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Beer dollar sales in convenience stores nearly stabilized in October

Circana found revenue slipped 0.2% from a year earlier, with volume down 2.5% after September’s steeper declines

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U.S. beer sales in convenience stores showed a modest improvement in October, but the category still sold fewer cases than a year earlier, according to Circana data reported by Brewbound on Tuesday, November 17.

The market research firm’s latest monthly report found that dollar sales for total beer in convenience stores slipped 0.2% in the four weeks ending November 1 from the same period a year earlier. Volume fell more sharply, down 2.5%. Craft beer posted a similar pattern, with dollar sales down 0.3% and volume off 1.7%.

The figures suggest that beer held up better in convenience stores than it had in September, when sales were weaker. Brewbound said the channel was the “least scary” outlet for craft beer and the broader beer category during October, reflecting a rebound in dollar sales to nearly flat year over year even as unit movement remained under pressure.

That split between revenue and volume is important for brewers, distributors and retailers. When dollar sales stay close to flat while volume falls, it can point to consumers buying less beer even if pricing and product mix help keep sales from dropping as quickly. For beverage companies, that can mean continued pressure on production planning, promotions and shelf space decisions in a channel that remains important for single-serve and take-home purchases.

Convenience stores are a closely watched part of the off-premise market because they provide a quick read on consumer behavior, especially for mainstream beer, flavored malt beverages and larger craft brands with broad distribution. A smaller decline in dollar sales may offer some relief after a difficult September, but the continued drop in volume indicates demand has not fully recovered.

Craft beer’s results were slightly better than the category as a whole on a volume basis, with the 1.7% decline coming in below total beer’s 2.5% drop. Even so, the craft segment remained in negative territory in both dollars and volume, underscoring how hard it has been for many brewers to return to growth in a mature market.

Brewbound also reported a notable brand shift in the latest four-week period. According to the publication, New Belgium’s Voodoo Ranger Imperial moved ahead of Blue Moon in the L4W ranking. The report did not provide broader ranking detail in the excerpt available, but the change points to continued movement among major brands as brewers compete for share in a soft-volume environment.

Circana’s four-week ending November 1 snapshot adds to a broader picture of a beer market that has shown resilience in revenue but weakness in physical sales. That dynamic matters across the beverage industry because it can influence how suppliers allocate marketing dollars, how wholesalers manage inventories and how retailers adjust assortments. In convenience stores, where cooler space is limited and performance is reviewed closely, even small shifts in trend can affect which products gain or lose placement.

The October data did not show a return to clear growth for beer or craft in the channel. But compared with September’s tougher results, the latest figures suggested that the rate of decline eased, at least on the sales side. For companies operating across beer and other beverage categories, that may offer a slightly firmer base heading into the late-year selling period, even as weaker volume continues to signal cautious consumer buying.