

# Retail Round Up

April 2026



# Retail Round Up-**April**

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### **Hello and welcome to our Retail Round-Up!**

This newsletter brings you a curated collection of observations, news, and POS display photography from retail across UK. Our goal is to provide insightful support for our POS partnerships. We look forward to sharing more each month and actively welcome your feedback as we refine the format for future editions.

We hope you enjoy the read!

### **What's inside?**

-  In-store photography
-  Insights and consumer trends
-  Brand and retail news
-  Innovation and sustainability

 = Displays produced by DS Smith

# April- Retail News

Food sales decreased by 2.5% year on year in April, against a growth of 8.2% in April 2025. This was below the 12-month average growth of 3.5%



Retailer's promotions were responsible for £2.6 billion of promotional spending, 8.8% more than the same time last year. Promotional sales ramped up this month to 28.2% of total grocery spending



Lidl's £600m UK expansion, creating around 2,000 jobs and opening 50+ new store highlighting continued investment and confidence in the grocery sector



The Devil Wears Prada 2 made a promotion moment, Nestlé's Aero used an on-pack competition & Diet Coke used limited-edition packs and shopper promotions to drive in-store engagement and sales.



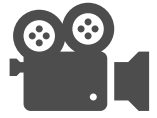
Nostalgia driving promotions in April, with Waitrose creating limited-edition 'Noshtalgia' range in partnership with Disney's "Rivals." And Tesco reintroduced its iconic blue-and-white "Value" stripes from the 1990s/2000s.



<https://brc.org.uk/news-and-events/news/corporate-affairs/2026/ungated/uncertainty-hits-retail-sales/>  
<https://www.kantar.com/uki/Inspiration/FMCG/2025-wp-All-eyes-on-price-as-promotions-ramp-up>  
<https://www.marketingbrew.com/stories/2026/04/28/devil-wears-prada-2-brand-partnerships-strategy-process>  
<https://metro.co.uk/2026/01/05/tesco-officially-bringing-iconic-90s-value-logo-back-dead-26083620/>  
<https://www.retailgazette.co.uk/blog/2026/04/lidl-announces-major-expansion-with-600m-investment-and-50-new-store-plan/>  
<https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/range-previews/waitrose-and-disney-launch-noshtalgia-range-for-rivals-season-two/718011.article>

# Super brand collaborations in store





# Reel meets Retail In-Store activations



# POS excellence in-store



AUCTION:  
RED AS  
DEADPOOL

AUCTION:  
PURPLE AS  
ELEKTRA

AUCTION:  
YELLOW AS  
WOLVERINE

AUCTION:  
BLUE AS  
DAREDEVIL

AUCTION:  
BROWN AS  
YELENA

AUCTION:  
GREEN AS  
SHE-HULK

AUCTION:  
ORANGE AS  
THOR

# From Fixture to Fandom: Retail That Stops Shoppers in Their Tracks

At DS Smith Retail Marketing, we know that great retail displays do more than hold products; they create impact and spark engagement. That's exactly why collaborations between brands and major entertainment franchises have become such a powerful force in-store. Our work with Mars, is a perfect example of how pop culture can turn a retail fixture into a shopper destination.

When shoppers spot limited edition M&M'S packs featuring iconic characters from the big screen, it instantly creates excitement. These collaborations tap into fandom, nostalgia and collectability, giving consumers another reason to engage with the brand and, importantly, pause at the fixture. In today's busy retail environment, that split second of attention is incredibly valuable.

From our perspective as designers of the POS displays, the goal is to bring the energy of the partnership to life in store. Bold graphics, impactful structures and **strong visual storytelling** help transform the display into something **immersive and memorable**. Rather than simply promoting confectionery, the display becomes **part of the wider entertainment experience** surrounding a film launch or streaming phenomenon.

The commercial benefits are clear. Cross-promotional campaigns help brands increase visibility, create social buzz and drive impulse purchases, while retailers benefit from eye-catching theatre that keeps the shopping environment fresh and engaging. **It's a win-win when executed well.**

Of course, collaborations on this scale do come with challenges. Working with global entertainment brands means navigating multiple stakeholders, detailed brand guidelines and tight launch deadlines, all while ensuring the final execution lands perfectly in-store. But that complexity is also what makes these projects so rewarding.

When all the moving parts come together, the result is retail marketing that feels exciting, culturally relevant and hard to ignore. Those are just the kind of campaigns we love bringing to life, helping brands like Mars create displays that shoppers don't just see, but enjoy interacting with.



**George Searle**  
Head of Artwork

# Mars - M&M'S partnerships with Disney



From concept to shelf, M&M'S collaboration with Disney's Marvel or Mandalorian Grogu was delivered through a fully integrated process to create impactful and immersive retail displays.



# POS activations across the categories

# The Big Spring Clean



## SAINSBURYS VANISH

- Half Pallet
- Clear purpose messaging
- Price-led mechanic



## SAINSBURYS PERSIL

- WOW Unit
- Immediate Brand Recognition
- SKU Segmentation



## THE RANGE SCRUB DADDY

- Quarter Pallet
- Fully Branded
- Multi SKU



**Cleaning and wellbeing merge as #cleantok trends with over 150 billion views**

Cleaning is marketed on TikTok as a source of calm and mental wellbeing. Cleaning brands now need to consider what emotions your products are selling.

# Winning the Pet Shopper In-Store



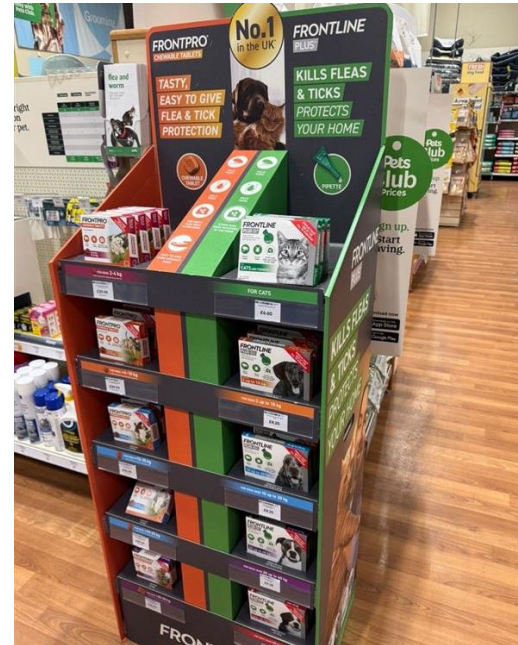
## TESCO BAKERS

- Half Pallet
- Harmonised Fit
- Colour SKU Segmentation



## PETS AT HOME BUGALUGS

- Quarter Pallet
- Oversized header
- Large Stock Holding



## PETS AT HOME FRONTLINE

- Quarter Pallet
- Strong Category Signposting
- Consumer Purchasing Segmentation



**Pet owners are trading up, spending an average of £33 a month on human food for their pets**

Demonstrating how feeding habits for pets, mirror the trends in wellness.

# Ambient Highlights



## SAINSBURYS PIP & NUT

- Half Pallet
- Character-led Marketing
- Structural Design for Smaller Stock Load-up



## WAITROSE PROPER

- Theatre POS
- Snacking Moment-led
- Driving Brand Saliency



## SAINSBURYS NESTLE

- Half pallet display
- Summer of Sport Promotion
- Multi SKU offer



83% of consumers say own label quality has improved, narrowing the gap with branded products

64% of consumers still believe branded is better than own label.

# In-Store Drinks Highlights



## SAINSBURYS NESCAFE

- Quarter Pallet
- Flavour Segmentation
- Stand Out Branding



## SAINSBURYS PEPSI

- Full Pallet Theatre
- Dual Sided Shopping
- Summer of Sport moment



## SAINSBURYS MULTIBRAND

- In-aisle Marketing
- Brand Partnership Collab
- Path-to-purchase activation



**Healthy ageing expands into drink market, as elderly nutrition market expected to reach £32.18bn by 2032**

Electrolyte-enhanced waters, fibre infused, low and no sugar options, added prebiotics, fortified drinks with protein or vitamin D are some of the ingredients targeting elderly nutrition in drinks.

<https://www.beveragedaily.com/Article/2026/05/06/healthy-ageing-food-trends-and-opportunities/>



# In-Store confectionery highlights



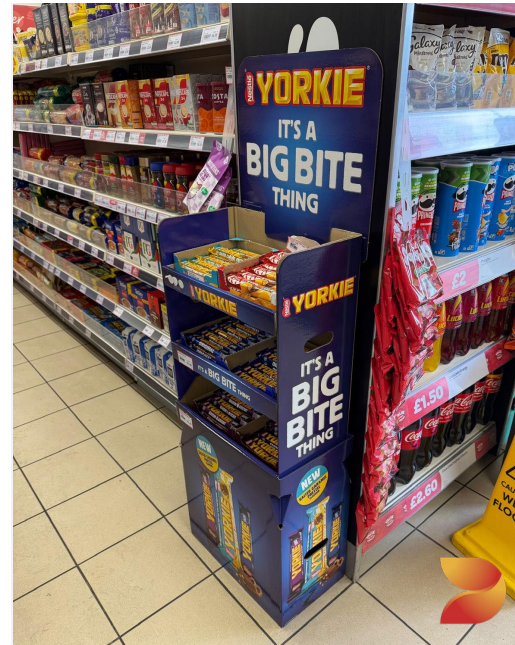
## TESCO CADBURYS

- Quarter Pallet
- Fully Branded
- Blockers



## INDEPENDANT AMOS

- Slimline Quarter Pallet
- Nostalgic activation
- Bold and high-quality print



## LONDIS YORKIE

- Quarter Pallet
- Strong Brand Blocking
- Carry Handles



**YO! And Nestle's KitKat collaborate on a new nationwide dessert.**

Collaborations show how confectionery brands are evolving from products into cultural ingredients used by food service to create instant relevance, novelty, and demand



# Consumer, brand and retail news

# Consumer, brand and retail news



## Household

Younger shoppers have turned to TikTok to shop for loo roll, with brands like Who Gives a Crap and Cheeky Panda growing in response to online sales.

Household NPD launches dominated by plastic-free packaging initiatives. With top launch for 2025 is Cif Infinite Clean from Unilever, which also contains probiotics to continue to feed on grime after use. Showing household goods following wellness trends.

<https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/category-reports/the-new-roll-models-trends-in-household-paper-products-2026/714206.article>  
<https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/rankings/household-cleaning-2025-price-rises-a-dirty-word-in-homecare/713028.article>



## Drinks

Fruit lager dominating sales within the beer aisle, with value sales climbing to +52.2% in April. Growth prompting a new fruit lager bay in Tesco stores.

Ingredient to watch: Ube set to be the next matcha. Its purple appeal and wellness function offers both visual and health cues. Supply and demand will determine if this flavour is set to stay.

<https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/fruit-lager-the-shining-saviour-of-beer-as-sales-surge-by-50/718493.article>  
<https://clients.mintel.com/content/insight/ingredient-watch-ube-value-extends-beyond-colour>



## Snacking

Lindt taps into matcha craze with Matcha flavoured truffles.

Snacking is getting **gamified**, ready to be shared on social media like the launch of PepsiCo's "Flamin Hot or Not" crisps or ChupaChups "Impossible" unopenable lollipop. 54% of younger consumers are more likely to try a product if it has an interactive digital experience.

<https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/comment-and-opinion/egg-crisps-and-matcha-chocolate-six-trends-from-alimentaria-2026/716912.article>  
<https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/lindt-taps-into-japanese-flavour-trends-with-cherry-blossom-and-matcha-truffles/717601.article>  
<https://www.exchange4media.com/marketing-news/scan-snap-share-how-snack-brands-are-turning-packaging-into-social-content-machines-145147.html>  
<https://www.chupachups.co.uk/easiertoopen>

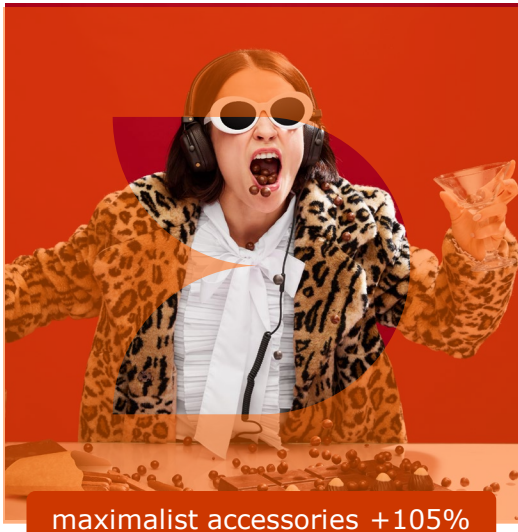


# Pinterest Trends 2026: What's To Learn For Retail?

# Pinterest Predicts 2026:

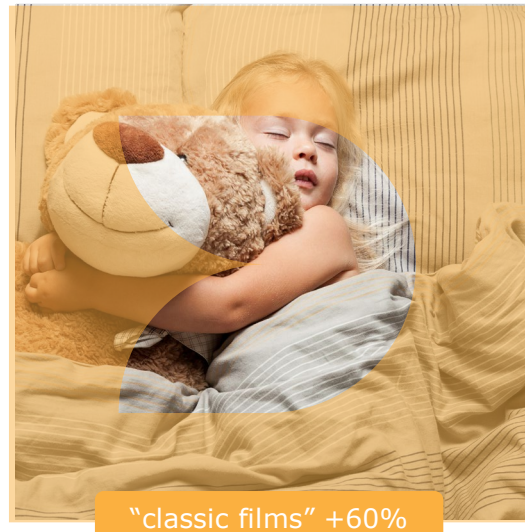
## How will these play out in the retail environment?

Trends growing 4.4x faster than 7 years ago, which demand retail activation must shift to be flexible, compete harder for attention and tap into pop culture and social trends quickly.



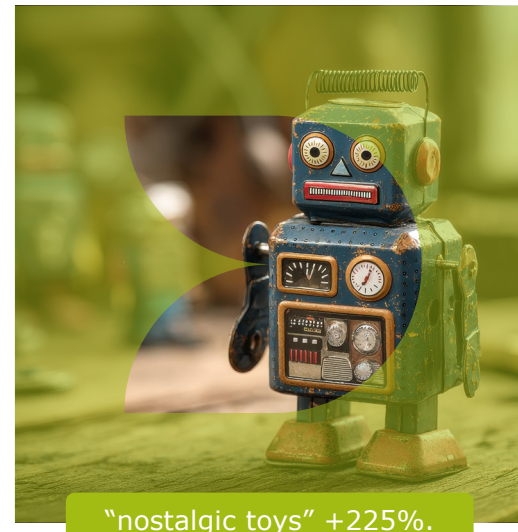
42% of global respondents say they only participate in trends that suit them. How can your campaign give room for agency with engagement in store?

**Think: gamification, adaptable graphics for regional nuance, interactivity.**



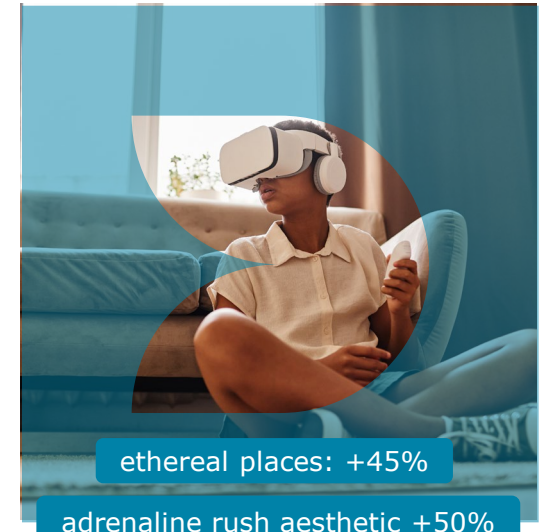
Comfort in uncertain times is driving purchases with 55% of people prioritizing comfort, 52% are rewatching classic films.

**Think: Partnerships with classic brands and campaigns that make your shoppers feel cozy.**



Nostalgia continues to drive trends, particularly millennials beginning to start families.

**Think: retro, simpler times, through-back graphics**



Shoppers are looking for escapism, through fantasy, reconnecting with nature or adrenaline sports to escape everyday drudgery.

**Think: where does your campaign take your shoppers? To a fantasy land or to a thrilling experience?**

# The year of the cabbage?

## What “Cabbagecore” can reveal for Retail Marketing

All over social media, people are talking about cabbages.

**The “cabbagecore” trend is important because it signals a shift in how value, relevance and storytelling are created in-store. It highlights that culture can redefine value, therefore altering how we turn everyday products into relevant, engaging and premium-feeling in-store experiences.**

What this means for marketing:

- **Merchandise around uses**, not just categories – cabbage can be multiple cuisines, is healthy, a carb alternative
- **Premiumise the affordable**, you don’t need premium inputs to create premium perception. Draw inspiration from the power that social media to premiumise a basic ingredient
- **Re-frame staples** as heroes – bulk commodity to hero ingredient



The Trends Are Clear:

Pinterest 2026: Cabbage dumplings +110%,  
Cabbage soup +95%

TikTok driving “Cabbagecore” across food, fashion & design. **#cabbage was tagged in 163K+ posts**

82% of shoppers are changing shopping behaviour due to price rises

<https://www.thekitchn.com/cabbage-food-trend-2026-23762917>  
<https://www.tiktok.com/tag/cabbage>  
<https://business.pinterest.com/en-gb/pinterest-predicts/2026/cabbage-crush/>






# Customer Segmentation: Confectionary and Snacking

# Confectionary and Snacking: One Category, Multiple Missions


The snacking category sits at the intersection of **habit, impulse, indulgence, and wellbeing**, shaped by highly contextual shopper missions.

The UK is Europe's largest snack market, worth £18bn, with savory snacks the largest segment, while the healthy snacking market continues to grow and is projected to reach £7.5bn by 2033.



**THE TREAT SEEKER**  
94% of consumers snack as a reward or treat

**Mission:** Emotional, indulgent intentional treat consumption, an affordable pick-me-up.  
**Browse time:** average  
**Influenced:** by occasion-led displays, premium cues, visual merchandising,  
**In-store Location:** POP execution, emotional connection and social inspiration.



**THE PRESSURED PARENT**  
69% of parents say their kids influence what they buy

**Mission:** unplanned, frequent, novelty child-led purchases, which are shared decisions.  
**Browse time:** low  
**Influenced:** social media trends, HFSS legislation, parent approved messaging.  
**In-store Location:** family oriented zones, hero displays, child impulse cues.



**THE TREND CHASER**  
74% of UK consumers have bought a product after seeing it promoted by an influencer

**Mission:** Discovery, social need to try new viral products.  
**Browse time:** low  
**Influenced:** by social media trends, cues like 'new' or 'limited edition'  
**In-store Location:** off shelf theatrical display

# Confectionary and Snacking: One Category, Multiple Missions



**THE GRAB AND GO**  
66% of snackers eat between meals 1/day.

**Mission:** functional, for immediate hunger  
**Browse time:** low  
**Influenced:** by convenience and highly impacted by HFSS rules.  
**In-store Location:** placement near food-to-go, bold signage, clarity.



**BALANCED SNACKER**  
77% of consumers prefer snacks with fewer ingredients

**Mission:** permissible health considered indulgence  
**Browse time:** high  
**Influenced:** by health claims, clean label credentials, HFSS compliant.  
**In-store Location:** Organic wellness bay educational messages and benefits.



**THOUGHTFUL GIFTER**  
62% of UK shoppers buy chocolate as a gift.

**Mission:** Emotion occasion led gift for others  
**Browse time:** high  
**Influenced:** by premium quality and presentation of product, and storytelling. Less price sensitive  
**In-store Location:** theatre and occasion ranges, seasonal aisle



**SNACK STOCKER**  
The average household spends £480 annually on snacks

**Mission:** pragmatic, looking for quantity and value as part of larger grocery shop  
**Browse time:** high  
**Influenced:** Less by impulse, more by promotions  
**In-store Location:** Large format displays, in aisle with clear signage

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# **Sustainability: What does PPWR mean for Retail marketing?**



# PPWR Update

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The PPWR (Regulation EU 2025/40) entered into force on 11 February 2025, with some sections from **12 August 2026**.

The **Packaging and Packaging Waste Regulation** sets harmonised EU-wide rules for the entire life-cycle of packaging, covering design, placing on the market, labelling, waste prevention, re-use, collection and recycling.

This legislation affects corrugated in-store marketing activations by:

- Empty Space ratio requirements are still pending further clarification regarding definitions and their relationship to Retail Marketing displays.
- Increasing reuse and refurbishment requests (potentially increasing storage needs)
- Reviewing the requirement for % recycled content of plastics in unit





## POS Display

### [DS Smith POS solutions](#)

We can help you with deeper customer insights, smarter innovations and sustainable POS solutions, all deployed with speed, agility and scale. [Contact us](#) about your next campaign today.



## Innovation

### [Innovation at DS Smith](#)

Our innovation strategy is based on delivering our objectives on the immediate, medium and long-term horizon. We are investing globally in our people, plants and our partner ecosystem. [Contact us](#) about how we can innovate for now and for next.

Talk to one of our experts to find out more



## Packaging

### [DS Smith Packaging solutions](#)

We help stores increase efficiency, boost turnover and reduce costs. [Contact us](#) to connect with industry leading packaging strategists.



## Sustainability

### [DS Smith Sustainability](#)

Our circular business model is built around sustainability, and we are leading the way towards a low-carbon, circular economy.

Download our latest report [here](#)

Thank



You

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