# Retail industry pauses mergers as Walmart boosts beauty range and champions circular manufacturing



The latest episode of the Modern Retail Podcast, hosted by senior reporters Gabriela Barkho and Melissa Daniels, explores several significant developments within the retail industry, touching on market trends, corporate strategies, and sustainability efforts.

The discussion begins with an overview of the current pause in mergers and acquisitions within the retail sector. Barkho and Daniels highlight that due to widespread uncertainty in the market, many consumer brand investors are delaying new deals, effectively "taking a beat" before committing to mergers and acquisitions. This cautious approach is reflective of broader economic and strategic recalibrations industry-wide.

Following this, the podcast delves into Walmart’s recent initiative to enhance its beauty offerings. The retail giant has announced trials of dedicated beauty bars in certain stores as part of its spring beauty sales event. This move is seen as Walmart’s strategy to compete more directly with rivals such as Target and Ulta. Over the past year, Walmart has significantly expanded its beauty category by adding more than 40 premium brands, broadening its core assortment, and launching a beauty accelerator programme aimed at fostering innovation and growth in its beauty segment.

A special segment in the episode focuses on sustainability and the growing interest in circular manufacturing, coinciding with Earth Month. Melissa Daniels interviews Rachel Kibbe, founder and CEO of Circular Services Group and American Circular Textiles (ACT), to discuss the emerging opportunities and challenges in shifting towards circular manufacturing systems that promote reuse, recycling, and remanufacturing of materials.

Kibbe provides insight into the definition and scope of circularity, stating, “How I define circularity overall is just the life extension of the products we’ve already created, with the goal of reusing those resources or recycling them over and over. And what I’ve come to believe is that it’s just a new way of manufacturing.”

Regarding the current state of circular manufacturing in the United States, Kibbe notes that while aspects of the circular economy, such as thrift stores, resale and rental platforms, and repair networks, are well established, large-scale textile-to-textile recycling infrastructure remains limited. She explains, “What we don’t have is large-scale textile-to-textile recycling. I think a lot of consumers are confused about that, because some collection and reuse programs are called recycling, which isn’t necessarily wrong because reuse is a critical aspect of ‘recycling.’ But in terms of the actual recycling infrastructure, meaning taking your T-shirt and turning it back into a new T-shirt, we’re almost at ground zero.”

Kibbe also emphasises the potential benefits of adopting circular manufacturing more broadly in the U.S. She outlines that such a shift could revitalise domestic manufacturing, support cotton farmers by providing a stable supply chain within American mills, and reinvigorate repair networks. It could also create new jobs and promote economic opportunities that are resource- and energy-efficient. However, she acknowledges the challenges involved, particularly in securing the necessary initial investments and supportive policies. Kibbe states, “You can provide value to businesses, value to shareholders, and value to the environment and the workforce economy through ‘alternative’ ways of manufacturing.”

Moreover, the discussion touches upon recent tariff policy changes that are reshaping sourcing and supply chain strategies, prompting businesses to consider near-shoring opportunities—the practice of relocating production closer to domestic markets—to circumvent tariff-related challenges. Advocates for circular manufacturing view this shift as a chance to establish more resilient and sustainable manufacturing infrastructures within the United States.

The podcast offers a comprehensive view of current retail industry dynamics, ranging from cautious investment trends and competitive retail strategies to innovative sustainability efforts aimed at transforming manufacturing and supply chains domestically.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)