# TREND REPORT

October 2026

cohereOne + J.SCHMID

**We compiled these trends from more than 100 brands, comparing year-over-year data for October 1–31, 2026.**

This industry update is brought to you by:

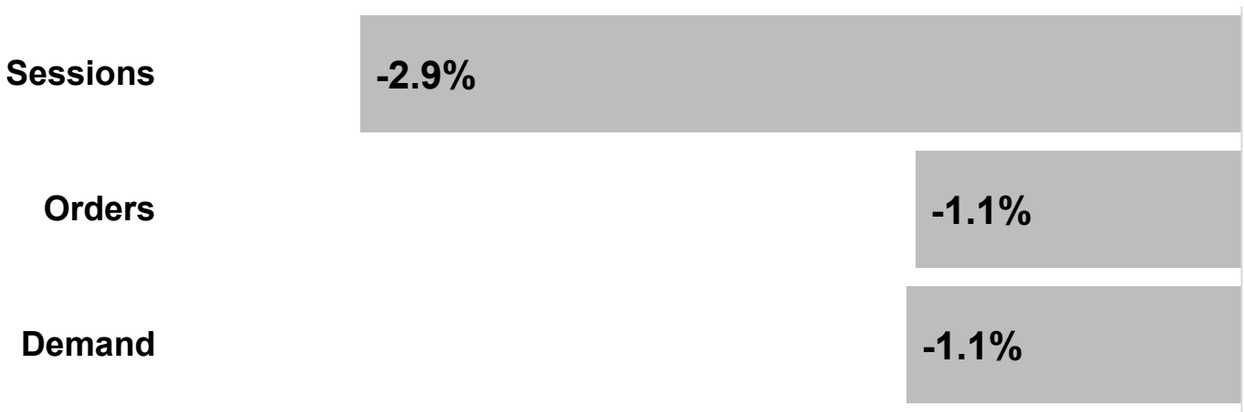
cohereOne

As the premier direct-to-consumer marketing partner for retail brands, CohereOne offers unrivaled visibility into industry performance. Our team of marketing professionals has a proven track record of launching and growing consumer-facing brands.

J.SCHMID

J.Schmid is a creative and branding agency that helps brands harness the power of human emotion. We are more than designers: our direct marketing experts understand the nuances of selling. We never treat a channel as a stand-alone piece, but as part of a brand's integrated, cohesive marketing mix.

# October 2026: Softer Traffic, Resilient Spending




October softened year over year, with sessions down 2.92%, orders declining 1.1%, and demand decreasing 1.1%. Orders and demand held up better than traffic, suggesting modestly improved conversion while spending per order remained relatively stable.

The broader retail environment remains resilient. The latest U.S. Census Bureau data showed September retail and food-services sales rising 0.8% month over month and 6.3% year over year, indicating consumers continue to spend despite mixed performance across individual industries.

Inflation strengthened in September, with the Consumer Price Index rising 0.6% month over month and 3.7% year over year, driven largely by higher energy and gasoline prices. Core inflation grew 2.6% year over year, suggesting underlying price pressures remain more moderate but have firmed somewhat.

The Federal Reserve held its benchmark interest rate steady at 3.75%–4.00% in October, maintaining relatively elevated borrowing costs as inflation remains above target. The Fed noted that economic activity and consumer spending remain resilient, but persistent inflation continues to influence interest-rate policy. Overall, higher interest rates remain an important factor to monitor, as borrowing costs can affect consumer spending and business investment heading into the holiday season.



TREND #1

# Zero-Click Brands

For years, digital marketing has been built around one goal: get the click. But increasingly, consumers can discover a brand, research a product, compare options and even make a purchase without ever visiting the brand's website.

Search is moving into social platforms. Product education is happening through creators and reviews. AI tools are summarizing options and shaping consideration. And social commerce is allowing customers to complete purchases within the platforms they already use.

The result is a growing zero-click customer journey, where every touchpoint has to do more of the work. Social content can't simply tease what comes next. Product listings can't rely on a website to provide the full story. Each interaction needs to communicate enough of the brand, product and value proposition to stand on its own.

The opportunity isn't to make owned channels less important. It's to build a brand that works beyond them. Because when discovery can happen anywhere, everywhere has to feel like your brand.

**Key Takeaways for CMOs:**

- Stop treating every interaction as a path to the website. Make each touchpoint valuable on its own.
- Build brand recognition and consistency across social platforms, marketplaces, creator content and AI-driven discovery.
- Give customers the information they need wherever they encounter the brand.
- Rethink measurement for journeys where influence happens without a visible click.

Read More - https://www.adobe.com/express/learn/blog/2026-social-media-trends

https://ahrefs.com/blog/ai-marketing-trends/



TREND #2

# The 2026 Holiday Consumer: Still Spending, but Shopping Smarter

*Why shifting consumer behavior is changing the rules for retail marketers*

As retailers enter the critical holiday shopping season, consumer spending remains resilient—but shopping behaviors are evolving. The National Retail Federation forecasts holiday retail sales will grow 4.2% in 2026, reaching a record $1.013 trillion. Meanwhile, Adobe projects online holiday spending will increase 6.7% to $275.1 billion.

Despite these positive projections, consumers are becoming more selective. According to NRF, 56% of holiday shoppers say economic conditions will influence their spending, with many planning to shop sales more frequently, compare prices, and seek greater value.

This shift is creating a more fragmented retail landscape. Higher-income consumers continue to demonstrate spending resilience, while price-sensitive shoppers are becoming increasingly strategic about when and where they purchase.

At the same time, the path to purchase is growing more complex. Consumers are discovering products through social media, AI-powered search, digital advertising, and traditional channels like catalogs and direct mail. The channel capturing the final transaction isn't necessarily the one generating demand.

For retailers, the opportunity lies in understanding customer behavior—not simply increasing marketing spend. Prioritizing high-value customers, refining segmentation, coordinating marketing channels, and measuring incremental revenue will be critical to maximizing holiday performance.

The takeaway? Consumers haven't stopped spending. They've become more intentional. Retailers that leverage customer insights to deliver relevant, timely marketing will be best positioned to capture demand, protect profitability, and build lasting customer relationships.



TREND #3

# 7.4 Million Jobs, $2 Trillion in Sales: Mail's Hidden Economic Muscle

The U.S. mailing industry is a quiet giant. The Envelope Manufacturers Association Foundation's 2026 study found that in 2025 it supported 7.4 million jobs (4.5% of all U.S. jobs) and generated nearly $2.0 trillion in sales (3.8% of U.S. output).

**Fewer jobs, more revenue**

From 2022 to 2025, jobs fell 6% (a loss of 474,930) while revenue rose 3.9%, or $74 billion. Two trends explain it: mailers keep shifting paper communications to digital, while online shopping drives growth in package delivery.

**How it compares**

Mail's $1.99 trillion in revenue tops the airline industry ($1.54 trillion) and the auto industry ($1.50 trillion), with fewer workers than either (7.4 million vs. 10.0 and 10.9 million). The study notes these comparisons are approximate.

**Winners and losers**

Printing, direct mail, catalogs, magazines, mail management and postal jobs declined. Online retailers, mail-order houses and stores fulfilling through the mail stream grew.

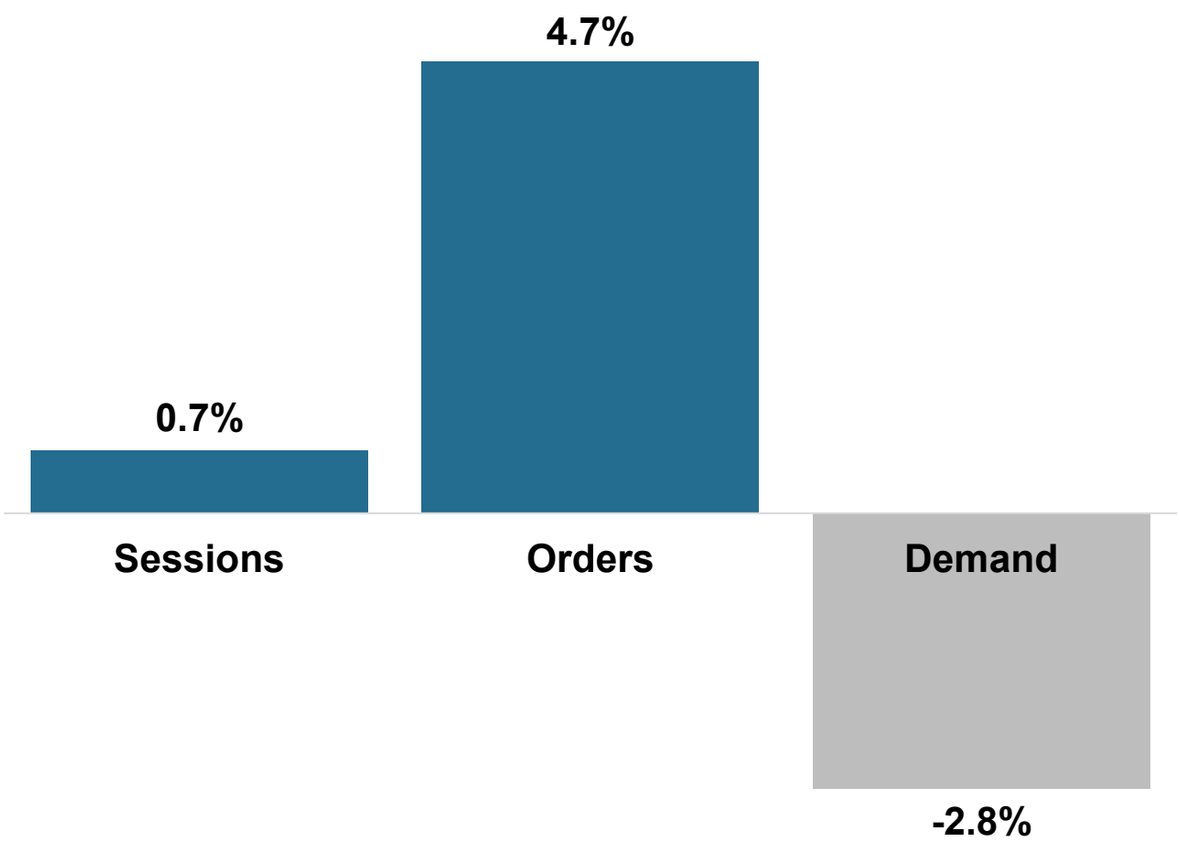
**Why it matters**

Mail remains core infrastructure for consumers, businesses and government, with jobs in every state and congressional district. As e-commerce grows, packages will carry more of the industry's weight.

**Read the source:** EMA Foundation 2026 U.S. Mailing Industry Job Study (PDF)

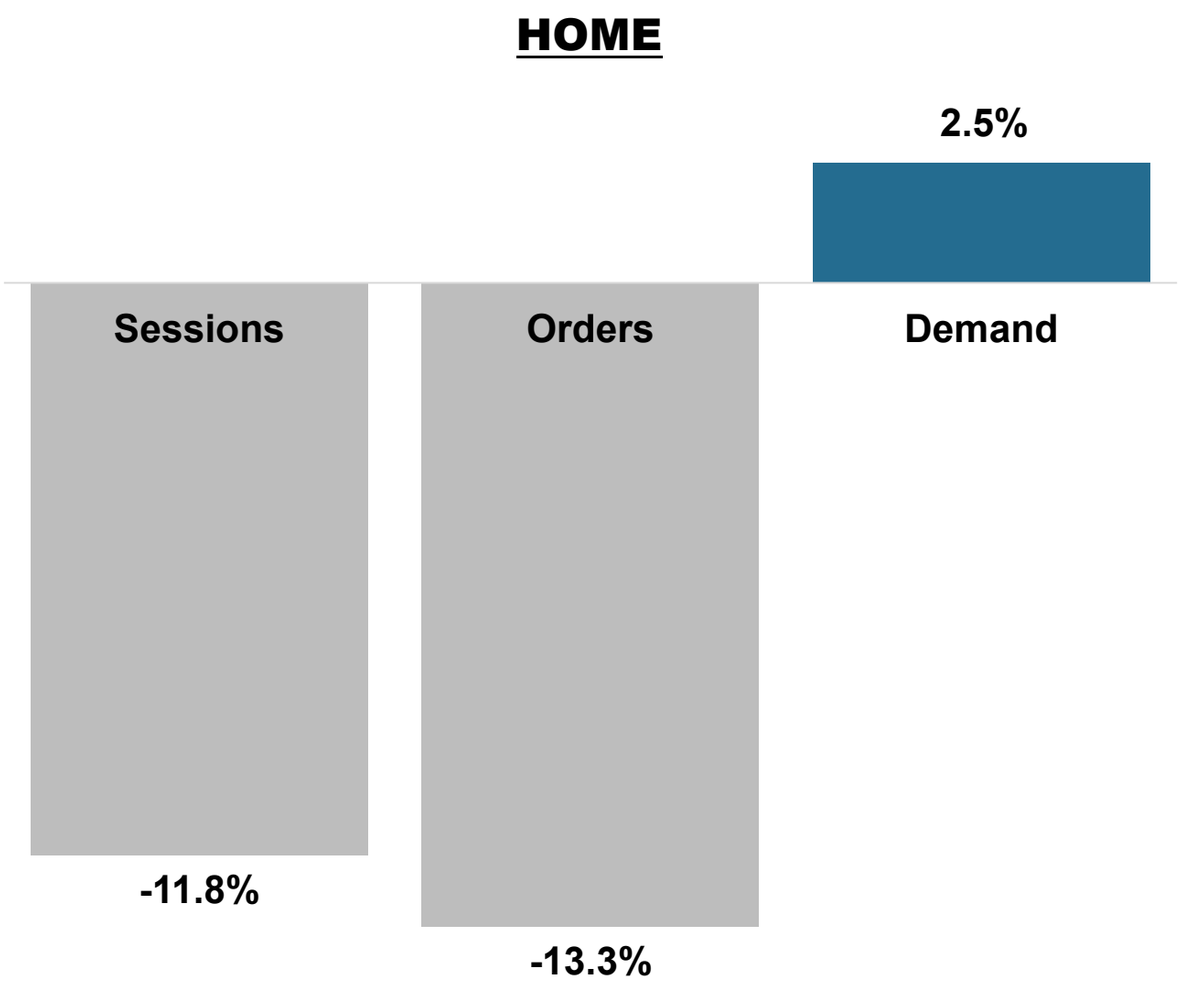
# BY INDUSTRY

**APPAREL**



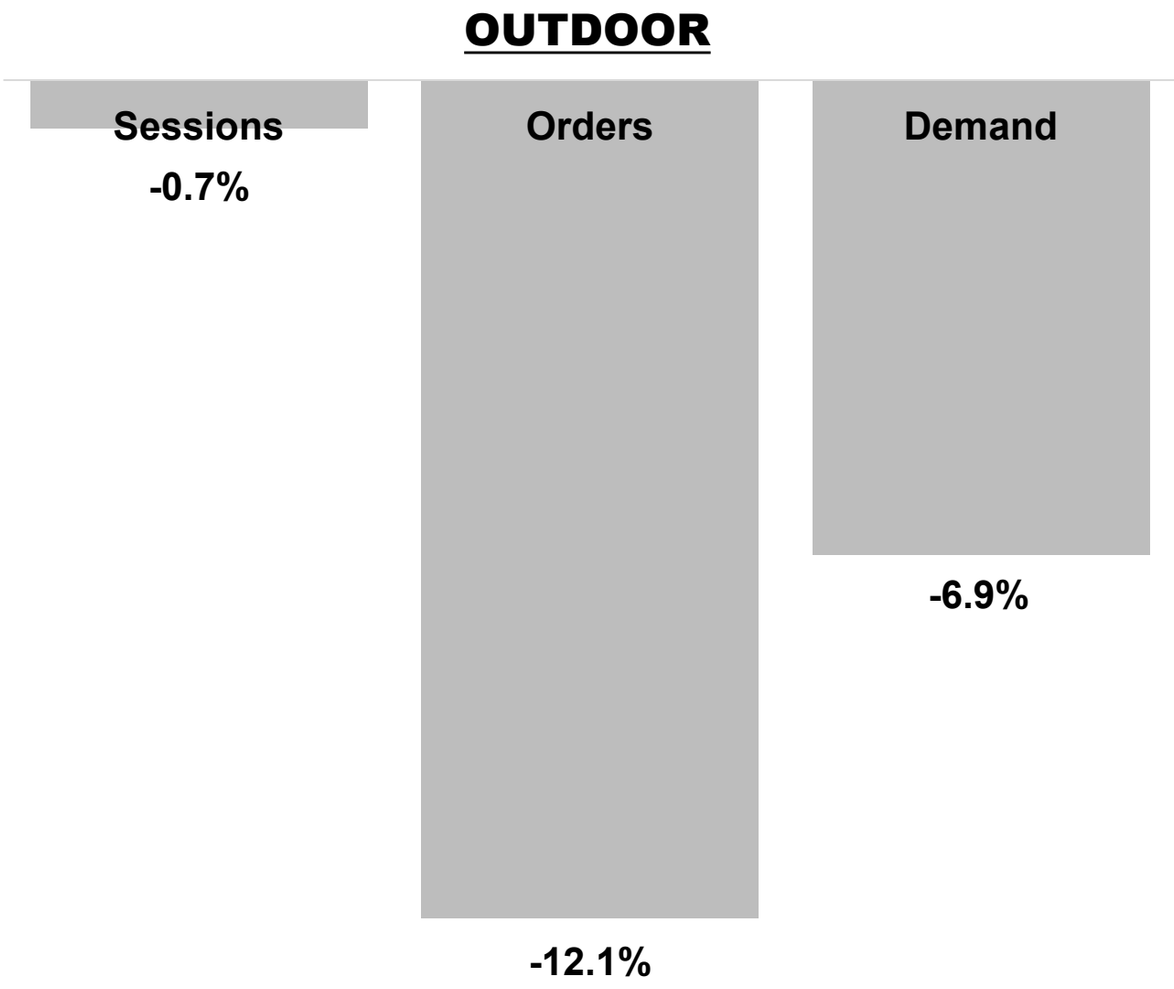

# Apparel Industry

Sessions increased 0.7% year over year, while orders rose 4.7%, indicating improved conversion efficiency and healthy purchase activity in the Apparel category. Revenue declined 2.8%, however, despite higher order volume, suggesting pressure on average order values and product mix. Overall, October results reflect stronger purchase frequency but softer basket values, highlighting the need to protect AOV as the category enters the peak holiday season.




# Home Industry

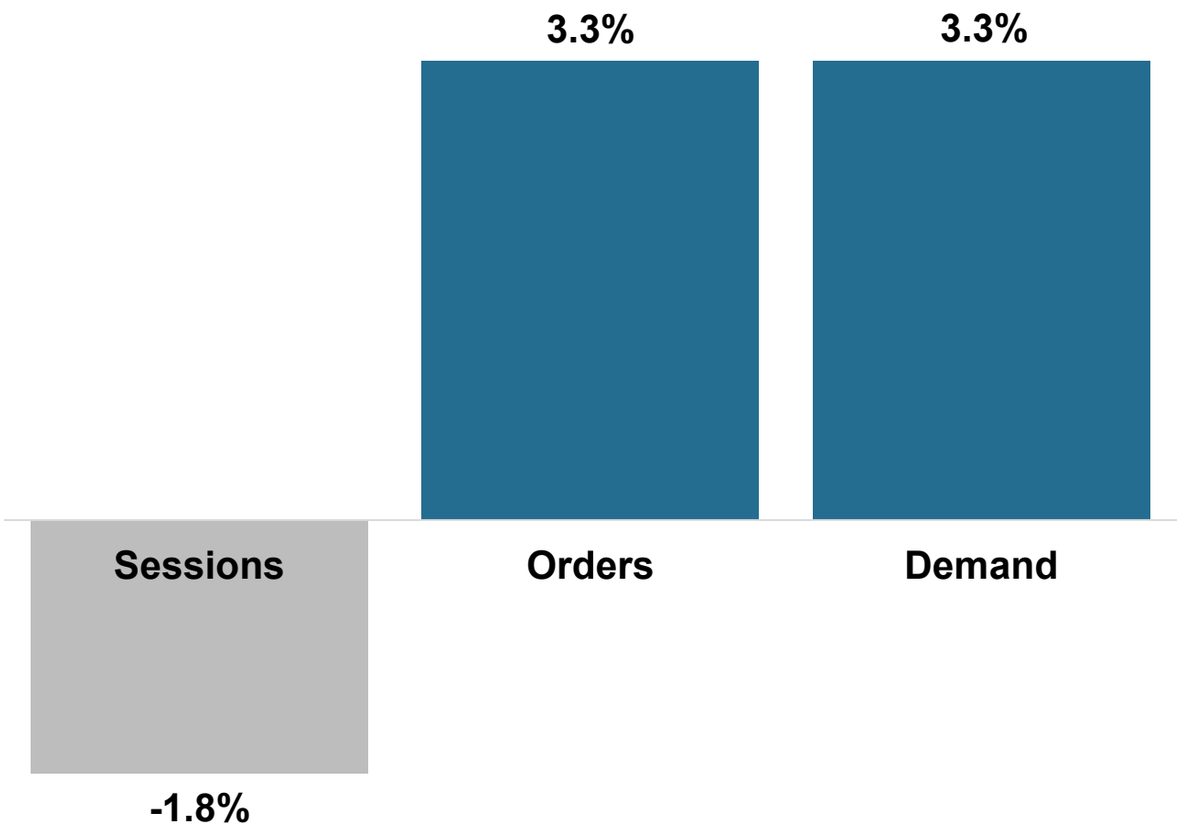
Sessions declined 11.8% year over year in the Home category, while orders fell 13.3%, reflecting softer consumer engagement and conversion performance. Despite lower traffic and purchase volume, revenue increased 2.5%, indicating significantly higher average order values and a stronger product mix among converting shoppers. Overall, October highlights weaker demand volume but resilient consumer spending, with higher-value purchases helping offset declines in traffic and orders.




# Outdoor Brands

Sessions declined just 0.7% year over year, indicating relatively stable consumer engagement in the Outdoor category. Orders fell 12.1%, however, signaling a significant decline in conversion efficiency as traffic failed to translate into purchases. Revenue decreased 6.9%, outperforming order volume and suggesting stronger average order values among shoppers who did convert. Overall, October reflects stable interest but softer purchase activity, with improving conversion remaining the key opportunity.

## SPECIALTY



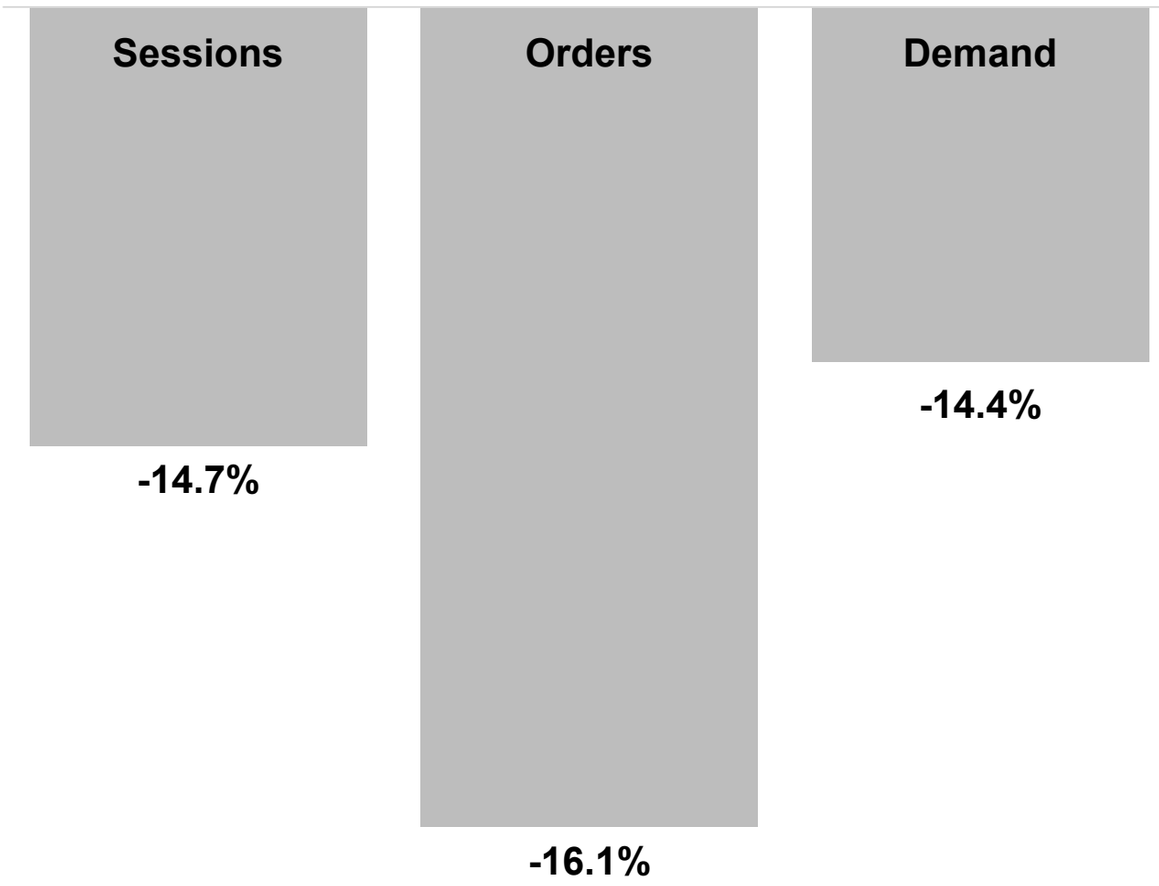

# Specialty

Sessions declined 1.8% year over year in the Specialty category, while orders increased 3.3%, indicating improved conversion efficiency despite slightly lower traffic. Revenue also grew 3.3%, keeping pace with order growth and suggesting relatively stable average order values. Overall, October reflects stronger purchase intent and effective monetization of a smaller traffic base, positioning the Specialty category with positive momentum.

# BY REVENUE

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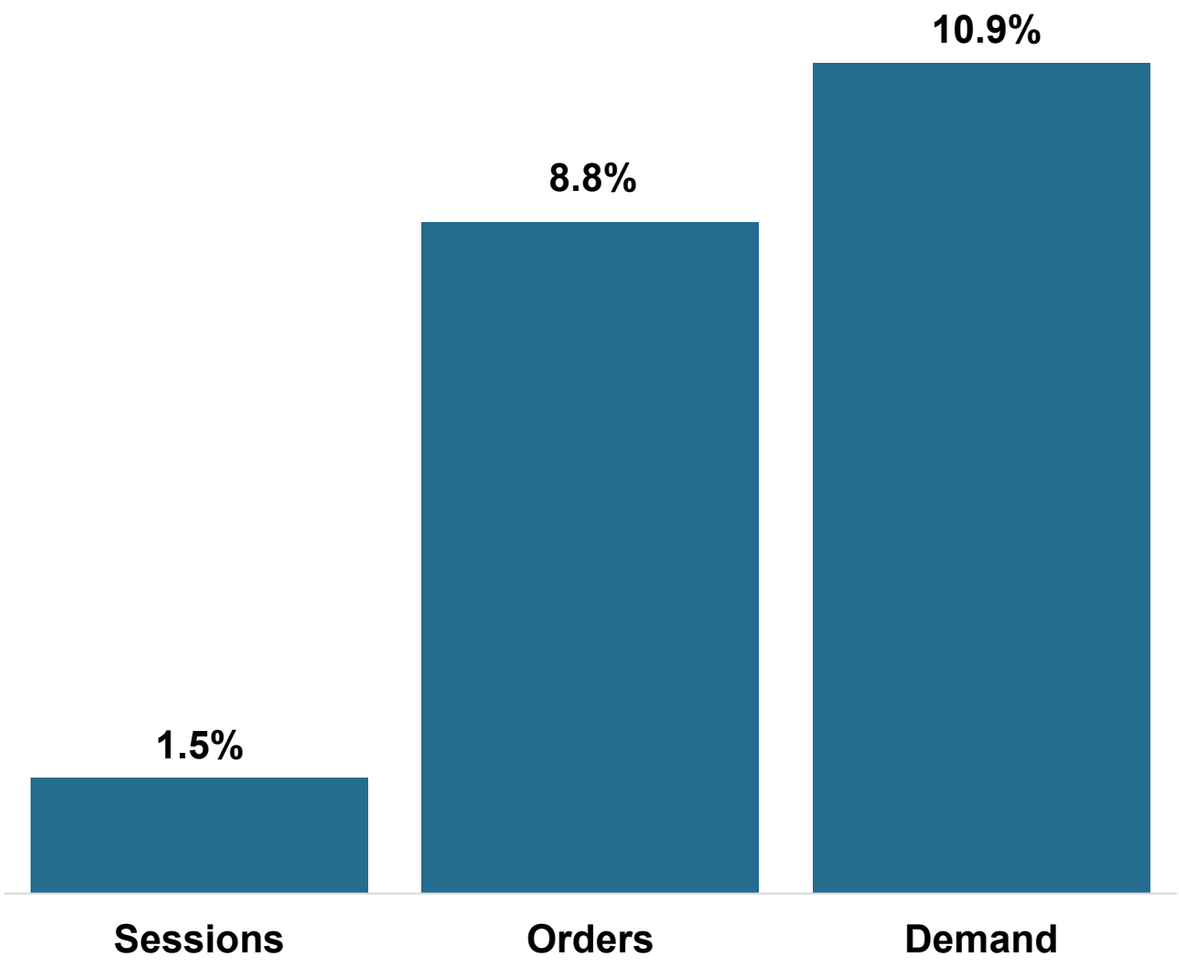
## TIER 1 BRANDS / $100M+




# Tier 1 Brands

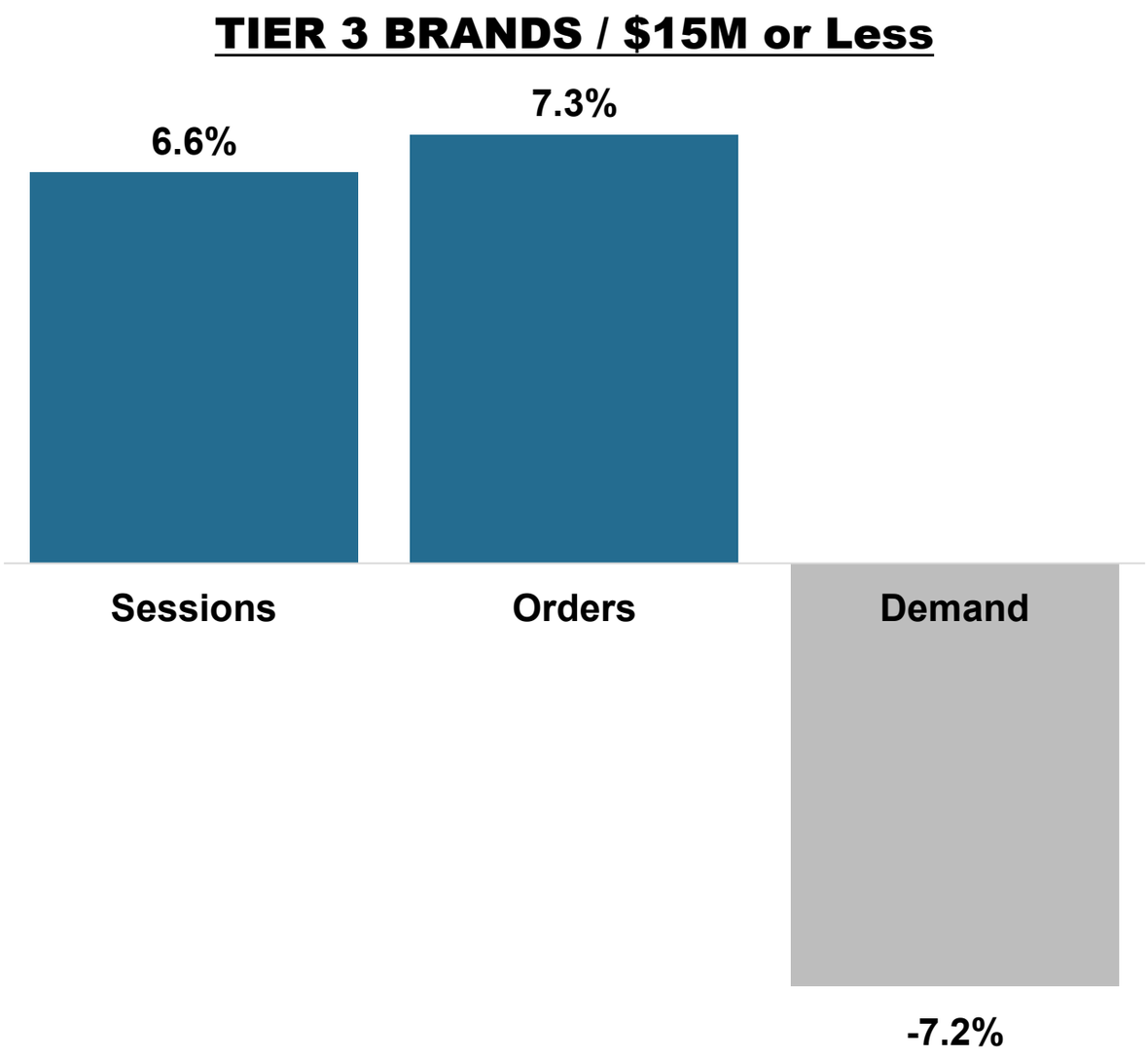
Sessions declined 14.7% year over year for Tier 1 brands, while orders fell 16.1%, indicating softer consumer engagement and modest pressure on conversion efficiency. Revenue decreased 14.4%, but held up slightly better than order volume, suggesting average order values remained relatively resilient. Overall, October reflects broad-based demand softness among larger brands, with weaker traffic and purchase volume driving the decline ahead of the holiday season.

## TIER 2 BRANDS / $15-$100M




# Tier 2 Brands

Sessions increased 1.5% year over year for Tier 2 brands, while orders rose 8.8%, indicating stronger conversion efficiency and healthy purchase intent. Revenue grew 10.9%, outpacing both traffic and orders and suggesting higher average order values and a favorable product mix. Overall, October delivered strong revenue efficiency, with Tier 2 brands effectively converting modest traffic growth into meaningful sales gains.




# Tier 3 Brands

Sessions increased 6.6% year over year for Tier 3 brands, while orders rose 7.3%, indicating healthy consumer engagement and slightly improved conversion efficiency. Revenue declined 7.2%, however, despite higher transaction volume, pointing to significant pressure on average order values and product mix. Overall, October results show encouraging traffic and order momentum, but weaker basket values limited revenue performance.