

Maple Leaf Foods: Look for the Leaf

Insights & Ideas

In early 2025, a wave of Canadian pride swept across the country, sparked by tariffs, political tensions, and the threat of becoming the 51st state. Canadians rallied together in an unprecedented movement to support local businesses and buy homegrown products, leaving U.S. brands off shopping lists as a sign of solidarity.

Maple Leaf Foods, a brand deeply rooted in Canadian heritage, recognized both an opportunity and a responsibility in this moment. With nearly every brand attempting to capitalize on patriotic sentiment, the challenge was clear: to rise above the noise.

The insights driving the campaign were hiding in plain sight; Maple Leaf's name and logo literally carry the national symbol. That gave Maple Leaf Foods permission to lead the "Buy Canadian" conversation and do it in a way that was uniquely Canadian: sharing the spotlight.

For media, in a marketplace where every brand was vying for patriotic attention, our approach would also become the disruption. Rather than relying on traditional reach and frequency, we engineered a media plan designed to earn attention through intensity, scale, and cultural relevance.

Instead of putting itself at the center, Maple Leaf Foods chose to help Canadian shoppers discover even more Canadian brands, encouraging them to "Look for the Leaf," even if it wasn't theirs. The brand teamed up with over 56 other Canadian-made brands positioning itself not just as a locally made product, but as a champion of Canadian unity and shared identity. The message was simple, but the media plan was anything but.

Media Execution

To make this feel like a cultural event, not just a campaign, we launched a coordinated 48-hour national media takeover, reaching Canadians in both official languages from coast to coast. This approach was a dramatic departure from the brand's usual reliance on television, online video, and targeted social buys.

The media plan was built for disruption: a full-throttle, time-boxed blitz rooted in share of voice and maximum visibility, designed to earn, not just buy, attention. The campaign dominated homepages of top-tier news outlets, blanketed high-traffic digital out-of-home placements in key markets and took over social channels. Even returning politicians in Ottawa were targeted with special ad placements in regional newspapers. Every channel reinforced the others, and where a formal media takeover wasn't possible, the team flooded the channel with concentrated spend to further reinforce the message. For 48 hours, it was impossible to go online, step outside, check your phone, or read the news without seeing "Look for the Leaf."

This "flood-the-zone" mentality created urgency and cultural relevance, upending the traditional always-on model in favor of moment-based intensity. Two high impact out-of-home dominations

were prioritized in high-dwell, high-visibility environments, including transit hubs, that then garnered significant earned media impressions. Formal takeovers on select digital platforms ensured complete category and platform dominance, while creative and media were developed in parallel to deliver a seamless, platform-optimized narrative.

Innovation

The innovation was in treating media as the message. The 48-hour blitz was a deliberate, disruptive departure from category norms, making the media plan itself the story. Maple Leaf Foods didn't just buy attention; it earned it by making itself, and Canadian unity, impossible to miss. The campaign's impact was measured not just by mentions, but by cultural resonance and business results: Maple Leaf Foods owned only 17% of the conversation by mentions, but captured 55% of total earned reach, proving the approach landed in higher-impact channels and reached more people than any competitor.

Results

Maple Leaf Foods was recognized not just as a Canadian brand, but as the leader of a national movement, demonstrating that when a brand's message and reach is bigger than itself, it can drive both cultural resonance and measurable business impact.

In just 48 hours, the campaign:

- Reached **67%** of all Canadian grocery shoppers, a remarkable achievement given the crowded media landscape and short duration.
- The 48hr blitz delivered **46M Impressions**, driving a **7%** increase in Sales Volume, a **43%** lift in Brand Engagement, and a **2%** gain in Share of Voice (compared to the previous week).
- The campaign generated **148K** clicks to the Maple Leaf Foods website, with an overall click-through rate (CTR) of 0.51%, **538%** above industry benchmarks, and a standout **3.23%** CTR on TikTok.
- The campaign generated **10M** Earned Impressions, totalling over \$150K in estimated media value.

After the 48hr blitz, Canadians were still talking about the campaign. In fact, 30 days later, we reached a total of 181M people and Maple Leaf Foods saw a **3,077%** increase in Online Mentions.