BRANDS GOING RETAIL

Accelerating Growth through Consumer-Direct Channels
Consumer brands continuously drive to achieve profitable growth via improved market share. Historically, brands have used two key strategies in this effort:

- marketing to build brand awareness
- expanding distribution through channels that provide direct consumer access to the product or brand, generally through wholesale or licensed relationships.

Recently, we have witnessed an acceleration of a different model: brands operating owned direct-to-consumer retail, either brick and mortar or e-commerce, or both. This direct-to-consumer model is successfully improving brand awareness, reinforcing brands’ direct engagement with the omni-channel consumer, while fueling growth in sales and profits.

Leaders of world-class brands emphasize the importance of direct-to-consumer channels in their overall strategy:

- “Our ambition is to build a global brand, where our own stores are an important asset to help discover and experience the brand. The store is our main advertising tool.”
  Raymond Cloosterman, CEO and founder, RITUALS

- “The retail strategy strengthened us, as we created close contact with our customers, which helped us to build strong and recognized brands.”
  Edson Amaro, brand director, CMO, Hering

- “With Lindt’s global retail focus, the company aims to strengthen the brand image, achieve a promotionally-effective impact and boost sales through conventional retail channels.”
  Lindt & Sprüngli

Ebeltoft Group conducted primary research combined with expert opinion surveys in 22 markets across the globe, to provide key data and decision points. The study also looked at success stories to learn key lessons.
Foreword

Consumer brands continuously drive to achieve profitable growth via improved market share. Recently, we have witnessed an acceleration of the brands-go-retail model.

Synopsis

Brands going retail is a growing trend in all markets, both mature and emerging. This trend evidences a commitment to and, in many cases, the need to establish critical direct relationships with the end consumer.

Ebeltoft Group

Is the global alliance of retail consulting companies with members operating in more than 25 countries, in both mature and developing retail markets.

Brands Going Retail: Activity by Subchannel and Category

Acceleration of brands opening brick-and-mortar locations, brands owning an online shop and online pure players going brick and mortar.

Brands Going Retail: Why and How?

With a large variety of brands going retail in different markets, each with its own strategic agenda and objective, we want to understand which models are most likely to get it right.

Challenges and the Roadmap

It’s not easy to go retail. Specific skills must be developed in order to successfully achieve return on investment in the marketplace

Note to the reader

Interested in further discussing the report and learning about Ebeltoft Group’s services and retail expertise?

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Brands going retail is a growing trend in all markets, both mature and emerging. This trend evidences a commitment to, and in many cases, the need to establish critical direct relationships with the end consumer.

Importantly, it also enables a brand to showcase its deep category expertise and innovation. When done well, a retail experience can be both profitable to the brand’s bottom line, as well as a way to build overall brand equity. Done wrong, it can expose a brand’s weakness, jeopardize existing channels and be a long-term profit drain. This is why brands must carefully consider and answer key questions around their retail strategy before taking the plunge.

Adding to the complexity are the numerous ways that brands can enter the retail space, ranging from a manufacturer opening traditional brick-and-mortar stores to going online, or with partnerships and shop-in-shops within existing retail entities. Moreover, each of these opportunities present numerous pathways. What is the difference between opening flagship stores versus more traditional formats versus an outlet strategy? Do they operate their own e-commerce sites, work within marketplace portals, or a subset among larger e-commerce domains? Do they represent their own stores or pursue franchising? Is there a different go-to-market strategy across geographic locations? Each of these key decisions can have an enormous impact on future success.

Finally, a brand’s going-retail strategy must take into account the changing global retail consumer, who is more plugged in, more diverse, more demanding and more channel-agnostic than ever before, demanding agile responses for the future.

**What have we learned from successful brands going retail?** Macro changes in the retail world are encouraging more brands to build direct-selling channels to the consumer. This path is complex and requires the development of strategies and skill sets that most brands have not yet cultivated. While building brand awareness is the most salient reason manufacturers go retail and create a direct-to-consumer channel worldwide, driving greater revenue and profit is also a critical motivator. In the long term, retail must be treated as a discrete and profitable channel, in order to earn the resources needed for success.

Our key findings for successes focus on the challenges retailers face, how to overcome them, and the keys to implement to keep them moving forward. The resolutions to these challenges are stepping stones for retailers testing their ability, by which they create a global network and brand presence to attract today’s connected consumers.
Committing to Retail: If you do it, do it right!

Based on our research and extensive work supporting manufacturers developing and implementing their go-retail strategy, the critical points to consider include:

- **Strategy before structure.** The chosen strategy should drive decisions on culture, organization and human capital, not the other way around. Retailing must be a key strategic decision for the entire organization.

- **Culture before competence.** Make sure retail expertise is anchored within your organization through new people, structures, tools and interfaces. Without a culture to support retail growth, it can easily be overwhelmed within a larger organization.

- **Define relevant KPIs and let your retail people do their job.** KPIs should include a mix of retail and brand metrics, so that the direct channel is fulfilling both objectives.

- **Think omnichannel right from the start.** The likely answer to any future brand’s going-retail strategy will require solutions that span various channels and routes to market. There is no ‘one size fits all’ answer. And, the new consumer will demand it.

- **Have the right assortment and range.** Many brands have the luxury of being a niche within a larger, multi branded retail space. While successful in this type of environment, they may not have a robust range to succeed in a direct channel.

- **Be consumer-centric.** Most of all, remember the purpose of a retail store, channel or website is to fulfill a consumer need.

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**Our Recommendations:**

1. **Define the role of the direct-to-consumer channel within the overall strategy.** Successful brands have clearly defined the purpose of the direct-to-consumer channel.

2. **Actively manage the direct-to-consumer channels with existing channels to optimize growth and profitability.**

3. **Develop direct-to-consumer competencies.** Successful brands going retail have committed to building the organization with supporting processes and tools to effectively operate a retail store network and/or web-based business.

4. **Make it an experience and make it outstanding.** That’s what retail is really all about: making your brand and product a seamless experience for the shopper.

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At Ebeltoft Group, we are committed to helping manufacturers assess and overcome these challenges to successfully go retail. We leverage deep global knowledge with our local expertise to provide the best possible resources for our clients - the only way to truly succeed in the new global marketplace.
Founded in 1880 in Brazil as a textile manufacturer, the now vertically integrated company opened its first brick-and-mortar store in 1993, followed by further expansion of its store network through franchise operations in 1994. Understanding the strategic importance of the store to support the Hering brand and differentiate from fashion brands entering Brazil, the company opened its flagship Hering Store in 2006, which supports the company’s long-term strategy to focus on:

- strengthening its brand positioning
- reinforcing and expanding the retail chain stores and franchises
- enhancing retail sales.

“The retail strategy strengthened us, as we created close contact with our customers, which helped us to build strong and recognized brands.” — Edson Amaro, brand director, CMO

In September 2015, the company further consolidated its strategies, and after a strong brand repositioning, launched its first DZARM store to bring a new store experience with innovative lighting, furniture and architecture to its contemporary brand.

Today, Hering is known by its customers for comfort clothes that guarantee quality cotton and authenticity of design — casual, fresh and young, reaching most of Brazil’s socioeconomic groups and ages through five banners: Hering Store, Hering Kids, Hering for You, PUC (infants) and DZARM (young).

Hering’s successful strategy resulted in 78 owned stores, 800 franchise stores, five webstores, 18,233 points of sale through multi-brand retail stores and expected gross revenues of $500 million in 2016.

With its high-profile heritage spanning more than 170 years and a strong focus on retail, the Swiss company Lindt & Sprüngli is known and respected around the globe for its premium chocolates. The brand owns 12 proprietary production sites in Europe and the U.S. and distributes products in 120 countries.

Rooted in its manufacturing legacy and long-standing commitment to high-quality chocolate, the company demonstrated a strong go-retail strategy that leveraged brick-and-mortar concepts as foundational in its owned chocolate cafés, boutiques, outlets and factory shops. These owned boutiques showcase the entire range of products, which customers are encouraged to sample, while immersed in the Lindt experience.

“With Lindt’s retail focus, the company aims to strengthen the brand image, achieve a promotionally effective impact and boost sales through conventional retail channels.”

Currently, there are approximately 300 Lindt & Sprüngli-owned shops in prime urban locations worldwide. Last year, the company reported a 7.9% sales growth, reaching $3.64 billion in revenue.
Who We Are

Ebeltoft Group is the global alliance of retail consulting companies with members operating in more than 25 countries, in both mature and developing retail markets.

Since 1990, our extensive experience as retailers and consultants has helped us develop innovative and pragmatic solutions that support retailers and suppliers to achieve their goals and succeed in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

Ebeltoft Group is uniquely positioned to combine global retail expertise with deep local insight, resulting in innovative and practical solutions.

What We Do

We work extensively with the local retail community around the world, leveraging our global expertise and partnering and supporting many mid-sized retailers, as well as manufacturers.

Previous retail industry publications from Ebeltoft Group include: Retail Innovations (annual), Global Cross Channel Retailing Report and Retail Internationalization.

Ebeltoft Group has established its deep roots in the retail industry by serving:

- 33 of the top 50 retailers worldwide
- 28 of the top 50 retailers in Europe
- 24 of the top 50 retailers in the U.S.
- 21 of the top 50 manufacturers worldwide

Clients we supported through their brands going retail include:
Brands Going Retail: Activity by Subchannel and Category

1.1 A Global Perspective

Since the inception of Ebeltoft Group 25 years ago, we have worked toward the development and expansion of the world’s best global retail alliance. Through the collaboration of our 27 member companies around the world, including by investigating important questions on the continuous trends of the retail industry. Brands going retail is a significant trend that is gaining momentum and making an impact on the retail landscape across the globe.

The changing complexity of the retail industry for both mature and developing markets is forcing manufacturers to grow their brands to reach consumers through multiple channels, so they can develop a direct relationship and experiences with the brand. Success stories from brands like Desigual, Haribo, Lego, Lindt, Nespresso and Warby Parker provide clues to the best paths through retail for this strategy.

1.2 The Growing Trend of Brands Going Retail

While brands opening stores is not new, we observe this trend accelerating across retail markets in mature and developed regions (see graph 02).

- Brands opening brick-and-mortar locations is beyond the early-adopter stage, demonstrating the initial implementation of concepts with roll-outs. We anticipate that this trend will continue to grow, as brands develop the internal retail capabilities necessary to operate on a global scale.
- Showing a comparable level of development, brands owning an online shop is expected to outpace B&M, reflecting the attractiveness of this channel as a first go-to-retail strategy.
- The development of online pure players going brick-and-mortar is still in its early stages and expected to grow significantly in the coming years.

A successful example of a pure-play company leveraging brick-and-mortar retail is the U.S. organization Warby Parker.
1.3 Brands Going Retail: A Category Perspective

Our research demonstrates the growing global trend of brands to open shops – physical and/or online, with the specific go-to-retail strategy evaluated case by case, taking into consideration factors including the brand’s positioning and product category.

Looking at the current market and expected scenario in the next three years, graph 03 shows which categories are most likely to pursue the go-retail strategy:

- The most activity in going retail is noted in the fashion, sports and footwear category. This is closely followed by cosmetics and consumer-electronics brands.
- The expected level of development is comparable across categories, with all product groups showing a moderate increase for the next period.
- DIY brands have been the least active in this channel.

In general, categories implementing a go-to-retail strategy are led by the product groups where we see a structural tendency to further enhance the product with a lifestyle vision and storytelling around the brand. In other words, the greater the opportunity to elevate the category beyond a commodity, the greater the potential success of retail. In addition, the traditional level of vertical integration within a category plays a major role in designing the go-to-retail strategy, as well as the structural development of retail within the country.

Graph 03 Brands going retail development per category.

Warby Parker is a textbook case of an online, fashion-forward pure-player going brick-and-mortar. The company’s goal is to reinvent the eyewear industry by challenging the traditional approach to the eyeglass-purchasing process.

As an American manufacturer of designer eyewear, Warby Parker started as an e-commerce store in 2010, aiming to offer designer eyewear at affordable prices, and invented the at-home try-on process. The company built its brand and legacy by allowing customers to try on up to five pairs of glasses ordered online, free of charge, in order to choose which to buy and which to send back.

By circumventing traditional channels and engaging with customers directly through its website, Warby Parker was able to provide prescription eyewear to customers for a flat rate of $95, including prescription lenses, a significant discount from alternatives. WP used customer insights to understand what their customers needed and determined that opening stores would allow customers to further engage with the products and receive a full-on eyewear-purchasing experience, optometrist included.

Warby Parker now runs 19 stores in addition to shop-in-shop showrooms across the United States.
With a large variety of brands going retail in different markets, each with its own strategic agenda and objective, we wanted to understand which models are most likely to get it right. This is particularly true in today’s omnichannel world, where customers prefer shopping in multiple formats, experiencing a variety of physical and digital touch points.

2.1 Key Objectives of Brands Going Retail

Each go-to-retail strategy design starts with key objectives that the brand is trying to accomplish. In many cases, a company may want to achieve multiple objectives in a retail strategy.

- **Within the first-level objectives**, brands pursuing a go-to-retail strategy place a high priority on having total control over the marketing, branding and direct experience of their shopper.
- **The second-level objectives** focus on giving the brand the opportunity to sell a broader range to its customers and increase its direct margins.
- Notably **lower ranked** are objectives including more independence from retailers, testing new products and consumer-data collection.

With the influence of BIG data and the importance of customer information to target marketing efforts, it is interesting to note that the collection of consumer data shows surprisingly low importance in the age of technology, information and personalized experiences.

The same is true for the testing and introduction of new products. The value of owned channels is probably under-leveraged in this aspect.

Selling excess inventory, which was the original impetus of brands going retail through outlet and clearance centers, has diminished as a key driver.

An unstated objective is the desire to be independent from retailers. While we sense that this is strategically important, brands may be hesitant to be vocal on this issue, as a way of preserving their existing relationships and channels.

What is key is that pursuing a direct relationship with consumers potentially enables all of these objectives to be achieved. While elevating the brand and experience represents a higher-level goal, the more commercial aspects can’t be ignored.
Beginning with one Nespresso brick-and-mortar boutique in 2000 and expanding to more than 410 in 62 countries by the end of 2014, the brand has become the world standard reference in its category and a textbook example of a manufacturer going retail.

When initially launching the brand, Nespresso learned that it was essential for customers to actually try its coffee machine and experience the brand to its fullest. It was after shop-in-shop pilots in department stores that the coffee company launched its own successful retail strategy, by opening boutiques across the globe. As a result, Nespresso’s retail-strategy sales showed a strong increase of +30% annually between 2001-10.

Responding directly to the consumer’s needs and way of shopping, the Nespresso boutiques promote a balance between the coffee experience and retail, while focusing on service, time management and personalization. Through the Nespresso stores, customers can experience and interact with the brand, its values and products, through the in-store café, optimal service and attractive designs. In addition, by vertically integrating into retail today, 70% of Nespresso’s 10,500 employees are in direct contact with its customers, either in-store or online, with 250,000 customers visiting its online boutique every day.

This is a true go-retail concept that leverages the store to maximize the brand and product experience for its customers.
2.2 Formats for Go to Retail

Paths to market now are more varied than before. Retailers can pursue alternative retail avenues and brands can move toward developing an e-commerce platform or choose among diverse physical options, ranging from a full-blown flagship store to temporary pop-up shops.

The right retail approach really depends on which strategic objectives a brand is attempting to pursue. Certain formats may be more or less successful to achieve these goals.

As the influence of e-commerce continues to grow on a global level, brands no longer are limited to brick-and-mortar options to achieve their goals. E-commerce can often offer a lower-capital and more frictionless way to test the go-to-retail waters.

Flagship stores clearly help deliver image and build a brand. Stand-alone stores can help meet a broad range of objectives, while e-commerce can, perhaps, most quickly showcase a broader range and drive new revenue streams. We found little difference between mature and developing markets, although all objectives in mature markets tend to be relatively more important than in developing markets.

Retailers like Birchbox are using customer insights to determine where to open new storefront locations. Online retailers can capitalize on this opportunity of “free study objects” and use real-world customers to observe shopper likes and dislikes.

After the opening of its flagship store in SoHo, Birchbox took its brand on a “roadtrip” across a few markets in the U.S. to gauge customer traffic and feedback, in order to determine its next retail storefront investment. Brands like Birchbox are using creative and alternative methods like pop-up shops to test their brand’s equity and marketing tactics, while engaging with consumers in innovative ways.

Companies -- even well-established e-commerce brands -- are realizing that they can’t ignore people who want to touch and feel the merchandise, and retail storefronts give customers that opportunity. Physical stores also are great marketing and advertising vehicles and offer an opportunity to differentiate from the plethora of virtual stores online today.

The lesson learned from retailers who have successfully moved their brand from one format to the next is to listen to their customers and understand what their true needs are, in order to keep them coming back and wanting more. It’s all about engagement with the brand, no matter the format.
Manufacturers are using creative tactics to build upon and leverage marketing and brand building through cross-industry partnerships that can help build the brand through other major retailers similar to these major case examples:

- **Imaginarium + Dannon**: Dannon has placed its products inside Imaginarium shops to gain brand momentum with shoppers who wouldn’t normally expect to be exposed to a dairy product at a traditional toy store; this also costs Dannon less than placement in a traditional brick-and-mortar location. It is also, perhaps, an acknowledgment that a Dannon store on its own may not offer consumers a complete solution. Pairing and partnering with an established retailer still drives brand exposure without exposing the limitations of a narrowly focused store.

- **Birchbox + Gap**: Birchbox partnered with Gap to develop shop-in-shops and curate cosmetic products with clothing sold in-store for a limited time to create a sense of urgency to explore the Birchbox brand and learn more about its offering. This can potentially be a win-win for both brands: Birchbox gains exposure, while Gap partners with a relevant brand.

- **Urban Outfitters + Hairroine**: Hairroine set up pop-up salons in New York at some Urban Outfitters locations to gain brand momentum and educate and expose customers to its services and products, with the added convenience of salon services “while you shop.”

With these test models and brand partnerships, manufacturers can gauge momentum based on foot traffic and success before moving forward with an official go-retail strategy, which brings us to another important question: Which operating models are the most important and successful? These cases are representative of a global perspective on brands’ engagement with consumers in new ways and how brands are going retail in every market, no matter the rate of development.

The right path depends on geography, goals, marketing strategies and maturity of the brand. Understanding your target customer and participating in research are key tactics to moving forward with expanding your brand’s go-to-retail method. A test-and-learn strategy is a great way to try out alternative methods to engage customers and use their data to outline a strategic plan.

### Rituals

“Our ambition is to build a global brand, where our own stores are an important asset to help discover and experience the brand. The store is our main advertising tool.”

Raymond Cloosterman, CEO and founder, RITUALS

RITUALS, the Holland-based luxury lifestyle brand, was founded with the vision to transform your daily routines into more meaningful moments by paying more attention to details. This philosophy led to the creation of a unique brand with strong store concepts that feature approximately 400 cosmetic products ranging from body and facial care to scented candles, clothing, perfumes, gemstone make-up and tea.

In 2000, the first RITUALS store opened in Amsterdam, inspiring the development of new concepts in major cities around the world. The new concepts support the brand’s global expansion, while directly connecting with the local customers through their own and franchise concepts. By leveraging their brick-and-mortar concepts, the RITUALS stores are strategic extensions of the brand, philosophy and values and focus on creating a comfortable atmosphere, attention to detail and high quality, in order to create a truly unique experience.

“Shopping at RITUALS... is designed to bring you joy and satisfaction every time you enter one of our stores”.

Pursuing a strong go-retail strategy, the brand expects to close 2016 with 500 stand-alone stores, about 2,000 corners in luxury department stores and perfumeries, strong e-commerce operations and five City Spas, covering a total of 20 countries. In addition, in 2012, RITUALS created its travel retail division, ensuring the vast expansion of its presence at more than 100 airports, 10 airlines and 25,000 hotel rooms. The company’s sales for 2016 are expected to reach €500 million.
It’s not easy to go retail. Specific skills must be developed in order to successfully achieve return on investment in the marketplace.

Brands must stay flexible and follow and listen to the consumers. Online businesses moving into brick-and-mortar is just the beginning of a larger evolution. Increasingly, there will be a blended, seamless environment, where business will have to find equilibrium in an ideal balance of e-commerce and a physical presence, varying by category and geography. That’s where we come in. We will create a roadmap to retail for your brand, in order to successfully achieve these objectives and maximize ROI.

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**Challenges and the Roadmap**

**Graph 06 Overview of best-practice action plan for brands going retail.**

**Brands Going Retail: Road map**

**Phase 1: Assessment**
- Sustainable long-term concept
  - Understanding the customer
  - Alignment with existing retail distribution
- Market Assessment
  - Market, trends, competitors, benchmarking, internal assets, current retail distribution
- Business Assessment:
  - SWOT
- Business Case
- “Political” Case

**Phase 2: Strategy/Concept**
- Reason for being
- Store Positioning & Differentiation
- Brand/Retail Format/Strategy
- Customer Experience
  - Pricing
  - Communication/Marketing
  - Services
  - Dimensions
  - Cross Channel
  - Physical Aspects
  - Location
  - Logistics and Supply
  - Store staff and service model
  - Assortment
  - Data and analytics
  - KPIs/Controlling
  - IT
  - Operations
  - Organization Design

**Phase 3: Implementation**
- Entry Model and Stages of Growth
- Own Stores or e-commerce
- Franchise
- Licensing
- Hybrid Model
- Cross Channel
- Marketing Attribution Modelling
- Test store
- Fine tuning
- Training
- Rollout
3.1 Where do you go from here?

Our research suggests four clear action steps:

1. **Define the role of the direct-to-consumer channel within the overall strategy.** Successful brands have clearly defined the purpose of the direct-to-consumer channel. Some of these roles include:
   - Building brand awareness: developing flagship concepts that provide a premium brand experience to elevate the brand and drive consumer traffic across all channels.
   - Building distribution of existing business: expanding accessibility of the brand through e-commerce or a branded specialty format that provides additional distribution direct to consumer and an ability to develop and control relationships with the end consumer.
   - Providing a channel for excess inventory through an outlet format.
   - Providing a distribution channel for additional products, for example a sub-brand or “built-for-outlet” product often sold at a better value for the consumer and better margin for the brand.

2. **Actively manage the direct-to-consumer channels with existing channels to optimize growth and profitability.**
   - Develop a communication- and performance-management approach for each channel and channel partners/customers to build momentum and to proactively address potential conflicts.
   - Develop KPIs and new metrics for new channels, as well as existing channels, to motivate and reward contributions.

3. **Develop direct-to-consumer competencies.** Successful brands going retail have committed to building the organization with supporting processes and tools to effectively operate a retail store network and/or Web-based business. Generally, new capabilities are needed in:
   - Direct-to-consumer marketing and communication, including data management and promotion
   - Retail merchandising in-store, as well as online assortment planning and visual merchandising
   - Sales and retail operations to effectively sell, serve and operate in a store-based setting, including an expanded focus on talent management and customer service
   - Local-market optimization that considers habits and cultural differences, to bring the brand to market effectively within a local context.

4. **Make it an experience and make it outstanding.**
   - That’s what retail is really all about: making your brand and product a seamless experience for the shopper.
   - Leaders have defined brand-critical standards for their retail operations: the key differentiating elements at the core of the retail environment, selling and engagement model and communications with the consumer at every touch point.

**Ebeltoft Group** can address all of your go-to retail goals by tailoring our in-depth retail expertise and relevant experience to serve your needs. Our experience working across all retail categories and diverse formats will help you create a successful enterprise and assist in strategic planning on a path to continued success.
Note to the reader

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank all Ebeltoft Group partners and the retail community for their tremendous support and valuable contributions and recognize the various cross-channel experts who have guided us to produce a high-level report and challenged us to keep improving quality and honing insight.

For more information

Interested in further discussing the report and learning about Ebeltoft Group’s services and retail expertise? We invite your inquiry:

Lourens Verweij, Global Development Manager - Ebeltoft Group
- lourens.verweij@ebeltoftgroup.com

To contact the local Ebeltoft Group member in your region:
- www.ebeltoftgroup.com/members

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