

OUTLOOK 2026

CONSUMER



 Harris Williams

Across industries, the market is accelerating. Yet it's a nuanced environment, in which quality is king, strategic options are expanding, technology is transforming the landscape, and change is a constant. Overall, 2026 offers a wealth of potential for buyers and sellers who can navigate this complexity with strategic conviction and tactical creativity. [Read our 2026 Outlook.](#)

Here, we explore how these dynamics are driving M&A opportunities in the consumer industry.



Consumer: Healthy Consumer Metrics, Stabilizing Conditions

With continued resilience among consumers and a positive forecast for the global economy, spending is expected to be strong across a broad range of consumer categories throughout 2026.



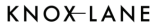











“Many consumer metrics are healthy, and in 2026, we believe consumer industry M&A activity will be very active as the consumer has remained highly resilient,” says [Ryan Budlong](#), a managing director and co-head of our [Consumer Group](#). “A diverse set of categories are positioned for growth and increased investor interest, with leading businesses pulling ahead by aligning more closely to important consumer trends.”

Below, we highlight key consumer sectors for investors to watch in 2026 and a selection of clients that exemplify opportunities throughout the industry.

Consumer Services: Wide-Ranging Potential

A broad array of consumer services with inherent recurring revenue characteristics will continue to be in demand and appeal to investors in 2026. Residential services, for instance, offer many attractive traits, with an aging housing stock, longer homeownership, and other themes creating a need for a range of solutions. Across several areas, there are ample opportunities for investors to professionalize leading businesses, leveraging technology, AI, marketing, and operational improvements to drive further growth and efficiency.

“The residential services sector encompasses a host of opportunities with sought-after investment characteristics,” says [Brent Spiller](#), a managing director and group co-head. “Exterior services, for example, tend to offer consistent, recurring demand and strong customer retention. The break-fix services category, meanwhile, is defined by its nondiscretionary, nondeferrable demand and highly technical nature.” Demonstrating this potential are [HighGround](#), a platform focused on restoration services, and [Erie Home](#), a leading roofing provider.

 <i>a portfolio company of</i>  <i>has been acquired by</i> 	 <i>has been acquired by</i>  <i>a portfolio company of</i> 	 <i>a portfolio company of</i>  <i>has been acquired by</i> 	 <i>a portfolio company of</i>  <i>has received a strategic investment from</i> 	 <i>has acquired</i>  <i>a portfolio company of</i> 
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Consumers also continue to prioritize experiences, including travel. Group travel, business travel, and tailor-made travel experiences have emerged as particularly robust and resilient categories, creating long-term growth opportunities for M&A investors. For both business and personal travel, the future is bright for businesses that combine technology and human interaction to solve more customer challenges. [Great Rail Journeys](#) is a leading example, offering a curated portfolio of premium multimodal tours in over 40 countries backed by advanced technology and a seamless digital experience for travelers. “For M&A investors, it’s an opportune time to help these forward-leaning companies pull ahead of the pack through superior scale, sophistication, and service,” adds Spiller.

A wide variety of multisite business models also remain attractive to investors. Buyers are prioritizing multisite companies with consistently strong performance, a proven ability to recruit and retain talent, and a clear road map to growth. The consumer healthcare space, for instance, is poised for growth in 2026, with steady demand for many different services related to health, wellness, aesthetics, and fitness.

Throughout multisite services, fitness investing also continues to be a highly active area for M&A. The fitness category is benefiting from a prolonged consumer focus on health and wellness and from an influx of new and growing brands. “A growing fitness market continues to add new members and draw investor attention across both the high-value, low-price and ultra-premium segments,” says [Ed Arkus](#), a managing director and group co-head. [CR Fitness](#) and [EoS Fitness](#) both illustrate this opportunity.

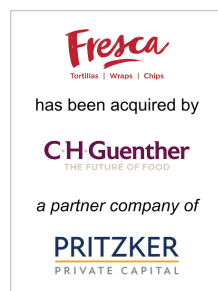
And for all consumer services businesses, as well as within other consumer segments, digital transformation continues to be a key strategy to stand out. “Leading brands across consumer services and other consumer sectors are uncovering new e-commerce strategies to stay ahead, accelerate growth, and signal operational excellence,” says Spiller. “Those that can reach more potential customers through brand building, strong digital fundamentals, and innovative AI tools while building more efficient and scalable marketing engines will be primed for long-term success and investor interest.”

Consumer Products: Emphasizing Resilience

Several consumer product segments continue to perform well, showcasing resilient and predictable demand. A prime example is the pet segment, which is supported by long-term pet health and humanization tailwinds. As pet well-being continues to be prioritized by many consumers, we expect ongoing growth in several related categories, such as supplements; natural, fresh, and raw pet food and treats; and innovative pet products that align with pet wellness trends.

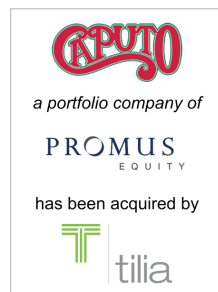
“In 2026, health and wellness will be top of mind for many pet owners,” says Budlong. “We’re excited to see this trend translate into increased demand for a variety of products that enhance both pet and pet parent quality of life.” Illustrating this potential is [MPM Products](#), a leader in premium pet food made with natural, clean-label ingredients.

Branded consumer products is another appealing area seeing enduring demand despite macroeconomic uncertainty and a shifting tariff landscape. While consumers are spending more thoughtfully and the price-value equation has gained importance in product selection, differentiated brands that define their categories and have shown the ability to scale continue to see strong investor interest. For instance, [DUDE Wipes](#) is a category creator that has emerged as a leader in the fast-growing flushable wipes segment.



Food and Beverage: Demand for Quality at Higher Value

Food and beverage is another area with considerable growth potential, featuring stable demand traits and many themes buoying investor enthusiasm across categories like foodservice, food distribution, baked goods, ingredients, and a variety of premium, better-for-you items.



Key trends include increased consumer spending on food away from home as well as heightened demand for greater value in terms of price, quality, convenience, and the overall dining experience. To cost-effectively differentiate themselves, leading foodservice companies are turning to their suppliers to outsource production while bringing consistent quality and innovation to the table.


That’s creating new opportunities for a host of businesses in the foodservice supply chain, including [Fresca Mexican Foods](#) and [Caputo Cheese](#). Harris Williams has also

worked with a variety of bakery businesses that exemplify this trend toward value-added partnerships with retailers and foodservice businesses, such as [CraftMark Bakery](#).

Relatedly, the co-manufacturing space is fertile ground for growth and investment as consumer food and beverage preferences continue to evolve, demand increases for innovative products, and the need for cost-effective production expands. Brands and retailers are collaborating more closely with co-manufacturers for production capacity and efficiency as well as innovation capabilities.

Across co-manufacturing, a wide range of product types are seeing especially strong growth. A prime example is the meat snacks segment, which aligns closely with consumer demand for premium items that are portable, nutritious, and high in protein. [Western Smokehouse](#) is a leader in this category, becoming a valuable partner for brands and retailers looking to differentiate themselves in a competitive market.

Finally, food distributors will remain on investors' radar in 2026, with the market requiring distribution partners that deliver quality, reliability, and specialized capabilities across complex supply chains. Several platforms have unearthed winning formulas to maintain high customer service levels while building scale, including [Chex Finer Foods](#), a specialty and natural foods distributor that is a value-added, growth-focused partner to both brands and retailers.




CraftMark
BAKERY

a portfolio company of



CIC PARTNERS

has been acquired by



OneEquity



Western Smokehouse
Partners

a portfolio company of



AIA
PRIVATE EQUITY PARTNERS

has been acquired by



Monogram
Capital
PARTNERS



CHEX
FINER FOODS

has received a strategic investment from



PAINÉ
SCHWARTZ
PARTNERS



WHAT'S NEXT

As consumers remain resilient amid a more favorable global economic outlook, strong spending is anticipated in a wide spectrum of categories. We expect consumer M&A activity to remain robust in 2026 alongside a resilient macro environment, with multiple areas poised for growth and investor interest across consumer products, services, and food and beverage. Businesses that have stayed closely aligned with shifting consumer trends are set to be the primary beneficiaries as deal activity gains momentum.

[Learn more about the Harris Williams Consumer Group.](#)

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Featured Engagements

a portfolio company of
 North Castle Partners
has received a strategic investment from
 SIXTH STREET

ERIC HOME.
has been acquired by
 LeafHome
a portfolio company of
 GRIDIRON

mpm
a portfolio company of
 3i
has been acquired by
 PARTNERS GROUP

Western Smokehouse Partners
a portfolio company of
 ALIA
has been acquired by
 Monogram Capital

GRUPO
a portfolio company of
 PROMUS EQUITY
has been acquired by
 tilia

TSG CONSUMER
has acquired
 E6SFITNESS
a portfolio company of
 BRS

Fresca
has been acquired by
 CH Guenther
a partner company of
 PRITZKER PRIVATE CAPITAL

DUDE WIPES
has received a strategic growth investment from
 TSG CONSUMER

CHEX
has received a strategic investment from
 PAINE SCHWARTZ PARTNERS

GREAT RAIL JOURNEYS
a portfolio company of
 DUKE STREET
has been acquired by
 VITRUVIAN PARTNERS

2026 Outlooks by Market

OVERALL MARKET OUTLOOK >	AEROSPACE, DEFENSE & GOVERNMENT SERVICES >	BUSINESS SERVICES >	ENERGY, POWER & INFRASTRUCTURE >
HEALTHCARE & LIFE SCIENCES >	INDUSTRIALS >	PRIMARY FUND PLACEMENT >	PRIVATE CAPITAL SOLUTIONS >
TECHNOLOGY >	TRANSPORTATION & LOGISTICS >		

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