AlixPartners

Large-scale Consumer & Retail M&A surges as dealmakers prioritise transformative carve-outs

Deal dashboard: Global Consumer & Retail M&A

Summer 2026

2026 has so far seen continued mega-cap M&A activity, fuelled by strategic portfolio realignment by major corporates

Executive summary:

- In H1 2026**, total deal value increased to £130 billion,** up 12% vs. H1 2025, with **1,549 deals at an average EV/EBITDA multiple of 9.5x**. This reflects a lower volume of deals but a larger total deal value, as dealmakers focus capital on large opportunities.
- As corporates streamline portfolios and sponsors target non-core divisions, H1 2026 saw a **wave of consumer carve-outs**. This included McCormick's acquisition of Unilever Foods for £33 billion and Marc Jacobs sale by LVMH for £630 million.
- **Total number of carve-out deals has slowed as dealmakers focus on bigger deals**. The total value of corporate carve-outs increased to £59 billion in H1 2026, a 24% increase in value compared to H1 2025.
- **Food & Beverage remains the most attractive subsector for M&A**, registering the largest total and average deal values. Apparel retail has also seen a return to M&A, with the sharpest rise in deal activity from H1 2025.
- **Health & Beauty M&A slowed down in H1 2026,** though the sector retains the highest EV/EBITDA multiples, profit margins, and revenue growth.

Future outlook:

- **Carve-out activity is set to persist**, as corporates prune non-core segments and PE sponsors pursue complex divestitures. Consumer and retail platforms remain a prime hunting ground for these structured separations.
- **Large-cap[2] deal activity is likely to remain the primary release valve for capital overhang,** as sponsors prioritise scalable platforms and structured financing to deploy dry powder, supporting a continued skew toward >£1 billion transactions.
- **Mid-market[1] momentum may remain uneven and more valuation- and quality-selective**, given a still-subdued macro growth backdrop and higher sensitivity to financing availability and consumer demand uncertainty.
- **Debt capital remains in ample supply, with lender appetite outpacing borrower demand**. Competition between the broadly syndicated loan market, private credit funds, and the high yield market (where issuance size allows) continues to support attractive financing terms.
- Amid GLP-1 adoption, AI-driven disruption, and broader uncertainty in software and technology, **lenders have shown renewed appetite for consumer businesses** as part of a wider rebalancing of portfolios. This is particularly true for those offering resilient demand and strong cash flow visibility.

Source: MergerMarket, AlixPartners analysis | Notes: 1. Mid-market deals are defined as deals worth between £100 million and £1 billion; 2. Large-cap deals are defined as deals worth more than £1 billion;

Macroeconomic headwinds are driving corporates to exit large parts of their portfolios and reorientate towards higher-growth, higher-margin segments

Key statistics: H1 2026

Value

£130B
Total deal value[1]
▼ 15% vs. H2 2025
▲ 12% vs. H1 2025

£271M
Average deal value[1]
▲ 13% vs. H2 2025
▲ 32% vs. H1 2025

Volume

1,549
Total deal volume
▼ 14% vs. H2 2025
▼ 14% vs. H1 2025

Pricing

9.5x[2]
Average. EV/EBITDA
▲ 1% vs. H2 2025
▲ 20% vs. H1 2025

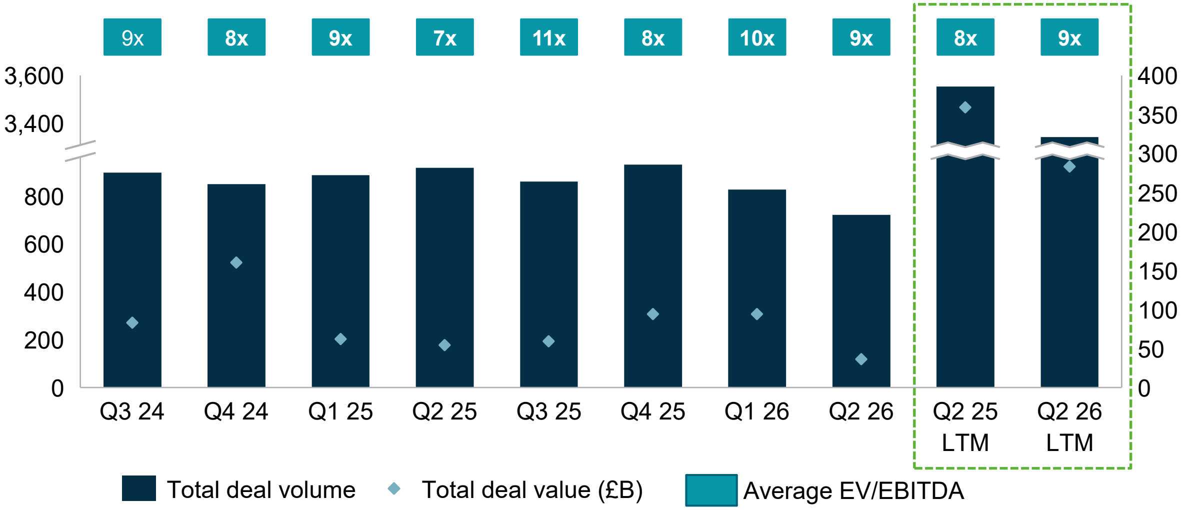
Mid-market deal trends[2]

99
Deals announced
▼ 19% vs. H2 2025
▼ 11% vs. H1 2025

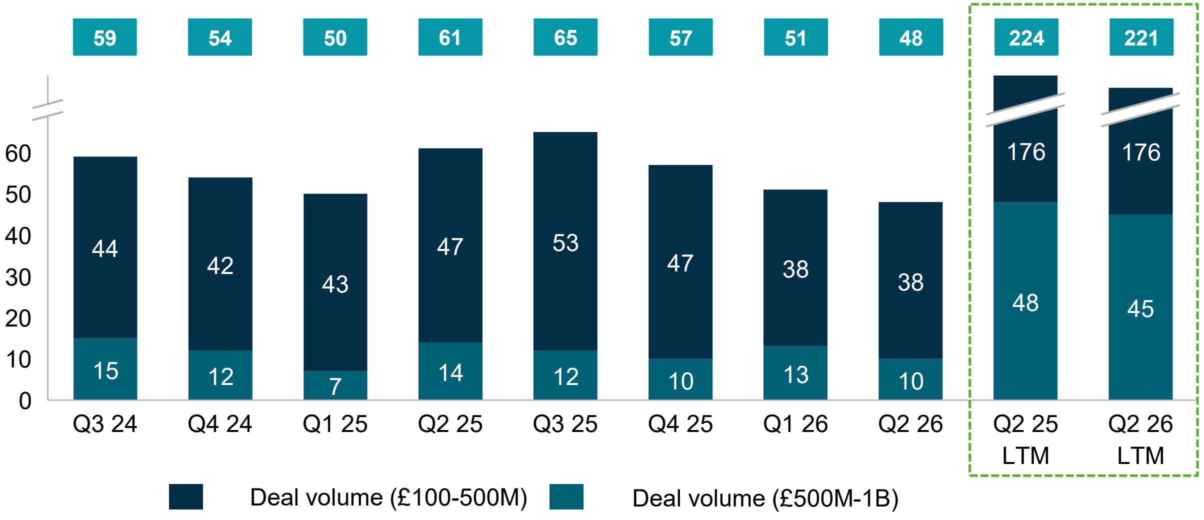
£33B
Total deal value[1]
▼ 8% vs. H2 2025
▲ 2% vs. H1 2025

74
Deals with a corporate buyer
▼ 15% vs. H2 2025
▼ 5% vs. H1 2025

Quarterly deal volume, value[1], and multiples[2]



Quarterly mid-market deal volume[3]



Source: MergerMarket, AlixPartners analysis | Notes: 1. Deal value based on reported deal sizes; 2. Outliers above 20.0x have been excluded from EV/EBITDA analysis; 3. Mid-market deals are defined as deals worth between £100 million and £1 billion;

AlixPartners

The value of corporate carve-outs has increased to nearly £60B in H1 2026 – a 24% increase vs. H1 2025

Key statistics: H1 2026

Deal value trends: Corporate carve-outs

▲24%
Total value[1] of carve-outs in H1 2026 vs. H1 2025

▲£54B
Total value[1] of carve-outs with a corporate buyer in H1 2026

▼£5B
Total value[1] of carve-outs with a PE buyer in H1 2026

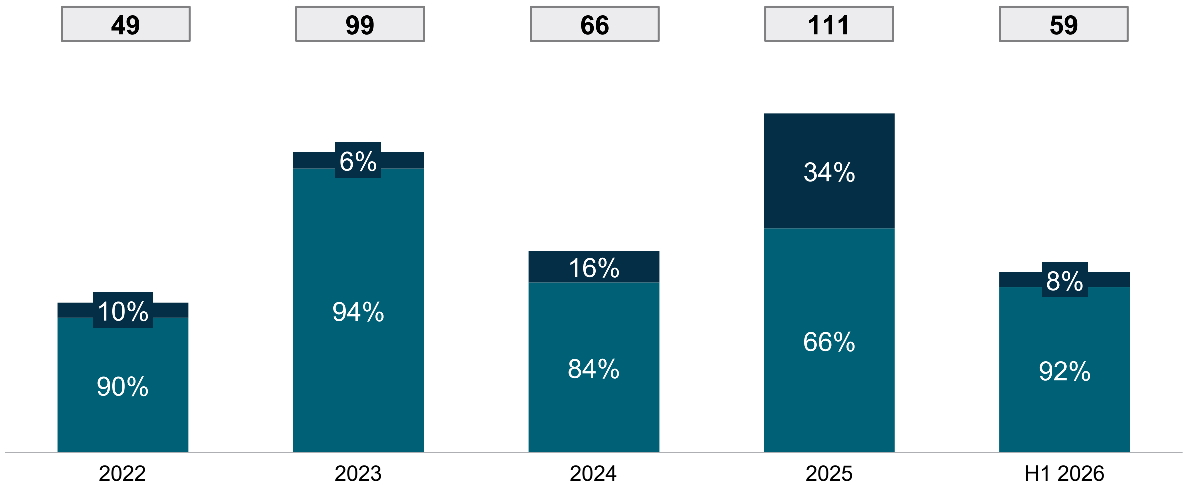
Deal volume trends: Corporate carve-outs

▼31
Carve-outs with a PE buyer in H1 2026

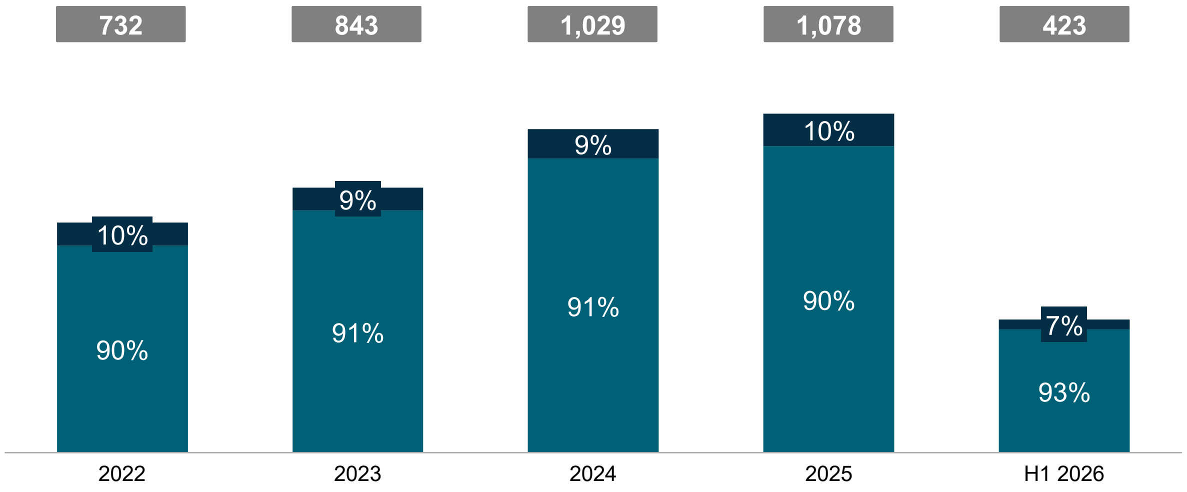
▼392
Carve-outs with a corporate buyer in H1 2026

▼20%
Total carve-outs in H1 2026 vs. H1 2025

Corporate carve-outs by value[1] (GBP billions)



Corporate carve-outs by volume



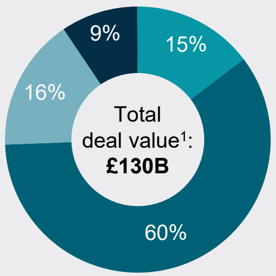
PE | Corporate | Total deal value | Total deal volume

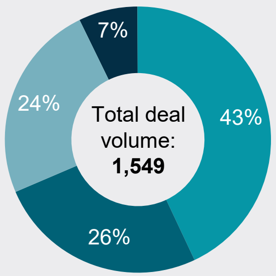
Source: MergerMarket, AlixPartners analysis | Notes: 1. Deal value based on reported deal sizes

AlixPartners

Food & Beverage is the most active segment, seeing the majority of deal activity by value

Geographic split



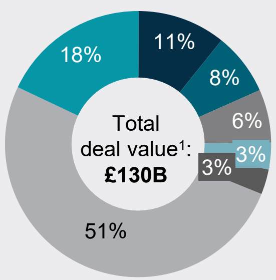


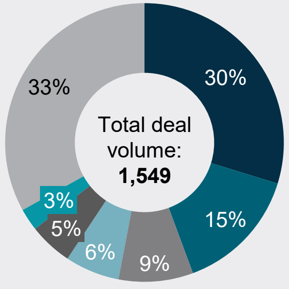
60% Americas share of deal value in H1 2026

43% of H1 2026 deals took place in EMEA (excluding U.K.)

U.K. | EMEA exc. U.K. | Americas | Rest of world

Subsector split



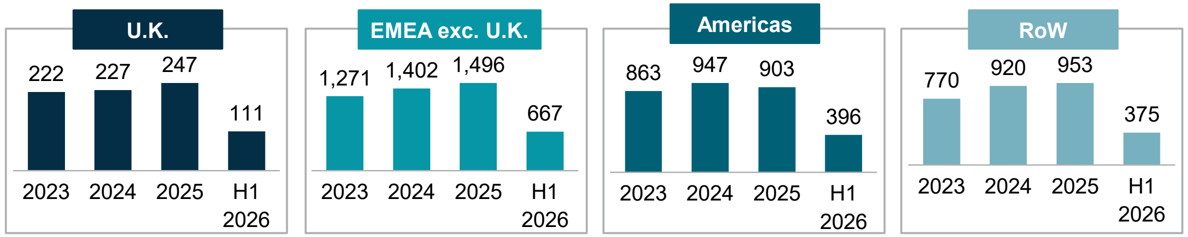


512 Food & Beverage deals in H1 2026

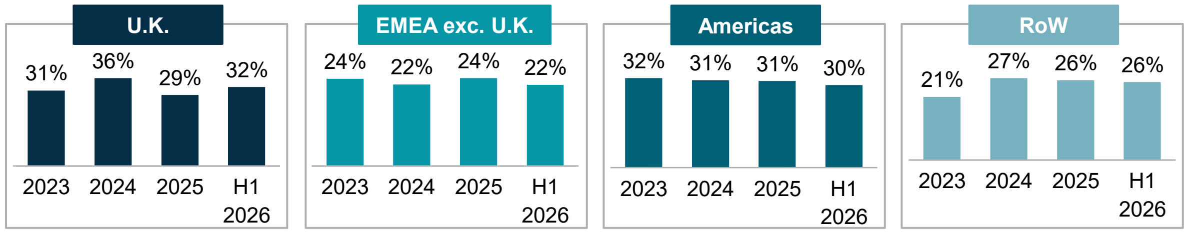
75% Apparel Retail experienced the steepest rise in deal volume from H1 2025

Food & Beverage | Other Consumer Goods | General Merchandise
Apparel Retail | Grocery
Health & Beauty | Apparel Manufacturing

Number of deals



Private Equity as % of total deals



Notable deals

Foods division

Acquired

- McCormick acquire Unilever Foods for £33.4 billion. Unilever shareholders retain ownership of 65% of the combined group.
- This turns Unilever into a beauty, wellbeing, home and personal care company.

Acquired

- Ingredion is acquiring Tate & Lyle for £3.7 billion, a 59% premium, expected to close in H2 2027.
- Combining the two companies creates a specialty-ingredients leader in texture and sugar reduction, with ~£100 million of cost synergies.

Acquired

- Danone is buying meal-replacement brand Huel for £858 million, around 3.4x sales.
- The deal pushes Danone into fast-growing plant-based functional nutrition, with a company that has an established direct-to-consumer channel.

Acquired

- G-III and WHP Global buy Marc Jacobs from LVMH for £630 million. They will operate as a joint venture.
- WHP strategy is to acquire IP and licence operating functions to specialist partners, whilst G-III is accelerating its shift into a brand-led global retailer.

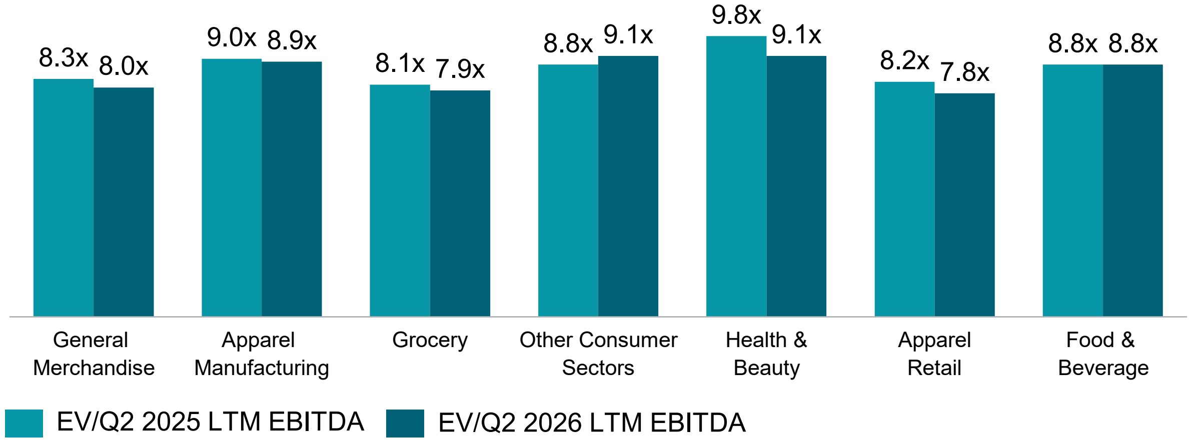
Source: MergerMarket, AlixPartners analysis | Notes: 1. Deal value based on reported deal sizes

Health & Beauty has built the strongest fundamentals – and commands the highest valuation

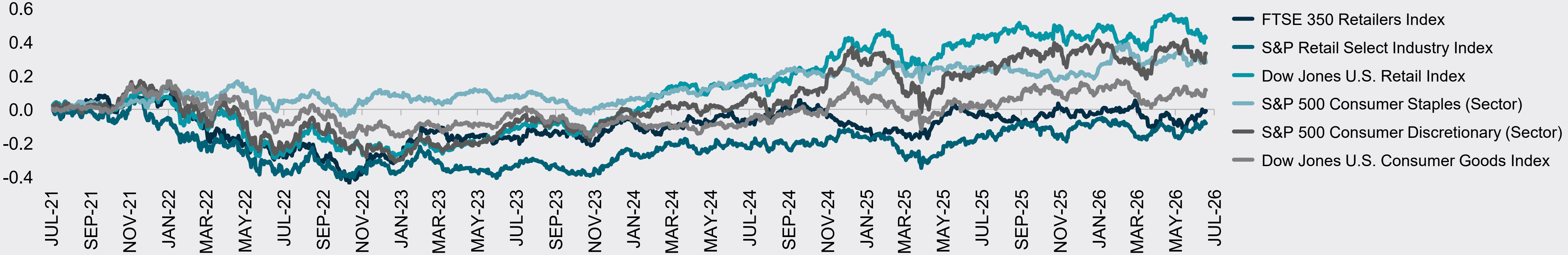
Growth indicators and EV multiples by subsector[1]

	Average trading comparisons			
Sub-sector	Rev. CAGR (2023-2025)	EBITDA margin % (FY 2025)	EV/Q2 2026 LTM REV.	EV/Q2 2026 LTM EBITDA
Food & Beverage	0.5%	8.0%	1.8x	8.8x
Apparel Retail	-1.6%	7.7%	1.6x	7.8x
Health & Beauty	1.5%	11.1%	2.0x	9.1x
Other Consumer Sectors	-1.5%	9.0%	1.8x	9.1x
Grocery	1.2%	4.1%	0.9x	7.9x
Apparel Manufacturing	-3.1%	8.5%	1.7x	8.9x
General Merchandise	-0.7%	6.1%	1.5x	8.0x

LTM EV/EBITDA multiples by subsector[1]



Sector index performance[2]



Sources: S&P Capital IQ, FTSE 350 General Retailers, S&P Retail Select Industry Index, Dow Jones U.S. Retail Index, S&P 500 Consumer Staples Sector, S&P 500 Consumer Discretionary Sector, Dow Jones U.S. Consumer Foods Index, AlixPartners analysis. | Notes: 1. Multiples above 20.0x excluded as outliers; (2) Rebased on 30/06/2021

AlixPartners

AlixPartners’ integrated offering delivers value to clients throughout the entire M&A deal lifecycle

Value creation along the deal lifecycle

Acquisition — Ownership — Exit

Pre-acquisition
- Outside-in due diligence
- Strategic and business review
- M&A strategy and outside-in synergy assessment.

Acquisition
- Lead M&A and debt advisory
- Operational and IT due diligences
- Post merger integration planning
- Carve-out support
- Merger clearance advice

Asset ownership
- Post merger integration implementation
- Synergy realisation
- Buy and build support
- Debt advisory – refi/growth/optimisation

Divestment preparation
- Industrial logic
- Performance improvement and business planning
- Exit readiness

Disposal
- Lead M&A advisory
- In-house M&A support
- Capital advisory
- Carve-out planning and execution

AlixPartners brings sector, operational, corporate finance, and capital advisory execution expertise to clients

James Cass
Partner & Managing Director – Corporate Finance, Consumer & Retail
E: jcass@alixpartners.com
M: +44 7721 628 756

Graeme Smith
Partner & Managing Director – Corporate Finance, Consumer & Retail
E: gsmith@alixpartners.com
M: +44 7932 158 222

Azeem Ahmed
Director – Corporate Finance, Consumer & Retail
E: aahmed@alixpartners.com
M: +44 7920 156 936

Chris Lowe
Partner & Managing Director – Head of Capital Advisory
E: clowe@alixpartners.com
M: +44 7920 775 642

Andy Searle
Partner & Managing Director – EMEA Leader of Consumer Products
E: asearle@alixpartners.com
M: +44 7920 156 919

Matt Clark
Partner & Managing Director – EMEA Leader of Retail
E: maclark@alixpartners.com
M: +44 7947 730 225

AlixPartners’ insights

- Unlocking volume growth report & podcast series
- AI in retail
  - AI is visible everywhere in Retail, except in the P&L
  - AI shopping agents: Customer gains, retailer gains, and what retailers stand to lose
  - Employee happiness in the age of AI: Why retail lags and what leaders get right
- GLP-1 and the snack sector: Disruptive trend, not existential threat
- Retail Viewpoint
- Consumer Products Corner
  - Strong demand meets rising costs as supply chain gains remain under strain
  - Apparel & Luxury feels effects of consumer price fatigue as household budgets tighten