2026 Global Asset Insights Report

Gordon Brothers

1903

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Meet Gordon Brothers

Gordon Brothers is the original global asset expert. Through our integrated asset advisory services, lending and financing, and trading, we deliver solutions across sectors to provide liquidity, create security, enable growth and maximize asset value.

50+
countries in which we operate

10M
historical sale data points

9,000+
appraisals completed[1]

$23B+
in fair market value of asset dispositions[2]

$2B+
in originations[3]

Since 1903, Gordon Brothers has partnered with operating companies, advisors, investors and lenders to help fuel growth, facilitate strategic consolidation or finance new opportunities. **We offer a range of integrated and standalone solutions** customized to unlock and optimize unrecognized value through Asset Services, Asset Lending & Financing and Asset Trading.

Asset Services

We provide businesses an understanding of the true value of their assets

Asset Lending & Financing

We provide the capital to unlock the future

Asset Trading

We monetize assets for companies while protecting their reputation

CONVERTING ASSET EQUITY INTO LIQUIDITY

Our deep asset expertise across the full spectrum of commercial and industrial assets enables us to provide comprehensive, creative solutions, including turnkey asset sales and multi-jurisdiction transactions, that help companies and investors to maximize asset value and transform their businesses.

REIMAGINING RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES

Changing consumer habits, evolving technology and the acceleration of e-commerce—retail is one of the most dynamic aspects of the global economy. We partner with our clients to maintain brand integrity, protect customer goodwill and allow them to focus on their core business while achieving stronger operational and financial results.

GROWING AND REIMAGINING ICONIC BRANDS

A company's brand is often more valuable than its hard assets. At Gordon Brothers, we help clients turn this intangible asset into tangible value.

TURNING REAL ESTATE INTO REAL RESULTS

As the industry leaders in full life cycle portfolio optimization, Gordon Brothers helps companies grow, reposition and right size their real estate footprint. By combining data science, market insight and transactional expertise, we transform real estate portfolios into engines of growth, flexibility and long-term enterprise value.

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[1] Represents activity from 2017 to 2022.
[2] Represents activity from 2017 to 2022.
[3] Capital deployed for lending includes amounts Gordon Brothers participated and syndicated out from 2020 to June 2025.

A Note from Our Executives

As the original global asset expert, we deliver solutions across sectors to provide liquidity, create security, enable growth and maximize asset value. Since our founding in 1903, our expertise has expanded to deliver asset advisory services, lending and financing and trading across brands, industrial, retail, consumer products and real estate.

In 2025, we bolstered our geographic and industry presence with the addition of over 200 team members, including the acquisition of SOLIC Capital Advisors, SIA Group and Atlantic RMS. The addition of these team members and our continued entrenchment across sectors helped us achieve a record-breaking year in originations and deals.

Among our successes, we completed the purchase of Big Lots Inc., facilitated the U.S. closeout retailer's going concern sale and charted the path forward for the company. Since, Big Lots has reopened 220 stores, rebuilt vendor partnerships, restored normal-course trade terms and completed go-forward lease agreements with landlords across the country. In addition, we continue to work with Big Lots' sponsor through our real estate services.

We also challenged ourselves to unlock new and creative asset-based lending solutions, such as the launch of our new revolving FILO structure, RILO℠ (Revolving-In, Last-Out), which is based on an incremental advance rate, allowing borrowers to draw and repay funds flexibly.

As we look into 2026, we expect to continue this trajectory, with the addition of Janet Jarrett bolstering our investment committee, our recent investment in Rachel Zoe and the acquisitions of the Chinese Laundry and LK Bennett brands. Recently, we supported Middle West Partners' acquisition of Paul Stuart and served as international agent for a $126 million facility to support Valore Holdings' acquisition of Mirai Casting Group. These successes make us uniquely positioned to deliver insights across our core industries.

The launch of this report represents our commitment to doing just that. It brings together leaders across our business lines to share their insights and predications for 2026.

Thank you to our team for their dedication to delivering creative solutions to transform businesses and for the perspectives they have shared in this report. Additionally, we would like to thank our clients for their continued partnership, trusting Gordon Brothers to help them transform their businesses.

Norma Kuntz
Chief Executive Officer

Frank Morton
Chief Investment Officer

What Increased Competition in the Private Credit Space Means for ABL

How Leading Firms Can Differentiate Themselves in a Crowded Market

Private credit has experienced significant growth in recent years, and asset-based lending (ABL) has become a primary vehicle fueling this growth. Driven by changing bank regulations and a need to fund more diverse asset pools, it's clear that the growing momentum of the ABL market will continue as new entrants flood into the space. Despite recent concerns, ABL capabilities also perform well during periods of market uncertainty, driving additional interest in a sector under scrutiny.

The private credit market is a large and diverse industry with many strong players, and continues to expand as the number of companies with unique needs seeking financing grows. The private credit market is set to cross the $2 trillion AUM mark in 2026, and accelerated growth is expected.[4]

Seeing this opportunity, financial services companies, alternative asset managers, hedge funds and others have entered the ABL and private credit space, promising greater access to financing. Firms are now competing up and down the capital stack, working to win deals against other private credit asset-based lenders, as well as both partnering with and competing on the periphery against banks and others in the space.

As a result, the ABL space has moved from a once niche market to mainstream, with five of the top 30 private credit managers launching dedicated ABL funds in the U.S. in 2024 alone. The larger private capital arena has become so crowded that the number of U.S. private equity funds now outpaces that of U.S. fast-food outlets, about 19,000 to 14,000.[5]

> *"As the market becomes increasingly crowded, asset-based lenders need to be adaptive and diligent in 'blocking and tackling' to establish strong and collaborative processes that provide the foundation for successful transactions. Providing a holistic approach to client needs and risk evaluation allows Gordon Brothers to stay ahead of changing industry dynamics."*
>
> **—MARK BOHNTINSKY, GLOBAL HEAD OF CREDIT**

Kyle Shonak
Chief Transaction Officer,
North America

Mark Bohntinsky
Global Head of Credit

[4] Pitchbook, Private credit market to hit $2T this year, with declining defaults.

[5] CNBC, More private equity funds than McDonald's: PE giants forecast industry consolidation.

As the number of new players in the market increases, both competition within the industry and the potential for greater lending risks are expected to grow. Deepening ties and interconnectivity within the space and among new entrants could further heighten risks. Sector-specific knowledge and strong sourcing channels will help firms stand out in a sea of generalists. Additionally, firms able to prioritize collaboration over competition with new entrants to the market will be better poised to benefit.

Similarly, the increased interest in the space, combined with the potential for higher yields, also presents risks as increased competition and dry powder could lead to relaxed standards and a race to the bottom for firms lacking differentiation. Low industry experience, high concentrations of business in risk-prone sectors and a lack of diversification in terms of assets, services and types of financing can all lead to challenges for lenders and their clients, especially those new to ABL.

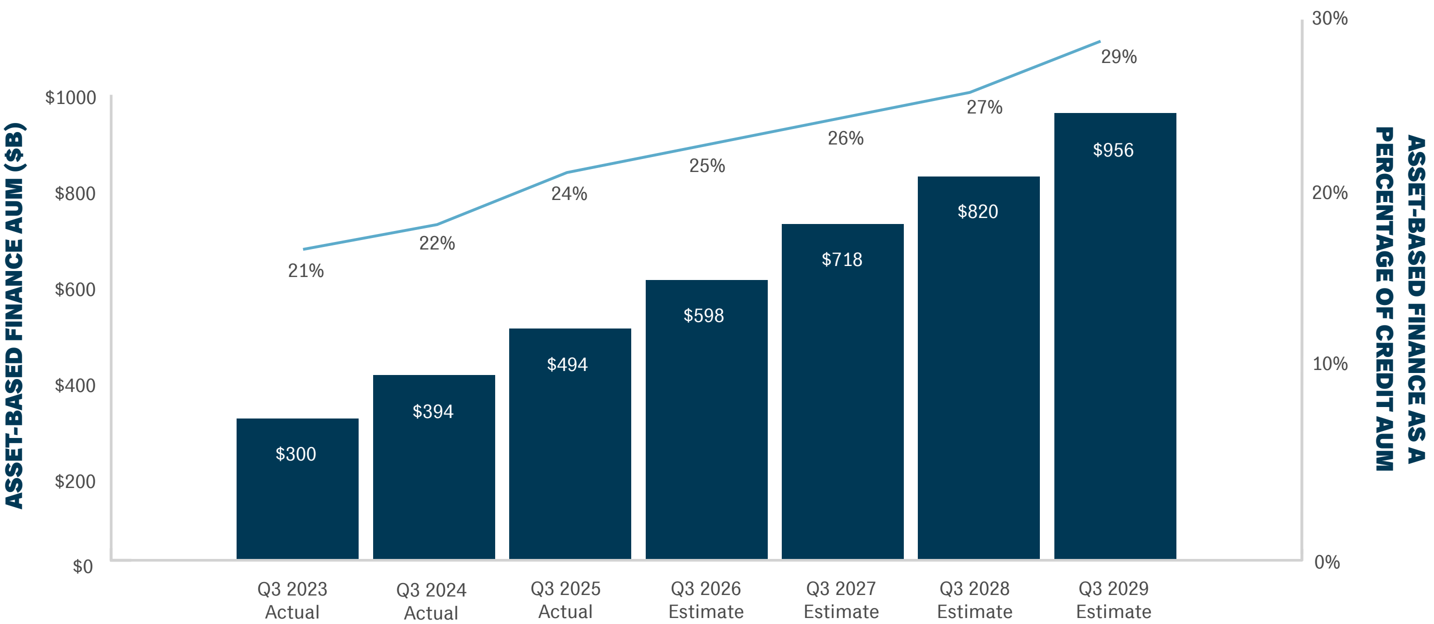
Competition in ABL and private credit more broadly will not abate anytime soon. Participants should understand the growing need to differentiate in order to maximize value, as this innovative financing tool remains a popular, reliable and expanding choice for both firms looking to develop their capabilities and clients seeking liquidity.

PERSPECTIVES

Navigating a Frothy Lending Marketplace

The fallout from the bankruptcies of multiple companies in late 2025 raised concerns across the entire asset-based lending (ABL) industry. Ensuring the market remains resilient during expected periods of greater risk can be achieved through a comprehensive, hands-on approach to asset-based lending that's driven by a solid structure rather than relying solely on pricing to drive deals forward.

Asset-based finance expected to gain share in private credit portfolios



Source: S&P Global Market Intelligence, Quantitative Research & Solutions, as of November 28, 2025. Asset-based finance assets under management actuals and estimates for KKR & Co. Inc., The Carlyle Group Inc., Ares Management Corp., Apollo Global Management Inc. and Blackstone Inc., based on QRS research.

How Intangible Assets Can Drive Value

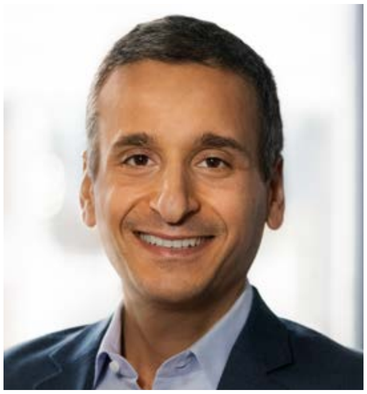
Defining the "Asset-Light" Model

Inflation, ongoing supply chain constraints and rapidly shifting trade policies are all expected to impact consumer spending this year, with the global forecasts anticipating tighter consumer budgets.[6] Consumer brands are already seeing these effects in lower foot traffic, reduced basket sizes and a greater emphasis on promotions and value-based offerings as shoppers seek to stretch their budgets further. For 2026, this shift in consumer sentiment reflects heightened caution and a greater focus on essential purchases, as economic uncertainty prompts consumers to reevaluate their priorities and cut back on discretionary expenses.

As consumers' spending power becomes more limited and cautious, the question for retailers and other consumer brands becomes: how do we re-think our model while retaining our core customers and attracting new consumers? This question is especially pressing for companies in fashion, footwear and home goods—industries that have struggled with overproduction and large physical footprints.

In 2026, we anticipate that more companies will answer this question by looking for opportunities to shift to an "asset-light" model. The asset-light approach enables companies to adapt more rapidly to market changes, reduce operational complexities and better allocate resources to areas that can generate the most value.

> *As consumers' spending power becomes more limited and cautious, the question for retailers and other consumer brands becomes: how do we re-think our model while retaining our core customers and attracting new consumers?"*
>
> **—TOBIAS NANDA, HEAD OF BRANDS**



Tobias Nanda
Head of Brands

Carolyn D'Angelo
Head of Brand Operations

[6] Alix Partners, 2026 Global Consumer Outlook.

The principles of an “asset-light” model are simple in practice but potentially transformative. By reducing fixed costs, reducing investments in hard assets like real estate and focusing capital on what the brand does well, companies can derisk their investments.

For instance, for a well-known brand experiencing liquidity constraints, the traditional path in the past would have been liquidation. Instead, an “asset-light” model identifies its intangible assets, like its brand reputation, design, product development and marketing, as its most valuable assets and works to increase that value. To invest more in those assets and relieve financial and operational burdens, the company can change how it operates by partnering with third parties to run its stores and manufacture its products under strict brand guidelines.

Ultimately, as the consumer landscape evolves, the asset-light model stands out as a strategic approach for strong, well-known brands at an inflection point and facing difficult headwinds. An asset-light model empowers brands to remain agile, focus on what they do best and weather economic storms without sacrificing their long-term prospects.

PERSPECTIVES

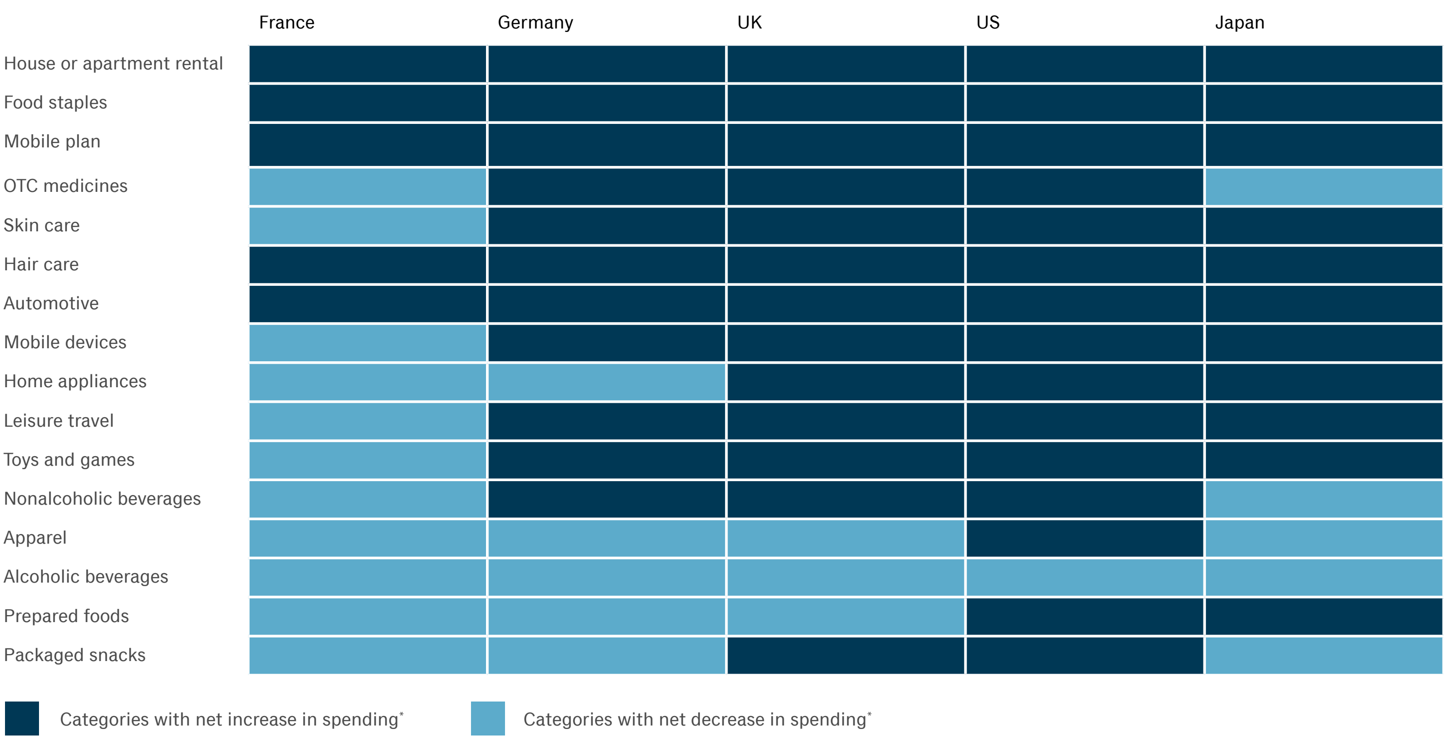
Laura Ashley

The revitalization of Laura Ashley shows the opportunity for strong brands with outdated business models to transform into successful asset-light operations. Gordon Brothers acquired the brand, archives and related intellectual property from insolvency in 2020.

We partnered with key manufacturers, retailers and e-commerce players to launch Laura Ashley globally across multiple categories with a focus on fashion, accessories, home and hospitality by leveraging licensing as a strategy to find best-in-class partners who specialize in certain categories and tapping into the expertise of these licensees. We invested heavily in marketing and were able to draw a new generation of consumers into the brand while remaining true to its incredible heritage. In 2025, we sold the Laura Ashley brand, archives, and related intellectual property to Marquee Brands.

Categories like apparel at risk for consumer cutbacks

INTENDED CHANGE IN SPENDING IN NEXT 6 MONTHS (%)



Source: BCG Global Consumer Radar Survey, November 2025. *Percentage of consumers who expect to increase spending minus percentage who expect to decrease spending. Data shown for select markets only. N = approximately 9,200.

The Rise of AI and the Need for Flexible Financing

Increased Power Needs Lead to Supply-Demand Challenges

Moody's predicts that global data center investment will reach at least $3 trillion over the next five years, with a continued push to shorten new build delivery timelines.[7]

Companies are investing heavily in real estate, data centers, power sources and other in-demand resources that currently face years of lead time for delivery due to the significant increase in total power center inventory across the U.S.[8] In 2025, nearly $200 billion in total debt was raised for data center development. While much of the financing focuses on purchasing real estate, power generation equipment itself often requires a separate financing solution. This boom is driving significant demand for lending and equipment financing capabilities, with the assets powering the revolution representing billions in equipment value and thus needing flexible, collateral-based financing solutions.

Infrastructure groups and tenants looking to create a new center often aren't able to secure funding until power is provided, but power suppliers cannot commit until financing is in place, creating a chicken or egg scenario for lenders. All three major players in this development—infrastructure groups, lenders and power suppliers—are working on different timelines, creating a massive financing gap.

> *"Demand for prime power elements continues to increase. There is a strong opportunity to help clients value and finance these assets to ensure long-term success and establish backup power needs. As markets continue to develop and appreciate, so does the equipment required to keep operations running smoothly."*
>
> **—ZAC DALTON, HEAD OF INDUSTRIAL CLIENT COVERAGE & ORIGINATIONS**

Zac Dalton
Head of Industrial Client Coverage & Originations

Ben Beasley
Head of Energy, Oil & Gas

[7] Moody's, Data centers: Managing risk amid a market boom.
[8] CBRE, High Demand, Power Availability Delays Lead to Record Data Center Construction.

Given these tricky dynamics, and that projects are often years away from completion on the manufacturer's side, companies require not only the right resources but financing that allows them to move quickly to secure the order. In the near term, this includes:

- Front End: Providing appraisals, lending and equipment financing capabilities
- Back End: Procure, buy and sell power equipment while properly monetizing assets

As prime power orders are completed, we anticipate that backup power will become a more valuable commodity. All of the power generating equipment used is tangible, appraisable and retains significant value in the short-term—creating a perfect opportunity for ABL. As construction projects scale up capacity in phases, ABL can provide a unique solution in the form of equipment-specific financing and revolving lines of credit that can scale with the project. However, the rapid pace of changing technologies and long production lead times in equipment manufacturing raise more questions over the long term.

Risks and external factors still remain that could hamper infrastructure expansion—creating winners and losers among companies and lenders. The potential for state and municipal regulations, grid power and connectivity issues, criticism of nuclear capabilities and pricey national gas contracts continue to create uncertainty about power availability and demand. This means long-term success lending in this space will depend on a strong understanding of the infrastructure supply chain, expertise in equipment financing and adaptability to account for a range of potential industry risks.

Companies able to bring together both the resources needed to power the increasing demand and liquidity needed to ensure continued growth will succeed in this fast-moving environment.

Prime vs. Backup Power Elements

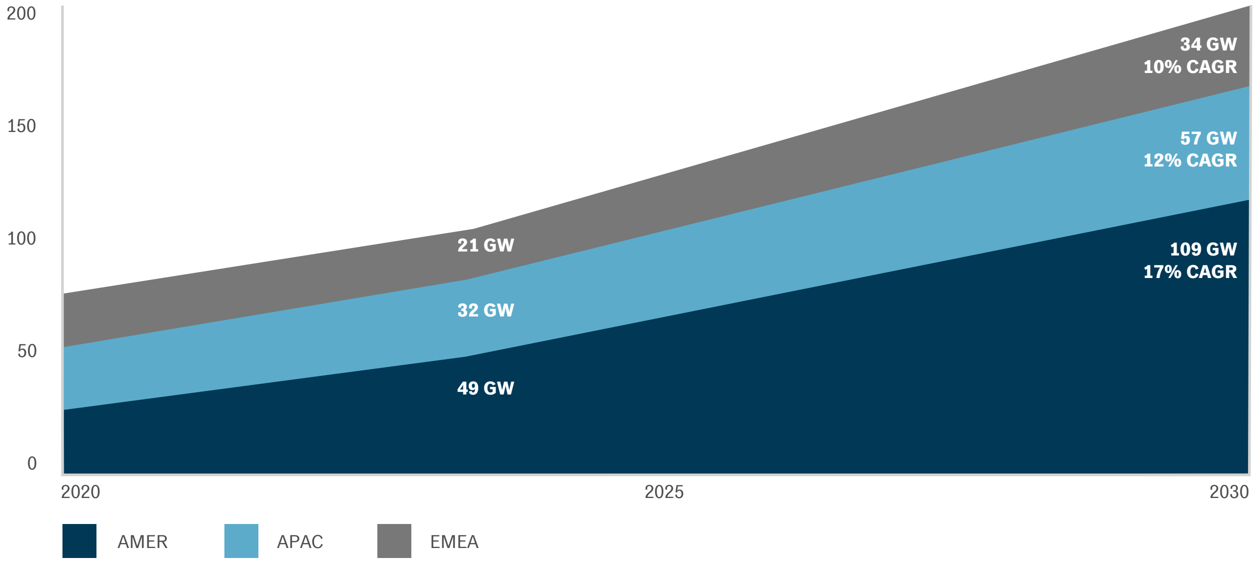
- Prime Power: The main source of power on the site, designed to operate continuously over a long timeframe
- Backup Power: Supplies power to equipment if prime power requires additional support, or if it is lost

What Fuels the Power Boom?

- Natural Gas
- Renewable Energy (solar, wind, hydro)
- Nuclear
- Coal
- Diesel

Nearly 100 GW of new data centers will be added between 2025 and 2030, doubling global capacity

GLOBAL SUPPLY FORECAST BY REGION (GW)



Source: JLL Research, 2025. Supply totals include co-location, built-to-suit, hyperscale owner-occupied and on-prem.

Brick-and-Mortar or E-Commerce? The Retail Balancing Act

Adapting to Unexpected Changes

Retail remains one of the most dynamic parts of the global economy. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift from physical stores to online shopping. However, e-commerce's rapid growth slowed in the years after the pandemic as retailers gradually returned to brick-and-mortar stores. In 2020, e-commerce grew across geographies, with a total global increase of nearly 20%, demonstrating a dramatic shift to e-commerce businesses in a very short amount of time.[9]

Comparatively, from 2022 to 2030, the global e-commerce market is growing at a CAGR of 12.22%.[10] While e-commerce is still growing, today, companies have realized that these pandemic-era overcorrections hurt their businesses, and a more conservative balance is necessary.

Recognizing the benefits and drawbacks of both strategies, we expect that throughout 2026, retailers will continue adopting a hybrid approach that captures the benefits of both and addresses the inefficiencies of each. Creating the right mix between brick-and-mortar and e-commerce will be crucial for success in the year ahead.

Rick Edwards
Head of North America Retail

How brick-and-mortar and e-commerce presences combine to create value and protect assets

BRICK-AND-MORTAR	E-COMMERCE
▪ Helps sell the brand to consumers and grab attention. ▪ Anchors customers while simultaneously driving them back to the brand's online platform. ▪ Continues to serve as an important social experience for global consumers.	▪ Provides additional flexibility in strategy and liquidity. ▪ Cuts down on overhead and labor costs. ▪ Opens the retailer to an expanding audience as young generations prefer to shop online.

[9] International Trade Administration, Impact of COVID Pandemic on eCommerce.
[10] Research & Markets, Global E-Commerce Market Forecast Report 2023-2030: Digitalization and Technology Drive the Multi-Trillion Market's Meteoric Rise.

Brick-and-mortar stores help anchor customers while simultaneously driving them back to the store's online platform. Stores offer consumers the opportunity to see and feel the product, try it on and provide a return option that is often more convenient than the added shipping fee for some online returns. Even as consumers rely heavily on technology, in-person shopping remains a mainstay social experience.

Healthy retailers, from big-box stores to high-end brand houses, are increasingly expanding their in-person presence to strengthen customers' connection to their brand. Recent data projects a 4% increase in store openings this year and a 4% decrease in store closings.[11] However, where these retailers are showing up has changed—malls are out, and lifestyle centers and off-mall leases near restaurants, entertainment and other commercial enterprises are increasingly attractive.

Still, internet-focused strategies provide necessary flexibility and lower overhead costs, which conserve retailers' resources. E-commerce ensures that retailers are not bound by consumers only in their physical locations, opening the doors to more markets and audiences. Additionally, as younger generations become target audiences, e-commerce presents new opportunities to reach them. Roughly 80% of Gen Z's (ages 13-28) shopping occurs online, compared to 75% of Millennials (ages 29-44) who prefer online shopping, and 65% of Gen Xers (ages 45-60) who shop online regularly.[12]

Retail will continue to evolve, and the winners will be those who can strike a balance amid these and other unexpected changes.

What Will the Cost of Tariffs Be?

The retail industry is facing a number of challenges that require retailers to adapt and innovate. As political and trade dynamics continue to shift, another major question for retailers is how they may handle increased costs from tariffs. The current state of tariffs can turn on a dime, and businesses are left adapting as quickly as they can to the ongoing political whiplash. The ability to evolve and react quickly will separate those retailers who can weather the tariff storm versus those who cannot.

AI Use or Over-reliance?

New uses for artificial intelligence in the retail sector could dramatically change how some companies operate, but it's too early to tell which use cases might have the greatest benefit. Over-reliance on AI recommendations and outputs could create an imbalance between the brick-and-mortar and e-commerce sides of the business if left unchecked.

For example, AI improvements in inventory tracking can help with merchandise planning, but companies need to be careful. AI may prioritize high-turnover products or focus so much on efficiency that it neglects customer experience, creating empty shelves that detract from the in-person shopping experience and the benefits of visiting a brick-and-mortar location.

[11] CoStar, US store openings are expected to see an uptick this year.
[12] PGM, Consumer Shopping Trends and Statistics by the Generation: Gen Z, Millennials, Gen X, and Boomers.

Conclusion

How Today's Trends Will Impact Businesses and Lenders Going Forward

Norma Kuntz, Chief Executive Officer,
and Frank Morton, Chief Investment Officer

As we look across the trends shaping today's market, a few clear themes emerge that will factor into the success or failure of many business plans for the year ahead. Central to all of these themes is adaptability and navigating uncertainty. For Gordon Brothers, understanding these global challenges is an everyday task when advising clients on the real-time value of their assets and the options to maximize this value.

Tariffs and trade policy are driving business decisions for many multinational companies. Ongoing trade policy discussions are creating political and financial whiplash, with ever-changing developments impacting how firms operate, set prices and look to expand. For some, especially consumer brands, that may mean changing their suppliers and purchasing habits, limiting their storefronts and tangible assets to operate through a more cost-efficient licensing model and other potential strategies to manage rising costs.

Further fueling uncertainty, geopolitical tensions in Iran have driven massive supply chain shocks, upending the oil market. As prices remain volatile, many have warned that the world must prepare for the price of oil to continue to rise, potentially hitting $200 a barrel. In the foreseeable future, price spikes and high demand for alternative energy sources will have ripple effects through other industries and add complexity to already strained supply chains.

Alongside rising risks come new opportunities. Automation continues to swing the pendulum, reshaping operational models and capital allocation strategies, and underscoring the need for flexible financing structures. Even as energy markets become more volatile, businesses are focusing on accelerating their adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), creating huge demand for scarce power assets. AI also offers tremendous potential for boosting productivity, particularly in sectors like retail, where it can enhance inventory tracking and merchandise planning.

For lenders and borrowers, ABL offers increased flexibility and security, helping them finance growth and manage unforeseen challenges. As the number of new entrants continues to grow to meet the increase in market demand, competition in ABL and private credit more broadly is also rising sharply. Lenders that provide creative, flexible financing structures combined with strong portfolio management and risk monitoring are best positioned to meet client needs.

Taken together, these trends reinforce the importance of strategic financing and working with partners who have a global mindset and a nuanced understanding of asset value. Gordon Brothers leverages its deep industry expertise and real-time asset valuation to help clients navigate uncertainty and capitalize on emerging opportunities. Companies that can recognize and work with partners who understand these evolving dynamics will be best positioned to thrive in the complex landscape ahead.

We thank all contributors and the extended Gordon Brothers team for their insights and support in developing this report. For further information or to connect with our experts, please contact us.

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