



PLAYBOOK

Harmonizing Retail Media: The 2025 In-Store Audio Playbook

iab.canada

Leger

in collaboration with

STINGRAY
ADVERTISING

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Foreword



Sonia Carreno, President

The rapid growth of retail media signifies a transformative phase in advertising, offering brands direct access to consumers at critical shopping moments. This burgeoning sector is reshaping the advertising landscape, delivering value through its ability to connect with audiences in both physical and digital retail environments. By harnessing first-party data, retail media enables advertisers to engage consumers at pivotal moments in their shopping journeys, offering personalized, relevant messaging that enhances the overall retail experience.

A powerful emerging component is in-store audio, seamlessly integrated into the retail environment to influence purchase decisions in real time while enhancing the in-store customer experience.

At IAB Canada, we are committed to supporting this dynamic industry through robust research, education, and collaboration. This commitment is exemplified by our partnership with Leger, a leader in market research, as we continue to explore the opportunities and challenges within the retail media landscape. Together, we aim to provide the industry with actionable insights and guidance, ensuring that advertisers can maximize their investments while fostering meaningful consumer engagement.

As retail media evolves, IAB Canada will remain a steadfast resource for the industry, offering innovative content and fostering connections that drive success. Thank you for joining us on this journey of growth and innovation.



Luc Dumont, Senior Vice-President

Leger is proud to have collaborated with IAB Canada on *Harmonizing Retail Media: The 2025 In-Store Audio Playbook*, a comprehensive study examining the role of in-store audio advertising in the evolving retail media landscape. The study explores how in-store audio serves as a key driver of consumer engagement, influencing shopping behavior at critical moments in the purchase journey. The report highlights the unique ability of in-store audio to create meaningful brand connections in high-intent retail environments.

The findings show that in-store audio not only captures shopper attention but also has a measurable impact on purchase behavior and brand perception. Short, targeted messages delivered in a retail setting can influence consumer decisions in real-time while also reinforcing longer-term brand consideration. The study underscores the increasing role of in-store audio in a well-rounded retail media strategy, offering advertisers a way to connect with consumers at the point of purchase.

Beyond this study, Leger has also worked with Stingray Advertising on brand lift research that further supports the effectiveness of in-store audio. These studies provide additional validation of how in-store audio influences consumer behavior, from prompting immediate purchases to strengthening brand affinity. Measuring real-world impact beyond recall, this research reinforces the value of in-store audio as a tool for advertisers looking to connect with shoppers in a retail setting.

Executive Summary

The 2025 In-Store Audio Playbook examines the transformative potential of retail media, with a specific focus on in-store audio advertising as a critical driver of engagement and sales. This research, conducted by IAB Canada in collaboration with Leger, highlights how retail media—defined as advertising within retailers’ owned and operated properties and supported by first-party customer data—is reshaping the advertising landscape in Canada. With the sector projected to reach \$3.8 billion by 2025, retail media represents one of the fastest-growing channels in digital advertising.

Retail environments offer unparalleled reach, with 97% of Canadians visiting retail stores at least monthly and 84% doing so weekly. In-store advertising influences 57% of shoppers’ purchase decisions, making it a critical touchpoint in the customer journey. Audio ads drive both immediate conversions and long-term brand affinity, with 58% of shoppers who hear the ad in-store making a purchase after exposure and 60% indicating they would consider the product for future purchases.

In-store advertising effectively influences consumer behavior, driving strong brand recall and purchase decisions. In-store audio ads engage both endemic and non-endemic brands, creating full-funnel impact by inspiring impulse buys, influencing at-shelf decisions, and boosting brand presence. As a growing retail media channel, audio enhances digital out-of-home (DOOH) strategies with high-quality creative that cuts through the noise to drive meaningful results.

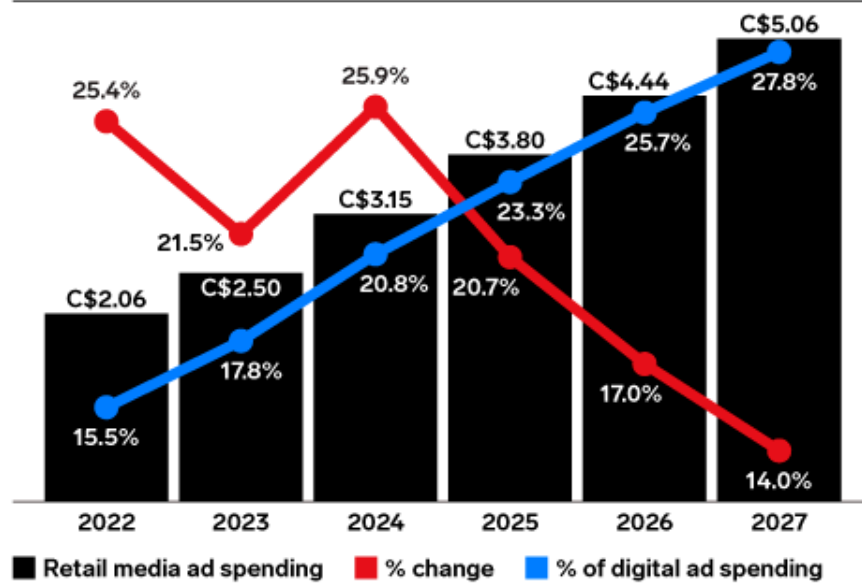
Effective in-store audio ads are characterized by simplicity, clarity, and relevance, ensuring they capture shopper attention even in hurried or distracted states. Dual-audience messaging appeals to families shopping with children, maximizing impact across diverse demographics.

The findings underscore the immense potential of retail media, particularly in-store audio, to engage consumers at pivotal moments in their shopping journey. By delivering concise, actionable messaging in environments rich with purchase intent, in-store audio enhances the retail experience while driving measurable results for advertisers.

Retail Media Driving Digital Ad Investment in Canada

Retail media refers to advertising that appears on a retailer's owned and operated properties both on the web or in-store and includes advertising that is placed on third-party publisher or platform content that is supported by the retailer's first-party customer intelligence and data.

Retail Media Ad Spending in Canada, 2022-2027
billions of C\$, % change, and % of digital ad spending



Note: digital advertising that appears on websites or apps that are primarily engaged in retail ecommerce or is bought through a retailer's media network or demand-side platform (DSP); examples of retail media networks in Canada include Amazon's DSP, Walmart Connect, and Loblaw Media's DSP; includes ads purchased through retail media networks that may not appear on ecommerce sites or apps

Source: Insider Intelligence | eMarketer Forecast, Nov 2023

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Insider Intelligence | eMarketer

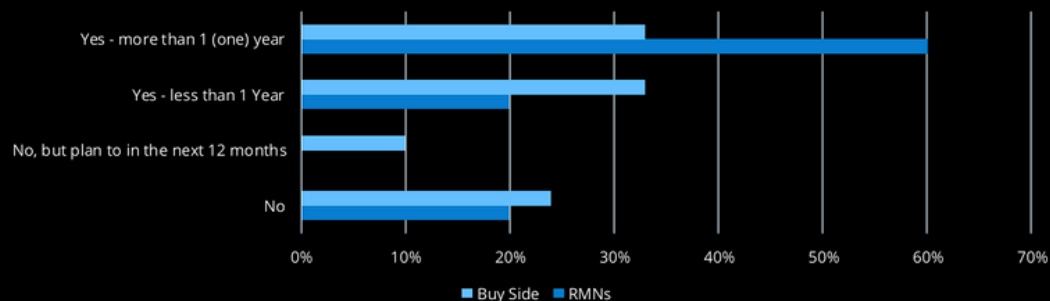
Source: Emarketer (Canada Retail Media 2024)

In Canada, this sector is among the fastest-growing digital channels, projected to reach **\$3.8B by 2025**. This expenditure takes several retail properties into account including websites, mobile apps, streaming services, email channels and in-store placements.

According to [IAB Canada & Retail Council of Canada's 2024 State of Retail Media Study](#), currently, **66% of advertisers collaborate with retailers to access these in-store consumer touchpoints**, and another 10% plan to do so within the next year. Canadian retailers are responding by expanding their media offerings to include both digital and in-store placements, further increasing retail media's influence on digital ad investment across the country.

Over 60% of agencies & brands report working with Retail Media suppliers.

Are you working with Retail Media Partners/Buyers

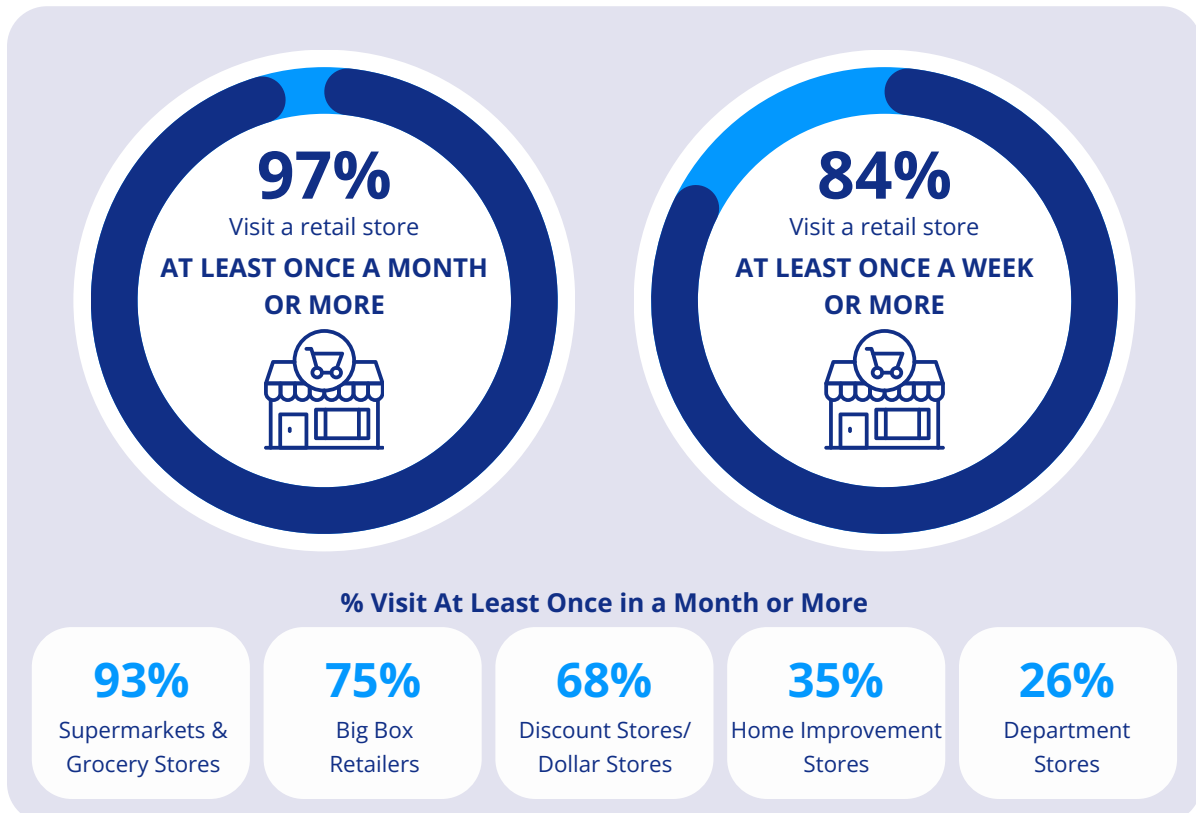


IAB Canada/Retail Council of Canada Barometer Report: State of Retail Media in Canada 2024

RCC RETAIL COUNCIL OF CANADA CCCD COUNCIL CANADIEN DU COMMERCE DE DETAIL iab.canada

In-store marketing is a critical component of the retail media mix, as it provides enhanced opportunities to engage customers in a 360° fashion from the moment they step into a store to the point of purchase. Options include everything from point-of-sale displays to in-store promotions, signage and audio, all serving to captivate attention and encourage purchase behavior.

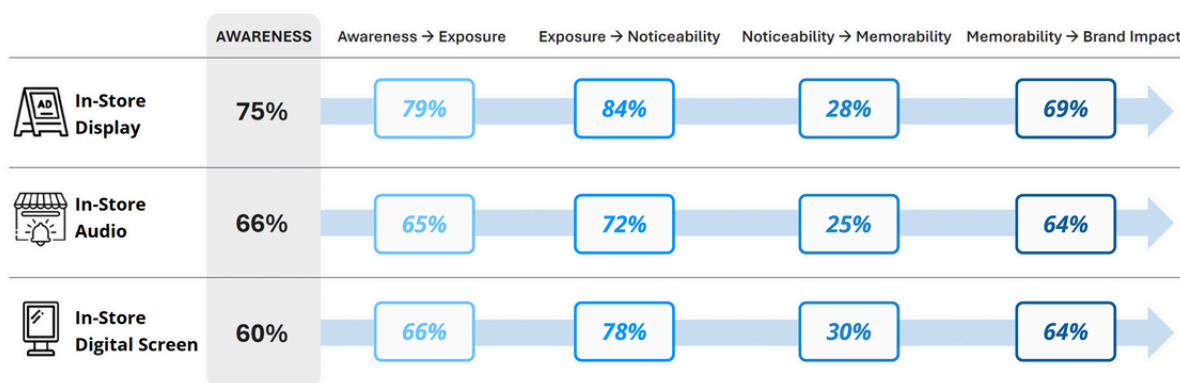
It's no wonder that in-store advertising is a rapidly growing sector, given the steady foot traffic that guarantees exposure in a sales environment. Large retailers are operating at incredible reach levels with **97% of Canadians reporting that they visit a retail store at least once a month and 84% doing so each week.**



Source: IAB Canada & Leger (Retail Advertising Landscape Study Q4 2024)

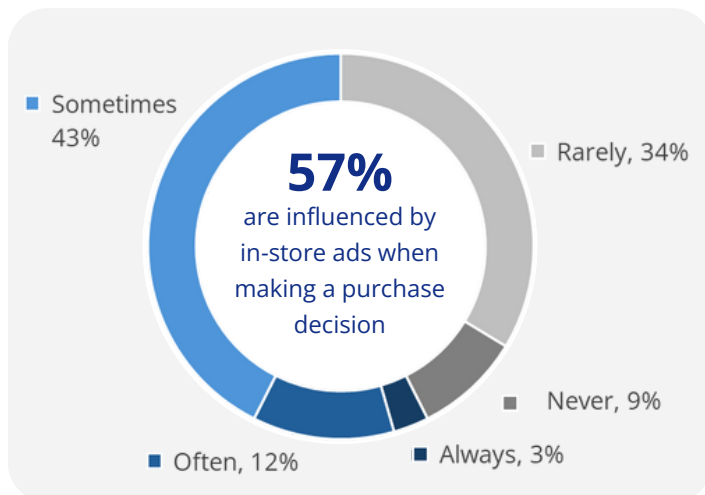
The Powerful Role of Audio in Retail Environments

In-store advertising channels in general demonstrate strong potential for influencing consumers during their shopping experience, showing high levels of memorability and brand impact. Between 70-80% of consumers exposed to in-store advertising recall noticing it, and all formats show a healthy conversion from memorability to brand impact.

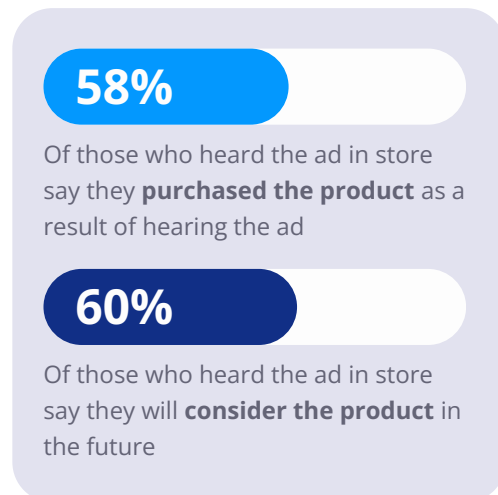


Source: IAB Canada & Leger (Retail Advertising Landscape Study Q4 2024)

In-store ads have a notable impact on consumer behaviour, where **57%** are influenced into making a purchase decision. In a separate study conducted by Stingray Advertising and Leger, **58%** of consumers who heard the in-store audio ads will purchase the product, while **60%** will consider the product in the future.

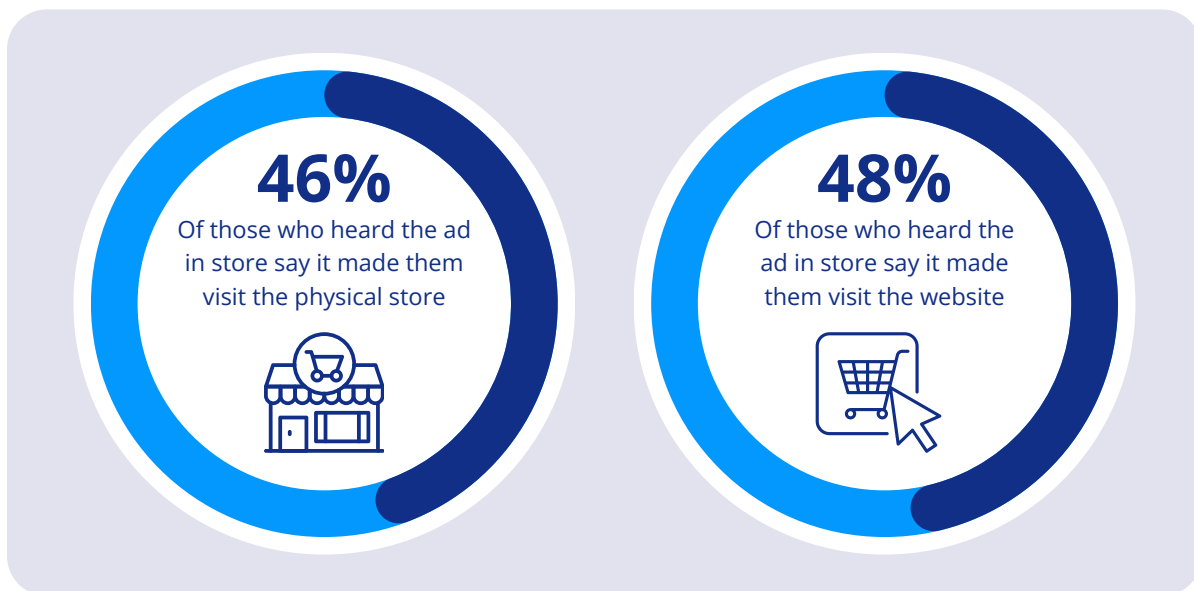


Source: IAB Canada & Leger (Retail Advertising Landscape Study Q4 2024)



Source: 36 brand lift studies conducted by Stingray Advertising and Leger in 2022-2024

In-store audio ads also provide non-endemic brands a way to engage consumers directly in a shopping mindset, even without having products in-store. Brands can leverage in-store audio ads to drive both foot traffic (**46%** will visit a physical store) or online visits (**48%** will visit the website) - creating a full-funnel experience.



Source: IAB Canada & Leger (Retail Advertising Landscape Study Q4 2024)

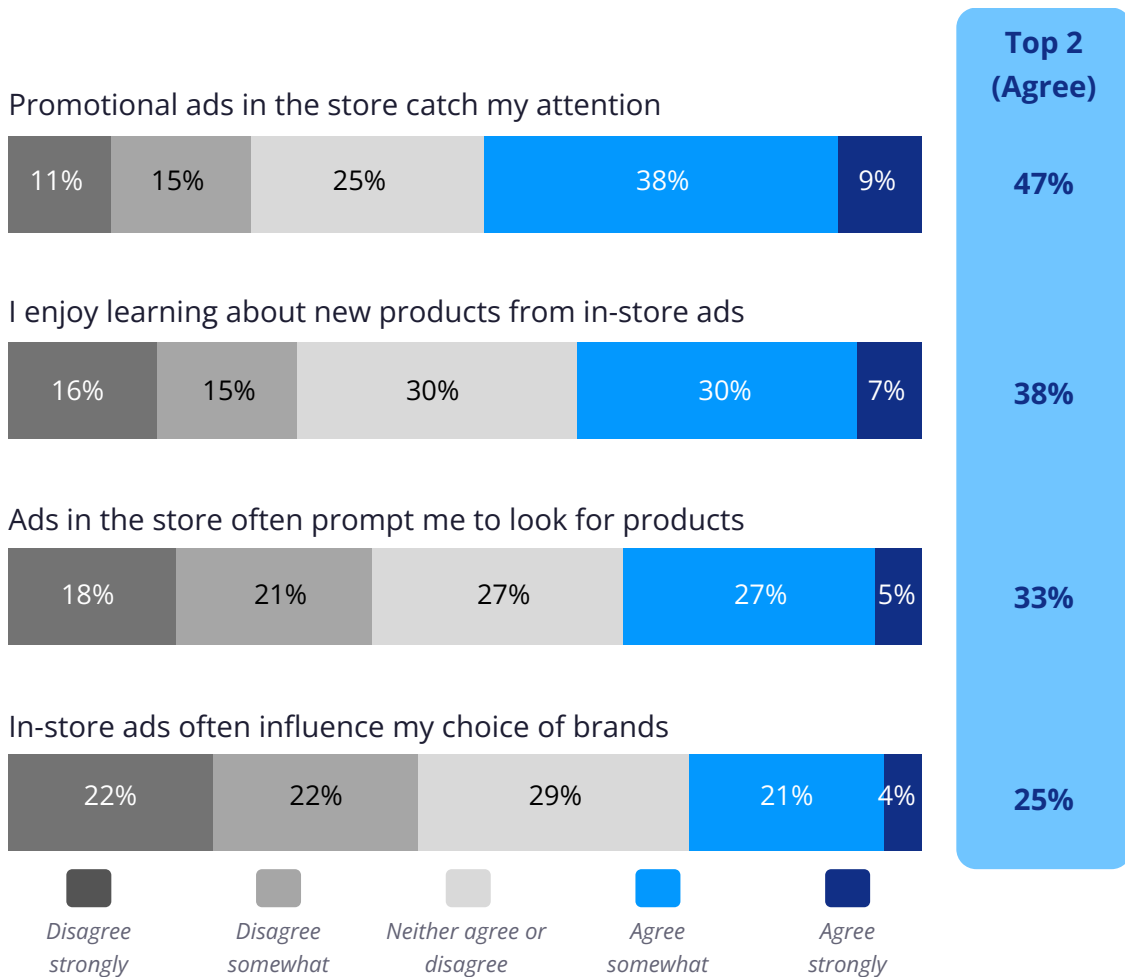
While digital display leads in delivering cross-funnel results, audio has seen tremendous growth as a retail media channel and is used in stores to help inspire impulse shopping, at-shelf decision-making and reinforcing brand impact.

Audio advertising within retail environments can play an integral role in an overall digital out-of-home (DOOH) advertising strategy and has the power to cut through background music or announcement style messaging with sophisticated, high-quality creative that boosts brands' overall in-store digital presence to influence purchasing behavior and drive meaningful results.

In-store audio is a powerful and often underutilized tool for brands looking to engage consumers at the point of purchase. By integrating in-store audio into the retail ecosystem, brands can influence decision-making in real time, drive conversion, and create lasting brand impact.
- **Nikki Stone**, Chief Commerce Officer, GroupM Canada

Understanding Meaningful Engagement in Retail Audio

We've established the tremendous reach retail offers in general. The knock-on potential for in-store audio is extensive, benefiting from frequent consumer visits and qualified audiences within familiar retail environments. Approximately 47% of Canadians report that in-store ads effectively capture their attention, while 38% appreciate discovering new products through these ads. 33% says that in-store audio ads prompt them to search for featured products. In-store ads often influence brand choice for 25% of consumers. Brands can leverage this channel to build awareness and drive product engagement in a uniquely immersive way.

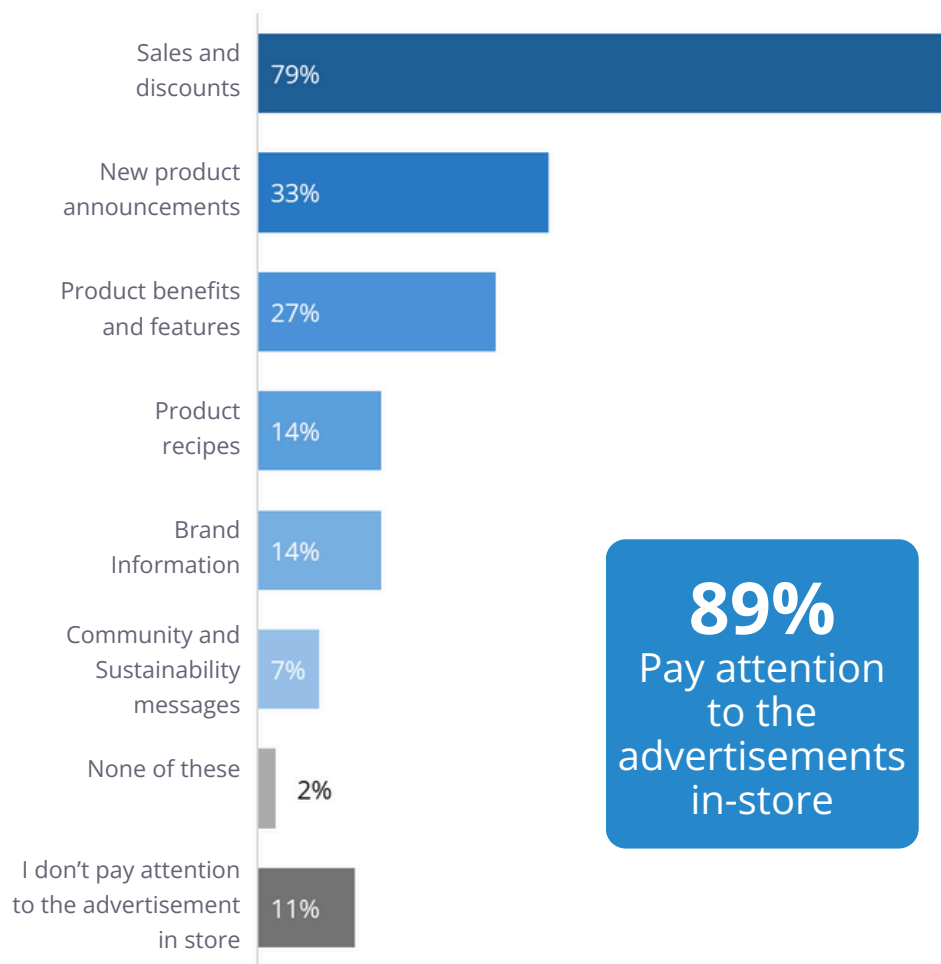


Note: Percentages may not total 100%.

Source: IAB Canada & Leger (Retail Advertising Landscape Study Q4 2024)

Re-Thinking the Path to Placement

As the advertising funnel evolves within retail media, in-store audio plays a strategic role across multiple stages of the customer journey. This medium can capture initial attention, provide relevant product information, and encourage purchase decisions, making it suitable for cross-funnel messaging. Key messaging that resonates in retail audio includes sales and discounts (79%), new product announcements (33%) and product benefits and features (27%). The simplicity of these messages is crucial, as they significantly outperform complex messaging on topics like social responsibility or detailed product usage. There is significant drop-off as messaging becomes more complex or longer in format like product recipes (14%) or community and sustainability messages (7%).



Source: IAB Canada & Leger (Retail Advertising Landscape Study Q4 2024)

49% of Canadians report that they are often in a hurry and try to leave the store as quickly as possible. As mentioned earlier, messaging that is brief and on-point stands a higher chance of success than longer, more involved ad spots. With 41% reporting that they are shopping with kids, it is important to keep audience in mind and where possible appeal to both audiences when appropriate. Simplicity, clarity and brevity are guiding principles that can help overcome the top cited challenges to in-store ads.

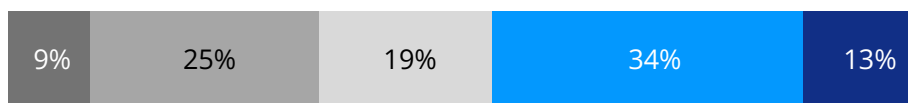
I often shop in a hurry and try to leave the store as quickly as possible



Top 2 (Agree)

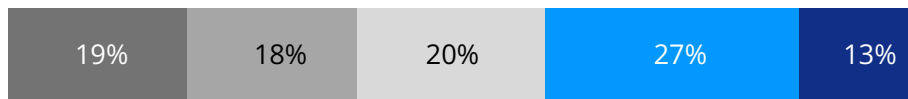
49%

I stick to a shopping list and rarely look at other products



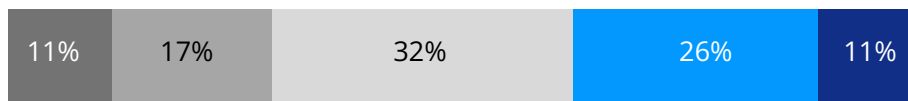
47%

I am mostly accompanied by kids while shopping



41%

I find it challenging to focus on ads while shopping in-store



37%

Disagree strongly

Disagree somewhat

Neither agree or disagree

Agree somewhat

Agree strongly

Note: Percentages may not total 100%.

Source: IAB Canada & Leger (Retail Advertising Landscape Study Q4 2024)

Operationalizing Retail Media

In Canada, media agencies are increasingly structuring their operations to support retail media. 62% of major media agencies in Canada report investing in the retail media space. With only a few years of experience, many agencies are establishing dedicated teams to focus on this new channel, leveraging retail media budgets and creating bespoke services for clients. Most (63%) report a specialized group within the organization that is focused on trade and retail media budgets representing a significant new opportunity for media agencies, while only 26% have either a separate media buying team or use a hybrid-model.

In addition, retail media networks are performing. More than half (55%) describe their experiences working with networks as positive.

Shifting Budgets

The expansion of retail media has resulted in significant budget shifts across advertising channels. Strategically, 62% of advertisers report reallocating funds towards retail media. 44% report diverting budgets from programmatic advertising, 38% from traditional and display advertising, and 25% from linear TV. Trade budgets, historically managed by in-house or specialty agencies, are now increasingly directed towards retail media, reflecting a fundamental shift in how brands approach ad spend. This reallocation signals an emphasis on reaching consumers at the point of purchase, enhancing real-time influence over purchasing behavior and presenting an interesting change in agency dynamics as these trade budgets historically have been handled in-house or with specialty retail agencies.

Planning for Success

The foundation of any successful retail media campaign lies in setting clear, measurable objectives and understanding the target audience deeply. Objectives can range from increasing brand awareness to driving in-store traffic or boosting specific product sales. These goals should be SMART: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound.

Setting Objectives

The first step in any successful in-store retail media campaign is ensuring clarity on how to measure the success of a campaign; marrying the relevant KPI to SMART objectives. Retail media is no longer just about driving short term performance, it is now a proven way to build brands. Campaign objectives should be both long, and short term, and the KPI's should reflect that.

Short-term KPIs may focus on metrics like incremental sales or ROAS, while longer-term objectives could involve customer acquisition or average customer value growth. Additional goals might include improving retailer relationships, enhancing brand awareness, encouraging department-specific visitation, elevating customer experience through enhanced in-store content or achieving dominance in specific product categories. By aligning these objectives, brands can ensure that retail media campaigns support both performance-driven and brand-building goals, making the most of this unique channel's potential.

What Works in Retail Audio

Effective in-store audio ads are characterized by simplicity and relevance. Canadian consumers respond best to brief, actionable messages, with 49% of shoppers expressing a preference for concise audio content as they often aim to complete shopping quickly. Advertisements highlighting sales, new products, product location inside the store and clear benefits resonate most, especially as some shoppers navigate stores with children, indicating the importance of crafting messages for a dual-audience. Keeping audio ads short, straightforward and to-the-point helps ensure they are engaging and effective in driving in-store action.

Some additional considerations for effective in-store audio ads include:



Clear & Direct Messaging - deliver a straightforward, easy to understand, and concise message. Ads shorter than 20 seconds perform relatively better, with higher purchase conversion and future purchase intent compare to longer ads.



Informative Content - provide useful information about the product's benefits or where to find it in-store. Ads focused on brand awareness and features drive higher purchase and consideration rates.



Slogans - Ads with a slogan had higher purchase and future consideration rates. Use memorable slogans or taglines to reinforce brand recall.



Pleasant Voice and Tone - a friendly, soothing, or cheerful tone in the ad's voice resonates positively with shoppers.



Upbeat and Catchy Music/Sound - Ads with catchy tunes or upbeat background music boosts engagement and creates a positive vibe, leading to higher purchase intent and consideration than ads without it.



Convenient Reminders - reminding consumers about products they could pick up during their shopping trip can prompt interest in buying the product.

Source: Leger & Stingray (36 BLS studies 2022-2024)

The Case for Investing in In-Store Audio Advertising



Retail Environments Offer Extensive Reach:

With 97% of Canadians visiting retail stores at least once a month, 63% visiting 3 or more stores in a month and 84% shopping weekly, retail environments offer unparalleled reach. Grocery stores, big-box retailers, and discount stores maximize the exposure, targeting and engagement opportunities for in-store audio advertising.



Effectively Captures Shopper Attention Despite Distractions:

With 89% of shoppers paying attention to in-store advertisements and 71% rarely or never using headphones while shopping, the in-store environment offers a focused setting for brands to capture attention without competing against personal media.



Offers an Environment Where Consumers are Open to Product Discovery:

57% state that they are influenced by in-store ads when making purchase decisions. Shoppers also show an engagement with product information; 37% enjoying learning about new products in-store. This creates an ideal opportunity for prompting unplanned purchases.



Immediate Sales and Long-Term Affinity:

Leger brand lift studies demonstrated that, 58% of shoppers who heard audio ads in-store made a purchase, and 60% stated they would consider the product for future purchases. This highlights the dual impact of audio ads: driving immediate conversions while simultaneously fostering brand affinity for sustained consumer engagement.



Engages Non-Endemic Audiences: For brands without in-store presence, audio ads drive physical and online store visits, with 46% visiting a store and 48% visiting a website after hearing an ad. This makes in-store audio valuable for cross-channel engagement.

Conclusion

The growth of retail media in Canada represents a transformative opportunity for advertisers and retailers alike. As retail media spend accelerates, brands that effectively leverage in-store audio, in-store displays and in-store digital screens stand to benefit from enhanced customer engagement, broader reach and measurable impact. Audio has proven to be a powerful tool in influencing in-store decision-making and creating memorable brand moments, making it an invaluable asset within the retail media mix.

To harness the full potential of retail media, advertisers must establish clear objectives, utilize data-driven strategies and prioritize customer experience for each step of the customer journey. As the landscape evolves, collaboration among media agencies, retailers and brands will be key to unlocking innovative formats and more sophisticated targeting capabilities, ensuring that retail media continues to thrive as an essential pillar of digital advertising in Canada.



About the Interactive Advertising Bureau of Canada (IAB Canada)

Founded in 1997, the Interactive Advertising Bureau of Canada (IAB Canada) serves as the voice and thought leader of Canada's digital marketing and advertising industry. Representing over 250 stakeholders, including advertisers, agencies, media companies, and government associations, IAB Canada is the only national trade association dedicated exclusively to digital marketing and advertising. IAB Canada's members contribute to nearly 90% of the \$18.1 billion digital advertising industry in Canada, including SMEs and large corporations across diverse sectors.



About Leger

Leger is a leading market research firm, recognized for its expertise in consumer behavior and media trends. In collaboration with IAB Canada, Leger conducted comprehensive research on the retail media landscape in Canada, providing critical insights into the growth and effectiveness of audio in retail. Leger's findings are instrumental in guiding brands and agencies as they adapt to the evolving media environment and capitalize on retail media's transformative potential.

Acknowledgement

IAB Canada and Leger gratefully acknowledge the support of the Retail Council of Canada and Stingray Advertising. Their contributions were instrumental in the development of this playbook. Thank you.



Further reading:

- [IAB Canada/Retail Council of Canada - Barometer report: The State of Retail Media in Canada \(November 2024\)](#)
- [Leger/IAB Canada/Stingray Advertising - Retail Advertising Landscape \(October 2024\)](#)

Get Involved

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