Q3 2026 TRENDS, TACTICS AND STANDOUT ACTIVATIONS

Inside Canadian Commerce



Retail media is expanding, retailers are investing in value and new formats, and brands are finding creative ways to connect with shoppers. This quarter's report examines the strategies shaping Canadian commerce, showcases standout in-store activations, and shares research on the promotions, recommendations and digital ads influencing Canadian shoppers.

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Retail Media Expands

Canadian retailers are expanding their retail media capabilities, creating new opportunities for brands to reach shoppers and demonstrate the sales impact of advertising.



- **Loblaw Advance Expands Advertiser Access:** Loblaw Advance named Criteo its preferred demand partner in Canada, extending advertiser access to audiences across Shoppers Drug Mart, PC Optimum and PC Express email channels.
- **Kraft Heinz Measures In-Store Media Impact:** A summer campaign with Empire Media+ saw in-store digital screens deliver a 1.08% incremental lift above the campaign's existing media mix.
- **Circle K Relaunches RMN:** Circle K relaunched its omnichannel retailer media network as Full Circle Media, creating opportunities for brands to reach convenience and fuel shoppers across the U.S., Canada and Europe.

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Retailers Invest in Growth and Value

Canadian grocers are strengthening their market positions through discount-focused expansion, new store formats and investments designed to meet shoppers' evolving needs.



- **Loblaw Accelerates Store Growth:** Loblaw plans to open 75 stores in 2026, primarily under its No Frills and Maxi discount banners, while testing new store formats and refreshing existing locations.
- **Costco Expands Its Canadian Footprint:** Costco announced four Canadian warehouse openings for November, extending its presence in Alberta and Ontario as the retailer continues to grow its network.
- **Food Basics Opens 'Contemporary' Store:** The Ontario discount grocer's 158th store, located in Ottawa, is described as "modern" and spans 30,000 square feet.

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Brands Create More Engaging Experiences

Brands and retailers are finding new ways to stay culturally relevant and memorable, using experiential activations, integrated campaigns, distinctive brand positioning and flexible rewards promotions to connect with consumers.

- **Excel Makes Gum a Personal Ritual:** Mars Canada's Excel introduced its "Chew Good" platform, using immersive Chewtopia pop-ups, guided meditations and social content to position gum as a personal ritual.
- **Oh Henry! Turns Hunger Into an Experience:** Hershey Canada activated its "Hunger Bar" positioning with a Grumble-Activated Vending Machine at transit hubs in Toronto and Montreal, using an interactive brand experience to build awareness and encourage shoppers to seek out the product at retail.
- **Empire Celebrates Its Canadian Roots:** Sobeys parent company Empire launched a commercial highlighting its Canadian operations, emphasizing local farmers, communities, employees and Canadian products across its retail banners.
- **Circle K Launches Visit-Based Rewards:** Circle K Canada and Couche-Tard introduced Road to Rewards, a promotion that lets app users earn rewards by building visit streaks, with options spanning food, beverages and participating CPG brands.

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Convenience Retailers Broaden Their Roles

Fuel and convenience retailers are looking beyond traditional forecourt purchases, exploring new foodservice, loyalty and charging opportunities to attract shoppers and generate additional revenue.

- **Fuel Retailers Adapt to a Changing Market:** Industry analysis points to growing investment in fresh food, grab-and-go offerings, personalized loyalty programs and EV charging as fuel retailers seek to diversify revenue and strengthen customer relationships.
- **Mountain Dew Activates Exclusive Flavors at Circle K:** PepsiCo's Mountain Dew promoted Circle K Canada-exclusive seasonal Baja flavors through a sweepstakes, supported by in-store signage, QR codes and social media activity.



Research at a Glance

These factoids provide a sample of P2PI's Canadian Shopper Engagement study, which found that Canadian shoppers are increasingly focused on value when shopping online. While promotions remain a key driver of ad engagement, relevant product recommendations and retailer advertising can still influence purchase decisions.

Digital ads must deliver clear value and relevance to stand out in a crowded shopping environment.

47%

of online shoppers visit retailer websites or apps to compare prices with other retailers.

44%

said discounts or promotions make an online ad more likely to capture their attention or prompt a click, up 9 points year over year.

76%

like when retailers recommend new products they haven't heard of before.

66%

of online shoppers said they have made a purchase after seeing an ad on a retailer's website or mobile app, although this declined 6 points year over year.

19%

frequently notice brand advertising on retailer websites or mobile apps, down 8 points year over year.

Source: P2PI, 2026 Canadian Shopper Engagement with Retail Media, January 2026.

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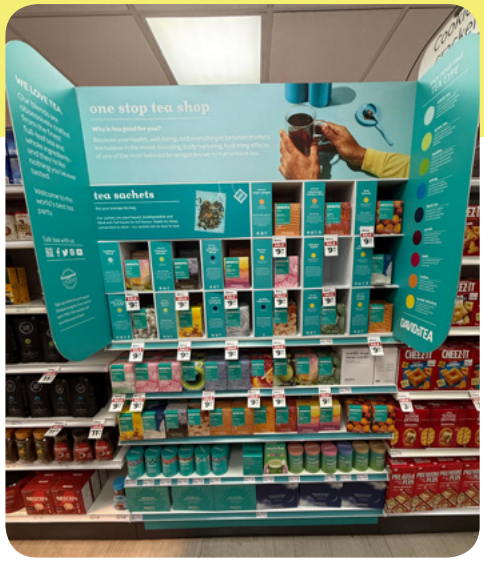
P2PI Favorites



DAVIDsTEA

DAVIDsTEA created a “One Stop Tea Shop” in-line display at a Rexall in Toronto featuring a wide assortment of tea sachets alongside the brand’s wellness positioning and information to help shoppers explore different tea types and flavors.



Mid-Autumn Festival

A Metro store in Toronto marked the Mid-Autumn Festival with a colorful seasonal display featuring festive graphics, instant noodles and other products, creating a timely, culturally relevant in-store destination.



PepsiCo

PepsiCo promoted its “Win Your Way to Any NFL Game” sweepstakes with a floorstand at a Toronto Shoppers Drug Mart. Featuring multiple brands, the display encouraged shoppers to purchase participating products, scan a QR code and upload a receipt for a chance to win.

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P2PI Favorites



Nutella

Nutella introduced its peanut-flavored spread with a prominent freestanding display at a Toronto Walmart. Oversized branding and dedicated shelving gave the new variant a high-visibility presence alongside the familiar hazelnut spread.



Twizzlers

Twizzlers used a tall, freestanding display at a Toronto Walmart to showcase its candy with the playful “Just One More” message. Bright colors and oversized product imagery helped the display stand out in-store.



A&W x Breyers

A&W promoted an “Earn a Mug” offer with an aisle violator at a Loblaws in Etobicoke, Ontario. The sign paired branded mug imagery with participating Breyers products to bring the promotion directly into shoppers’ paths.

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Growing Our Canadian Community

Please join us in welcoming our newest member,
Kraft Heinz Canada!

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