# Retail sector pauses on mergers as Walmart boosts beauty and explores circular manufacturing



In a recent episode of the Modern Retail Podcast, senior reporters Gabriela Barkho and Melissa Daniels explored several current developments in the retail industry, touching on the cautious stance in mergers and acquisitions, Walmart’s new beauty retail initiatives, and an in-depth discussion on circular manufacturing in the United States.

Industry players in retail mergers and acquisitions appear to be hitting pause, as widespread uncertainty makes many investors hesitant to close new deals. According to insights shared on the podcast, consumer brand investors are “taking a beat” before moving forward with acquisitions, indicating a period of watchful waiting within the sector.

The conversation then turned to Walmart’s latest move in the beauty segment. The retail giant has begun testing beauty bars in select stores timed with its spring beauty sales event. This initiative aims to enhance Walmart’s competitiveness against rivals such as Target and Ulta, and aligns with its broader strategy to elevate its beauty offerings. Over the past year, Walmart has added more than 40 premium beauty brands, expanded its product assortments, and launched a beauty accelerator programme to foster innovation within the category.

A significant segment of the episode was dedicated to circular manufacturing and its role in modern retail, coinciding with Earth Month. Melissa Daniels conducted an interview with Rachel Kibbe, founder and CEO of Circular Services Group and American Circular Textiles (ACT). They discussed how tariff policy changes are influencing considerations around sourcing and supply chain strategies, including the push towards American manufacturing and near-shoring.

Rachel Kibbe described circularity as “just the life extension of the products we’ve already created, with the goal of reusing those resources or recycling them over and over.” She views circular manufacturing as a “new way of manufacturing.” Although the United States has elements of a circular economy—such as thrift stores, resale and rental platforms, repair networks, and dry cleaning services—Kibbe highlights a critical gap in large-scale textile-to-textile recycling infrastructure. She noted, “We’re almost at ground zero” when it comes to the capability to transform used textiles back into new garments domestically.

The benefits of developing circular manufacturing systems in the U.S. include the revitalisation of American manufacturing jobs and support for cotton farmers by enabling local mills to purchase raw materials. Kibbe explained that such systems would allow consumers to purchase both new and used fashion items and could breathe new life into repair networks. Furthermore, this approach promises to promote resource efficiency, energy efficiency, and job creation. She elaborated: “You can provide value to businesses, value to shareholders, and value to the environment and the workforce economy through ‘alternative’ ways of manufacturing.”

However, Kibbe acknowledged the significant challenges in establishing the necessary infrastructure and obtaining initial investment and policy support. American Circular Textiles is actively engaged in advocacy efforts in Washington, D.C., working to promote the policies and frameworks needed to foster this emerging industry.

This episode of the Modern Retail Podcast offers insights into current industry hesitancies around retail deals, evolving beauty retail strategies, and the transformative potential of circular manufacturing for the U.S. economy and environment.

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

## References

* <https://www.retaildive.com/news/walmart-tests-beauty-bars-pilot-spring-sales-event/745859/> - This article verifies Walmart's initiative to test Beauty Bars in 40 select stores during its spring beauty sales event, allowing shoppers to try products and interact with beauty experts, aligning with Walmart's strategy to enhance its beauty segment.
* <https://www.retaildive.com/news/walmart-expands-premium-beauty-options/743176/> - This source confirms Walmart's expansion of premium beauty brands, including the launch of its beauty accelerator program 'Walmart Start,' which supports new brands and innovation in the beauty category.
* <https://www.thestreet.com/retail/walmart-rivals-target-beauty-expansion-with-unexpected-launch> - This article discusses Walmart's broader beauty strategy, highlighting the addition of over 40 premium brands and the retailer’s aim to compete with rivals like Target and Ulta, as well as its successful sales growth.
* <https://corporate.walmart.com/news/2025/04/18/walmarts-beauty-event-is-here-and-its-built-for-real-life> - This official Walmart corporate news piece provides details on the Beauty Bars pilot program, corroborating the introduction of in-store beauty experiences and product testing as part of the spring beauty event.
* <https://circularservicesgroup.com/about> - This website offers information about Circular Services Group and its CEO Rachel Kibbe, supporting the discussion on circular manufacturing, textile recycling challenges in the U.S., and advocacy for circular economy policies.
* <https://www.epa.gov/smm/sustainable-management-materials-textiles> - This U.S. Environmental Protection Agency page explains the concept of circular manufacturing in textiles, the importance of textile recycling infrastructure, and benefits to the economy and environment, aligning with Rachel Kibbe’s points on circularity and sustainable manufacturing.
* <https://news.google.com/rss/articles/CBMi9AFBVV95cUxOTWU5WWFqMHB4NnBZSDFZWWRwWWlnYWFIRUJnNW83anluRXo2dmVlQ1Q0VmFuUWhlQ1dDbEJNUEZlY09IeG1EaTZ5NjRncnB2Qk91ZloyemN4SW1MQ2lKaWZIOHdGX2VFQ1N6c295VW9scVVhU0ZKR1lOVkxxcmcyMFJDMTdjN3lES2lGVUpIZU9vVkxHVFdSeFNwNUNYclNGOXFoZHE1ZVZxTFBxVVIta0tYZGRWY3BwVVprRUpxYW5DNEljakpta2N1a2JteTlRN25KNkp0NmRCSVYta0dyaXNTa1Z0U3FxYW1ZNFJBNGJtSkRo?oc=5&hl=en-US&gl=US&ceid=US:en> - Please view link - unable to able to access data