.

To see how visual styling affects viewer response, we built four variations of the ad utilizing a 2x2 design, altering:

- **Background Color:** Panera's signature green vs. a neutral brown
- **Food Imagery:** With vegetables (e.g., leafy greens, tomatoes) vs. without vegetables (e.g., classic sandwich and soup)



Figure 1 Panera Bread Ad Variants Used for A/B Testing

The ads containing vegetables were used to highlight fresh ingredients like avocado, lettuce, and tomato. These images were made to appeal to health-conscious people who link colorful veggies with good health and quality. Additionally, the green-background version highlights Panera's brand identity and emphasizes freshness, while the brown-background version offers a more rustic and comfortable tone.

For the ads that did not include veggies, we chose standard Panera products such as grilled cheese and soup, providing a more basic and familiar food presentation. The green version maintained a clean, fresh appearance, whilst the brown-background edition emphasized warmth and comfort, evoking the concept of a full, satisfying lunch.

By keeping the primary message constant and only changing the background color and food style, we were able to isolate and examine how these visual factors influenced user perception and interaction with the advertisements.

Metrics

The metrics we used to measure each advertisement include:

- **Impressions:** The total number of times the ad was displayed to users.
- **Clicks:** The total number of clicks on the ad.
- **Click-Through Rate (CTR):** The percentage of clicks per impression.
- **Cost Per Click (CPC):** The average cost paid for each click on the ad.
- **Total Cost:** The total amount spent on the campaign.

We analyzed our performance using the following metrics: clicks, click-through rate (CTR), and cost per click (CPC). These were the key performance indicators we used to assess the effectiveness of the ad campaigns and the bidding strategy's advancement during the learning phase.

Hypothesis

We predicted that the ad with Panera's classic green background and fresh vegetables would be most compelling (see Ad A in Figure 1). Our basis for this was that the green color would appear

more vibrant and nutritious to the consumer, especially when paired with images of fresh ingredients. We believed that this combination would be more visible and appealing to students and faculty in search of nutritious meal options, with more clicks and engagement than the alternative ads.

Results

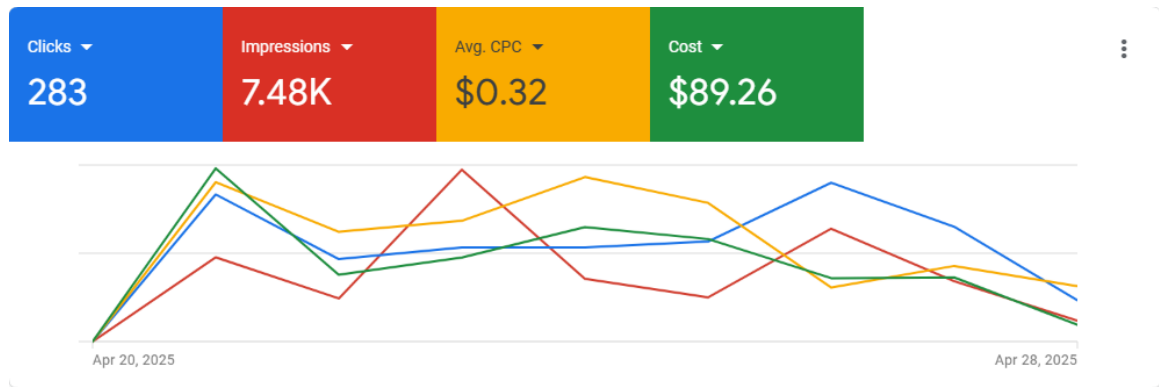


Figure 2 Performance of the campaign over time

At the end of two weeks of campaign execution, we found that the advertisement containing Panera's green background and crunchy veggies recorded the highest engagement level (*see Ad A in Figure 1*), achieving a 5.37% click-through rate (CTR). Although this ad reached fewer individuals (only 950 impressions), it clearly resonated more with audiences. The brown background ad using fresh ingredients, however, had a higher reach (3,408 impressions) but at a lower CTR of 3.49% (*see Ad C in Figure 1*). From this we learned that while more exposure is better, it's the quality of engagement that truly matters and the green, fresh-themed ad delivered that is the best.



Figure 3 Performance of Ad A vs Ad C

Another interesting finding we had was that the ad layout with brown background and classic comfort food (grilled cheese and soup) had a better engagement with a CTR of 4.85% (*see Ad D in Figure 1*) in comparison with the ad layout Panera brand green background and classic comfort food with a CTR of 2.77% (*see Ad B in Figure 1*). From this, we can infer that the brown background, when paired with comfort food, resonated more with the audience.

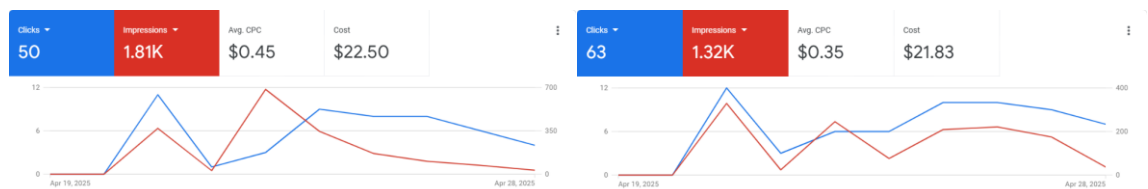


Figure 4 Performance of Ad B vs Ad D

The findings also align with our hypothesis that the ad visual with Panera brand green background paired with fresh ingredients resonated the highest with the audience and had the highest engagement (*see Ad A in Figure 1*). Despite brown background's broader reach (*see Ad D in Figure 1*), the Panera green ad with fresh ingredients performed better in terms of engagement, which was the key performance indicator for this campaign.

Data Analysis and Recommendations

Applying Behavioral Theories to Assess Ad Performance

I Sensory Marketing

Sensory marketing focuses on using sensory stimuli to influence consumer perceptions, emotions, and behaviors. In our campaign, we assessed the impact of visual elements, especially Panera's signature green color and element of freshness (by adding vegetables to ads), to test the sensory marketing principles and how it affects consumer engagement.

Consumers associate green color with health and freshness, which aligns with Panera's brand identity as it offers healthy and fresh meals to its customers. We paired the vibrant green background with the images of fresh vegetables to tap into the sensory response of our target audience. In our alternative ad, we introduced a new element by changing the background color to brown to assess the sensory impact of a neutral color that is in contrast with the vibrant green.

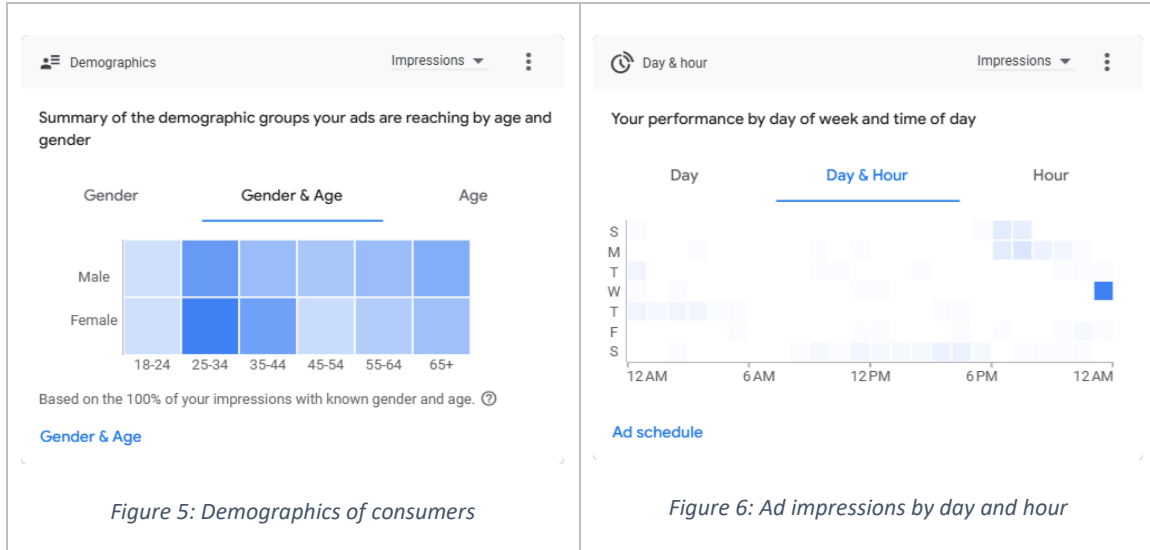
The results were completely in alignment with the principles of sensory marketing, since the green-themed ad (*see Ad A in Figure 1*) generated the highest CTR of 5.37%. From this, we inferred that Panera's brand color had a strong impact on driving customer engagement since people associated the green background with Panera's brand color. Even though the ad had fewer reach, it resonated with the audience more as compared to the brown background color ad (*see Ad C in Figure 1*), which reached around 3,408 people but only had a CTR of 3.49%. This demonstrates the power of sensory appeal created by green color, as it had a greater emotional connection with the audience.

II. Mere Exposure Effect

This theory implies that repeated exposure to a stimulus can increase the chances of a positive association with it, as familiarity breeds preference. To test this theory, we assessed whether brand-consistent elements such as Panera's green background and fresh ingredient visuals can increase consumer engagement through fostering positive associations and reinforcing familiarity with the brand. The ad A (*see Ad A in Figure 1*) had the highest engagement with a CT of 5.37%, even though it had a lower audience reach. On the contrary, ad C (*see Ad C in Figure 1*) had more impressions but had a lower CTR as compared to ad A. This reveals that brand-consistent visual elements play a vital role in driving customer engagement since they align with consumer familiarity.

Analysis & Insights

The ad D (*see Ad D in Figure 1*) with a brown background and comfort food had a lower CTR but high click volume. The ad triggered psychological needs of students, such as comfort and warmth, especially under academic stress due to the final week.



Demographically, the campaign reach was balanced across the genders, and most effectively reached the age bracket of 25-34, which received the highest share of impressions. This also very well aligns with the focus group of Panera which consisted of young professionals and college-aged consumers. The other age brackets received fewer impressions. Furthermore, the campaign had the highest impression on Thursday nights, with moderate engagement during the evening throughout the other weekdays. On the other hand, the activity during the weekend and early morning is negligible. This shows habitual consumption behavior and temporal segmentation and suggests that timing strategies should align with natural rhythms of student decision-making and availability.

Campaign Constraints

We ran into a few major limitations during our Panera Bread A/B testing campaign, which influenced our execution approach and results.

The first significant limitation was time. We needed administrative permission before campaign launch and had to make sure that our ad creatives adhered to Panera's stringent brand requirements. Due to this, our design timetable was prolonged, and the campaign launch was postponed from its planned start date of April 14 to April 19. It is challenging to make firm judgments regarding the relative efficacy of the ad variations due to the brief time and exposure, which may cause audience engagement patterns to not have completely stabilized.

Second, the campaign's overall scope and duration were constrained by our \$100 set budget. A bigger budget would have enabled more impressions, a wider audience, and possibly greater statistical significance in our findings, even though we were able to obtain insights.

Third, we were only able to compare cross-platform performance because we were only utilizing one advertising platform, even if Google Ads was a great tool for our tracking and targeting needs.

Although it was not practical given the limitations of our existing resources, branching out to sites like Instagram or YouTube could have improved our study.

Recommendations

Based on the insights from our A/B testing campaign, Panera Bread can further refine its future marketing strategies. The ad featuring a green background with the ingredients of freshness, such as vegetables, proved to be more engaging, making it a strong candidate for future ad designs, particularly emphasizing the freshness and healthfulness of Panera's offerings (*see Ad A in Figure 1*).

On the other hand, the brown background showcasing comfort food like soup and grilled cheese also performed strongly in terms of engagement (*see Ad D in Figure 1*). This implies that Panera Bread, particularly in seasonal or regional marketing campaigns, can use images of comfort food to appeal and engage consumers looking for coziness and familiarity.

The campaign primarily attracted men and women between the ages of 25 and 34, according to demographic statistics, which is consistent with Panera's target market of students and young professionals. Also, Future advertisements can continue to focus on this demographic while also experimenting and changing their ad production and targeting strategy to better engage other age groups.

Panera can develop a well-rounded, data-driven advertising campaign that increases engagement and fortifies brand resonance and connection by combining both "ingredient of freshness" and "comfort food" themes and matching creatives with the habits and inclinations of key audiences.

Appendix A – Campaign Performance by Ad Variant

Campaign	Avg. CPC	CTR	Impressions	Clicks	Total Cost
Ad Variant A – Panera Green with Ingredient of Freshness	\$0.44	5.37%	950	51	\$22.23
Ad Variant B – Panera Green with Comfort Food (Soup)	\$0.45	2.77%	1802	50	\$22.50
Ad Variant C – Brown Background with Ingredient of Freshness	\$0.19	3.49%	3408	119	\$22.70
Ad Variant D – Brown Background with Comfort Food (Soup)	\$0.35	4.79%	1316	63	\$21.83

Appendix B – Audience Demographics

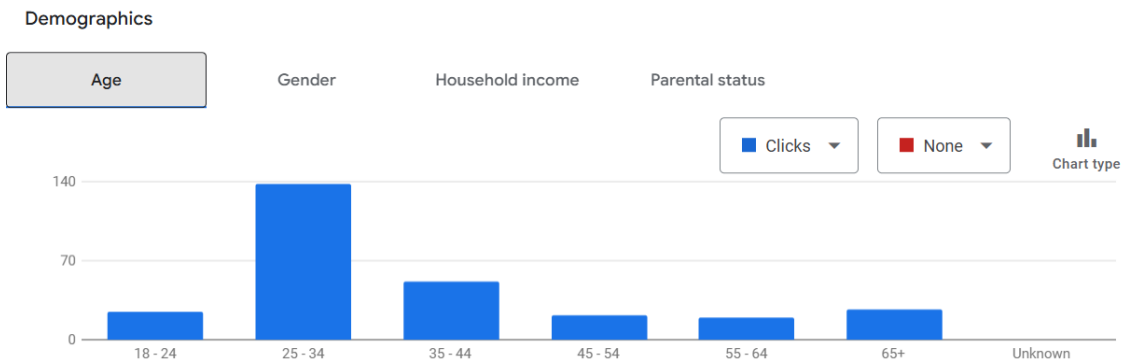


Figure 6 Age Distribution of Ad Engagement

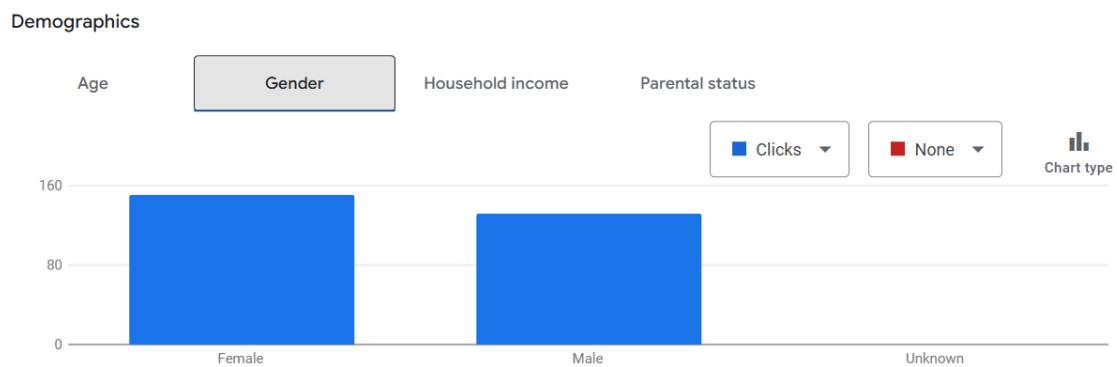


Figure 72 Gender Breakdown of Audience Reached

Demographics

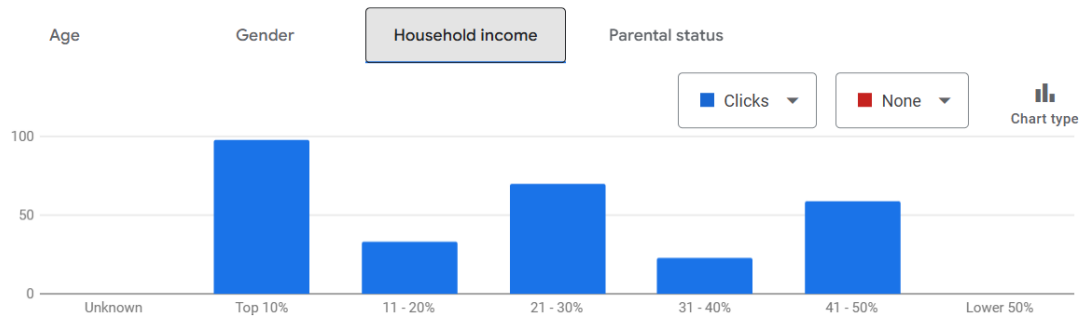


Figure 83 Household Income Breakdown of Audience Reached

Demographics

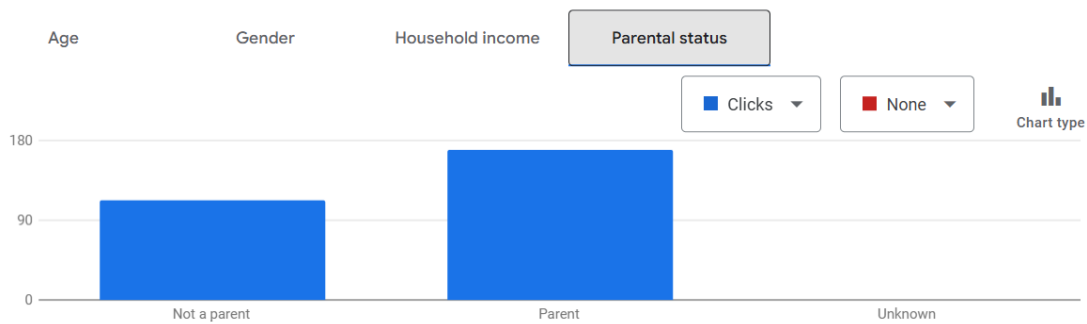


Figure 94 Parental Status of Audience Reached

Appendix C: Device Performance

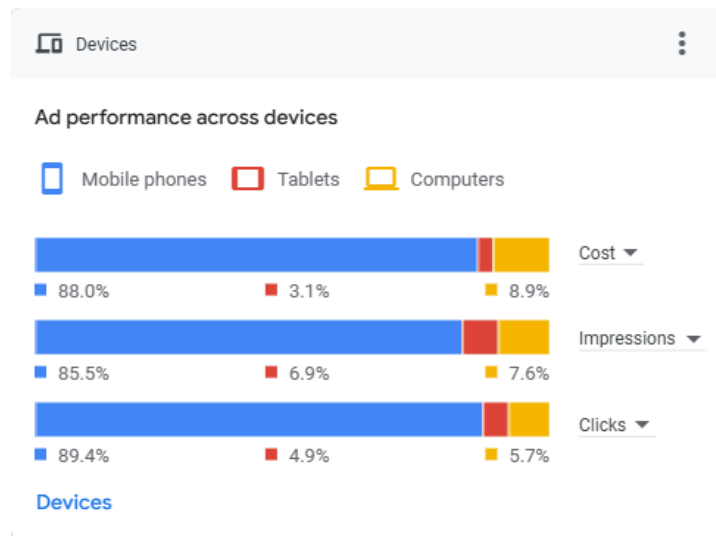


Figure 10 Device Performance Breakdown

Appendix D: Targeted Content and Keywords Summary

Keyword	Clicks	Impr.	CTR	Currency code	Avg. CPC	Cost
breakfast	0	1	0.00%	USD	0	0
easy healthy lunches	0	1	0.00%	USD	0	0
food places near me	0	4	0.00%	USD	0	0
meal menu	1	12	8.33%	USD	0.04	0.04
fast casual dining	0	2	0.00%	USD	0	0
easy healthy lunches	0	2	0.00%	USD	0	0
sandwich	1	35	2.86%	USD	0.09	0.09
bagel	2	20	10.00%	USD	0.05	0.09
meal menu	19	515	3.69%	USD	0.06	1.09
salads near me	0	6	0.00%	USD	0	0
purdue university	0	1	0.00%	USD	0	0
dining experience	3	96	3.13%	USD	0.07	0.21
soup	2	13	15.38%	USD	0.06	0.13
fast casual dining	0	34	0.00%	USD	0	0
baked goods near me	2	22	9.09%	USD	0.05	0.09
food places near me	2	94	2.13%	USD	0.06	0.13
breakfast	4	124	3.23%	USD	0.03	0.13
bagel sandwich	2	18	11.11%	USD	0.04	0.08
easy healthy lunches	0	1	0.00%	USD	0	0
breakfast	0	2	0.00%	USD	0	0
dining experience	0	1	0.00%	USD	0	0
meal menu	0	5	0.00%	USD	0	0
salads near me	0	2	0.00%	USD	0	0
salads near me	0	1	0.00%	USD	0	0
fast casual dining	0	2	0.00%	USD	0	0
meal menu	7	103	6.80%	USD	0.06	0.45
breakfast	1	25	4.00%	USD	0.04	0.04
baked goods near me	0	3	0.00%	USD	0	0
food places near me	0	32	0.00%	USD	0	0
bagel sandwich	0	3	0.00%	USD	0	0
easy healthy lunches	0	1	0.00%	USD	0	0
dining experience	0	26	0.00%	USD	0	0
Total: Unsupported entities	46	1,207	3.81%	USD	0.06	2.58
Total: Display automatic targeting	237	6,265	3.78%	USD	0.37	86.68
Total: Account	283	7,472	3.79%	USD	0.32	89.26
Total: Display	283	7,472	3.79%	USD	0.32	89.26