Brand Doctor

Brand Check-up

Tim Hortons

As of October 27, 2026

Status: Needs attention

Tim Hortons reached a proposed settlement with franchisees and recovered after 2020, but Canadian comparable sales growth slowed to 0.1% in mid-2026 as its marketing calendar fell short.

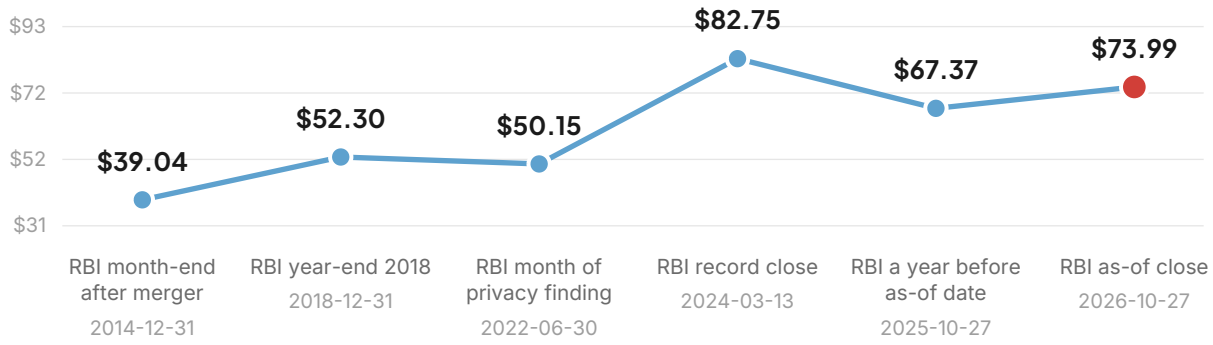
About this check-up

Brand Doctor reviews well-known brands the way we review a client's marketing: symptoms, diagnosis, treatment. This check-up uses public information available on October 27, 2026. It is brand and marketing analysis, not investment advice. Sources are listed at the end.

Vital signs

Share price

USD, at the dates shown [4, 3, 2, 1]



Share price (RBI)

US$73.99

Restaurant Brands International (NYSE: QSR) close, October 27, 2026; Tim Hortons has no shares of its own [1]

Change in a year (RBI)

+9.8%

From US$67.37 on October 27, 2025; 10.6% below the record close of US$82.75 on March 13, 2024 [1, 2, 3]

RBI revenue, 2025

US$9.43 billion

Total revenues for 2025, all RBI brands [6]

Tim Hortons system-wide sales, 2025

US$7.57 billion

Tim Hortons segment (Canada and U.S.), up 3.0% in constant currency; segment revenue US$4.25 billion [6]

Tim Hortons Canada comparable sales

+0.1%

Second quarter of 2026, vs +3.6% a year earlier; +2.8% in 2025 and +4.3% in 2024 [5, 6]

Tim Hortons restaurants

4,570

Tim Hortons segment (Canada and U.S.) at June 30, 2026, up from 4,521 a year earlier [5]

Timeline

2014-08 Burger King agrees to buy Tim Hortons for about C$12.5 billion (US$11.4 billion); 3G Capital is set to own about 51% of the combined company. [8, 16]

2014-12 The deal closes on December 12, and Restaurant Brands International shares begin trading as QSR on the NYSE and TSX on December 15. [7]

2017-06 A Toronto franchisee sues Tim Hortons and RBI in a Canadian court, seeking $500 million in damages and alleging that money was diverted from the advertising fund; the company denies all the allegations. Franchisees had formed the Great White North Franchisee Association earlier in the year. [9]

2018-04 Leger's corporate reputation study ranks Tim Hortons 50th, down from 4th in 2017. [10]

2019-03 A proposed settlement of two franchisee class actions is signed, after a term sheet that included $10 million over two years for local advertising; the franchisee advisory board is to review advertising fund spending. [12]

2022-05 Executives present a back-to-basics plan; Canadian same-store sales had fallen 16.5% in 2020 and risen 10.8% in 2021. [13]

2022-06 Federal, Quebec, B.C. and Alberta privacy authorities find that the Tim Hortons app violated privacy laws by tracking users' locations every few minutes. [14]

2024-03 RBI shares reach a record close of US$82.75 on March 13. [3]

2026-02 RBI reports 2025 results: Tim Hortons Canada comparable sales up 2.8%, after 4.3% in 2024. [6]

2026-08 Second-quarter Tim Hortons Canada comparable sales rise 0.1%; RBI outlines about 80 Canadian openings for 2026, new drinks and a Triangle Rewards link. [5, 15]

Symptoms

- Tim Hortons Canada comparable sales growth slowed from 4.3% in 2024 to 2.8% in 2025 and 0.1% in the second quarter of 2026.
- Canadian foodservice sales grew about 3% in the second quarter of 2026, as reported by Retail Insider, while Tim Hortons Canada comparable sales rose 0.1%.
- Tim Hortons fell from 4th to 50th in Leger's 2018 corporate reputation study and from 13th to 67th in the Reputation Institute's 2018 ranking.
- Privacy authorities found in 2022 that the app tracked users every few minutes, even when it was not open.
- RBI shares closed 10.6% below their March 2024 record on October 27, 2026.

Diagnosis

1 Owner and franchisees pulling apart

After the 2014 merger, a group of franchisees formed their own association, and in 2017 one franchisee sued for $500 million in damages, alleging that money was diverted from the advertising fund; Tim Hortons denied all the allegations. The Canadian Press reported that a 2018 fall in reputation rankings followed a public dispute between RBI and the franchisee association, which included cost-cutting at some franchisees' restaurants after Ontario's minimum wage increase. A proposed settlement followed in March 2019. [9, 11, 12]

2 Lost grip on the everyday visit

CNBC reported that sales and traffic were already stagnating before the pandemic as Canadians chose Starbucks or McDonald's for coffee. The 2022 back-to-basics plan focused on food and drink, digital engagement and the restaurant experience, which suggests where management saw room to improve. [13]

Diagnosis, continued

3 Data collection that outran trust

Privacy authorities found that the app recorded users' movements every few minutes, even when it was not open, and inferred their home and work locations. Collection continued for about a year after plans for targeted advertising were shelved. Tim Hortons agreed to delete the data and build a privacy management program. [14]

4 Growth tied to the marketing calendar

Canada comparable sales growth fell from 4.3% in 2024 to 0.1% in the second quarter of 2026. Retail Insider reported that CEO Josh Kobza acknowledged the marketing calendar had not produced the results management expected; the same report said the brand was comparing against major launches a year earlier and that RBI did not mainly blame a weaker consumer. [5, 6, 15]

Prognosis

Tim Hortons enters late 2026 with more restaurants and a weaker growth rate. RBI said in August that it remained on track for 8% organic adjusted operating income growth in 2026, and it is backing the Canadian business with about 80 new restaurants, an investment program funded mostly by restaurant owners, new drinks and a Triangle Rewards link. Retail Insider reports that Dunkin' is preparing to return to Canada. What to watch: whether Canadian comparable sales recover from 0.1%, whether the new drinks bring new visits rather than swaps from coffee, and whether franchisees keep investing alongside the company.

Treatment

- Keep franchisees inside the marketing plan by having their advisory board review advertising fund spending, as the 2019 proposed settlement set out.
- Run steady brand advertising around coffee, breakfast and the daily habit, so a weak launch quarter does not stall visits.

- Grow cold drinks and later-day visits as additions to the core, and judge them by new visits rather than by sales mix.
- Ask Tims Rewards members only for the data each feature needs, and explain the Triangle Rewards link in plain language.

Lessons for growing companies

Your operators are your brand

Tim Hortons fell from 4th to 50th in a reputation ranking less than a year after a franchisee went to court. Settle disputes with partners before customers see them.

Collect only what you can defend

Regulators found the Tim Hortons app tracked users every few minutes. If you would not explain a data practice in your own ad, do not run it.

Launches are not a strategy

When Tim Hortons' marketing calendar fell short, Canadian comparable sales growth fell to 0.1%. Pair launches with steady brand building that keeps people coming back.

Sources

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About Brand Doctor

Brand Doctor is a marketing strategy consultancy founded by Cliff K. F. Lin. He has spent 17 years in marketing and managed more than $30 million in spend for SaaS, tech and lead-generation companies.

A Brand Check-up applies the method we use with clients to a well-known brand: the symptoms you can see from outside, the root causes behind them, and the treatment we would prescribe. For your own company, we look at six areas (positioning, messaging, customer journey, channel mix, budget and spend, and measurement) and rank what to fix first.

$30M+	135+	8×	17
In marketing spend managed	Campaigns treated	Growth achieved	Years in marketing

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