

# Retail Round Up

March 2026



# Retail Round Up-March



## Retail Round Up March

### 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

# March- Retail news

Grocery sales accelerated to 4.4% growth in the four weeks to 22 March 2026, up from 3.4% the previous month.



Shop price inflation hit 1.2% in March. Food inflation eased, but pressures are set to return as Middle East conflict disrupts supply chains and energy costs.



The Food Standards Agency is set to be handed the role of watchdog for the UK's new healthy food targets scheme. Meaning marketing is now a compliance lever, not just a growth lever



Mother's Day 2026 featured dine-in occasions highlighting premium private label ranges, with self-care and beauty gift sets having more shelf-space dedicated to them in-store.

Lidl has pledged to cut food waste by 70% by 2030, raising the bar for the industry and putting pressure on rivals to take responsibility and act on the waste they create.

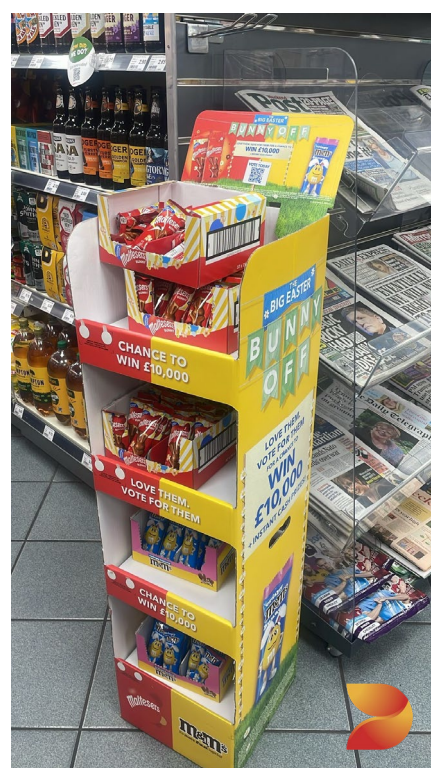


<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2026-03-30/higher-prices-are-coming-for-british-shoppers-retail-lobby-says>  
<https://www.igd.com/commercial-insight/retail-analysis/category/reports/mothers-day-2026/72711>  
<https://www.igd.com/reports/uk-grocery-retailing-10-essential-insights/50156>

# What was in-store for Easter



# Easter In-Store activations





## “An egg-ceptional Easter WOW unit, where creative ambition and smart engineering delivered standout in-store theatre.”

As part of the Easter campaign for Mars, we worked on the Co-op Easter Exclusive Theatre Unit to create a high-impact FSDU that would stand out in store while remaining practical to produce and install.

One of the key design challenges was creating the illusion of the Easter basket appearing to hover at the sides of the unit, supported visually by grass elements and butterfly details. Delivering this effect meant **carefully balancing creative ambition with the structural limits of a freestanding display**, ensuring the final design remained robust, stable, and fit for the retail environment.

The project followed a tight timeline, which is often the reality when designing seasonal FSDUs. With only a few days to make the concept work, decisions needed to be made quickly and confidently, while keeping the original design intent intact. This fast pace highlighted the importance of a hands-on approach and clear communication across teams.

**Collaboration played a central role in bringing the unit to life.** Working closely with other designers and supporting teams helped resolve challenges efficiently and ensured the unit could move smoothly from concept to in-store execution. Seeing the finished display launched in Co-op stores provided valuable insight into how thoughtful design, teamwork, and problem-solving come together to create effective WOW units.

Projects like this give a genuine behind-the-scenes look at what it takes to design award-winning FSDUs for major brands like Mars - **combining creativity, technical understanding, and collaboration to deliver engaging seasonal displays that perform on the shop floor.**



**Victoria Wright**  
Junior Structural Designer

# Easter 2026: Bigger, Bolder, Riskier

- **Retail insight:** Easter fixtures were densely packed with egg SKUs, reinforcing Easter's importance as a volume-driving moment. Yet, in the context of wider global uncertainty, the scale of indulgent displays raised questions around relevance and sensitivity. This creates a key consideration for marketers: how to maintain seasonal impact while aligning with evolving consumer mood.
- **A Less Indulgent Easter?** As shopper confidence continues to drop, many shoppers no longer go big on chocolate this Easter, as 57% say they noticed a big increase in easter egg prices compared to last year, and 40% saying they will buy and eat fewer chocolate eggs.
- **Easter mirroring Christmas playbooks:** Supermarkets are increasingly treating Easter as a 'mini-Christmas', expanding beyond eggs into decorations, gifting and hosting ranges. Supported by strong promotional mechanics, this shift encourages shoppers to trade up and view Easter as a planned occasion, driving basket-building, premiumisation and incremental spend.
- **Immersive Easter engagement:** Retailers are shifting Easter from a purely transactional event to an emotionally engaging, family-focused experience. Gamified digital touchpoints are being used to build excitement and drive store visits, such as the Morrisons More loyalty app, which featured an animated slot-machine pop-up to incentivise Easter in-store engagement.



# POS excellence in-store



# Poppi New Product Launch

Grocer Article



# Poppi – hits the store and the Carlsberg Britvic Hub





# POS activations across the categories

# In-Store Toys



**TJ JONES** LEGO

- FSDU
- Seasonal to Spring
- 3D elements



**SAINSBURYS** HOTWHEELS

- QP
- Fully Branded
- Great Graphics



**TESCO** THE ENTERTAINER

- QP Dump bin with shelves
- Branded with Promotional partnership
- Shopper accessibility in mind



**EuroShop research indicates that 69% of Gen Z consumers still shop in physical stores every week**

Retailers like The Entertainer and WHSmith are partnering with supermarkets and introducing shop-in-shop formats, making toys more accessible in everyday shopping environments

# Wellness In-store



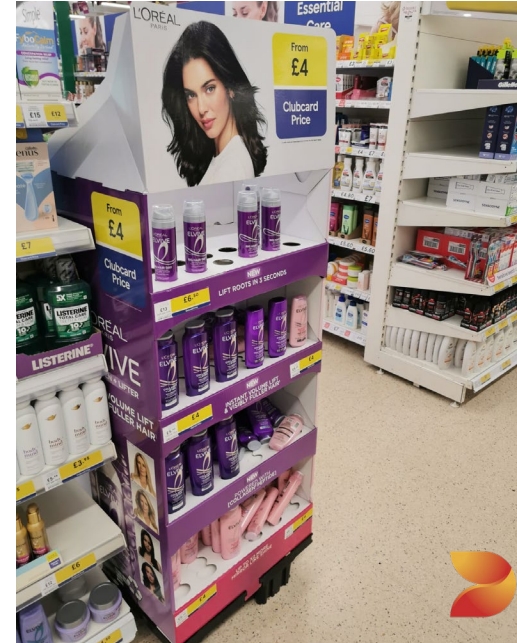
## SUPERDRUG MINE

- 4 shelf QP with easter shroud
- Multi SKU
- Seasonal Campaign



## BOOTS SOLTAN

- FSDU
- Stock locators
- Seasonal targeted campaign



## TESCO LOREAL

- QP unit
- Multi SKU
- Benefit-led educational instructions



**Spend on skincare amongst men is increasing**

Value of sales are up by 3.8%, as men become increasingly aware of the benefits of skincare to target aging and blemishes.

# Ambient Highlights



## SAINSBURYS KELLOGGS

- Half pallet display
- Bold graphics
- Multi SKU offer



## CO-OP PUKKA

- Slimline FSDU
- Moment building
- Clear Brand Storytelling



## ALDI HILLTOP HONEY

- Half pallet Display
- Fully branded
- Identity driven engagement



**Ambient food inflation fell to 2.0% YoY in March 2026, giving retailers a short-term value buffer**

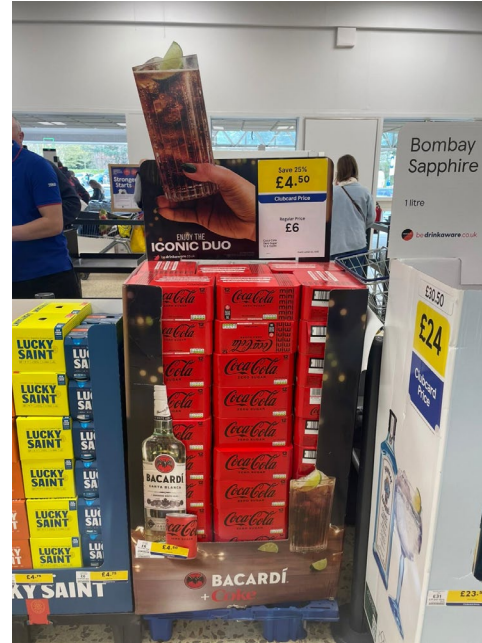
But price relief in ambient was temporary, with geopolitical cost pressures expected to return soon.

# In-Store Drinks Highlights



## SAINSBURYS LIPTON

- Half Pallet Display
- Multi SKU
- Driving Brand salience



## TESCO COCA COLA

- Half pallet
- Die cut wow header
- Collaboration campaign



## CO-OP RED BULL

- NPD flavour
- 3D elements talking to the Marathon occasion
- Central Aisle Placement



**Drinks brands turned to pop culture partnerships to stay front of mind**

Such as Monster and the F1, Robinsons and Star Wars: The Mandalorian, Diet Coke and the Devil Wears Prada 2. Drinks brands are leaning into cultural partnerships this spring

# In-store confectionery highlights



## MORRISONS MAOAM

- Hive QP stack
- Competition Promo
- Bold stand out Colour



## TESCO CHUPA CHUPS

- Slimline FSDU
- Nostalgic activation
- Suitable for multi SKU stockholding



## SAINSBURYS JAFFACAKES

- WP
- Humorous Conversation maker campaign
- Paired with OOH and social campaign



March saw a surge of **product innovation**, Easter season preparation, and **new flavour** launches across the UK confectionery retail market, leaning on strong **brand-led campaign** activity



# Consumer, brand and retail news

# Consumer, brand and retail news



## Wellness

Prices in beauty have risen. Skincare price +6.2% and haircare at +5%. So shoppers are no longer ashamed to buy budget. Growth has been seen in products with high-end looks, but with low end prices.

Beauty "Playgrounds" are the newest engaging retail activation in flagship stores. The concept includes "try me tables," social media stations with ring lights and brand ambassadors on hand to help with advice.



## Drinks

PepsiCo, AB InBev and Diageo all have pulled out their sponsorship of the Wireless festival over booking of controversial rapper Kanye West. Pepsi was to be the main sponsor of the event, and it has since been cancelled.

Volvic enters the functional drink category with vitamin + range launch. Enriched with B vitamins and magnesium, the launch aims to attract new customers as demand for healthy drinks continue to rise



## Snacking

Pladis expands Jacobs Mini Cheddars with two new limited-edition flavours: Chipotle & Lime and Nacho Cheese, just in time for this year's summer of sport!

As cocoa prices drop 8.79% over the past month, but remains volatile, leading to an interest in cocoa alternatives such as carob and NPD with reduced reliance on chocolate.

<https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/category-reports/how-budget-beauty-brands-are-winning-share/717354.article>  
<https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/category-reports/the-changing-face-of-beauty-and-personal-care-trends-in-2026/717351.article>

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<https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/drinks-brands-pull-sponsorship-of-wireless-festival-over-kanye-west-booking/717340.article>

<https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2026/04/01/volvic-enters-functional-water-category-with-vitamin-range-launch/>

<https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2026/04/08/pladis-expands-jacobs-range-with-two-limited-edition-flavours/>

<https://tradingeconomics.com/commodity/cocoa>  
<https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/comment-and-opinion/as-chocolate-prices-soar-cocoa-alternatives-are-on-the-rise/716264.article>



A person wearing a black balaclava and a dark jacket is seen from behind, standing in a grocery store aisle. The shelves are filled with various products, and the scene is dimly lit. A white speech bubble graphic is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# Marketing Behind Lock and Key:

How theft is challenging  
Retail Marketing

# What Retail Crime means for Instore marketing

## With grocery theft dominating headlines, what are the implications for in-store retail marketing?



Lucy Whing, crime policy lead at the British Retail Consortium, said retailers have invested over £5bn in the last five years to tackle theft and crime. **"Ultimately such theft is not a victimless crime, pushing up the price for honest shoppers."**

Stores are being physically redesigned in response to theft, from confectionary to drinks, grocery instore is no longer always about ease of shopping:

- Shifting from grab-and-go to high-friction displays
- Clear anti-theft boxes, shelf sliders and restricted fill

There are direct implications for seasonal displays, theatre and NPD visibility.

We will see an increased use of integrated dispensers in displays and structures to prevent thieves from sweeping shelves. Innovation will answer the call of the retailers to prevent loss in sales and shrink of profits as grocery theft continues to increase

Official figures from the Office for National Statistics show shoplifting offences in England and Wales rose 5 per cent to 519,381 in the year to September 2025.

Retail workers faced a 12% increase in violent behaviour in 2025.

<https://www.thegrocer.co.uk/news/waitrose-stands-by-decision-to-fire-staff-member-who-tackled-shoplifter/717380.article>  
<https://www.betterretailing.com/retail-crime-shop-theft-link-up-social-media-trend/>  
<https://www.grocerygazette.co.uk/2026/04/08/iceland-boss-offers-job-to-sacked-waitrose-worker-as-retail-crime-debate-intensifies/>  
<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/shoplifting-chocolate-theft-dairy-milk-b2926378.html>  
<https://retailtimes.co.uk/the-shoplifting-epidemic-how-retailers-can-mitigate-crime-with-simple-in-store-solutions/>

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# Sustainability: The Pressure is On



# From Targets to Tension

As we enter Q2 2025, it's clear that sustainability has shifted from a long-term ambition to an immediate commercial and operational challenge. **With only 20–30% of FMCG brands meeting their 2025 Scope 3 (supply chain) targets—** despite these emissions accounting for around **90% of total impact.**

Progress now depends on action across the entire value chain, not future commitments.

**Policy and Regulation:** EPR, DRS, EUDR, PPWR are all mounting pressure on global FMCG brands to move from ambition to delivery. The legislation is helping move sustainability from periphery to core requirements of FMCG operations.

**Consumers Expectations:** Surveys through late 2025 and early 2026 show climate change consistently ranking as a top-tier concern, alongside cost of living and healthcare. 77% of adults now say they're concerned about climate change.

**Increasing Risks:** by 2050, climate change is estimated to add £2.6 billion to UK food system costs following a business as usual scenario, as climate shocks and pressures affect long term costs.

**Technology, data and AI:** the pressure to embed sustainability data into commercial decisions is on. As the quality and scope of data increases, we need to use it to optimize commercial value to improve incentives of choosing sustainably.

**The end of incremental changes to high impact interventions:** waiting until policy forces large scale change must come to an end, as big impact initiatives require alignment, investment and most importantly time. It's the time to jump before you are pushed!

**Collaboration over competition:** expectations rise and timelines are shortening. Collaboration helps reduce cost, increases credibility and UK businesses that engage early will be better placed to influence outcomes rather than react to them. The power is in working together.

<https://www.cdp.net/en/insights/strengthening-the-chain>  
<https://www.igd.com/social-impact/sustainability/articles/uk-sustainability-trends-2026-the-pressure-is-on/72646>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/desnz-public-attitudes-tracker-winter-2025/desnz-public-attitudes-tracker-net-zero-and-climate-change-winter-2025-uk>



**Responsible  
Marketing Driving  
Sustainable  
Choices**

# Responsible Marketing: The Pathway To Sustainable Shoppers

Millennials and Gen Z are more driven to do good than any generation before them, making transparent sustainability more powerful than ever.

As marketers, we can reshape campaign brainprints to support sustainable shopping.

Now the UK's largest and highest-spending group, millennials are redefining the FMCG category.

So what is your campaign *really* selling and is it something consumers can believe in?

\*Brainprint in marketing refers to the psychological, sociological, and cultural influence of marketing activity on individuals, groups, organizations, and the socio-economic system at large

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates>  
<https://www.wearefutura.com/thinks/how-to-make-a-movement>  
[https://futura-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Selling\\_Sustainability.pdf](https://futura-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Selling_Sustainability.pdf)  
[https://futura-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/THE\\_HONEST\\_GENERATION\\_1.pdf](https://futura-assets.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/THE_HONEST_GENERATION_1.pdf)

93%  
of consumers want to see brands they love support worthy causes

89%  
of millennials and Gen Z care about how honest brands are.

77%  
Of millennials have involved themselves in a charity



**“Consumer demand for sustainability is the frontier of our transition to a greener, fairer and smarter global economy. [As a marketer], you have the power to unleash that consumer demand by strengthening consumer value.” Futerra**





## 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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