



HOW RETAIL IS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF MARKETING

And how educators can bring it into the
classroom

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Retail is where marketing meets the consumer in real time.

Question:

**What is one marketing campaign,
retailer or brand experience your
students are already talking about?**

No One does Marketing Better than Retail

- Omni channel marketing in retail:
Stores, social feeds, pop-ups, loyalty programs, and customer interactions
- Retailers are constantly adapting to consumer behavior



NRF is the Leading Expert in Retail

Bringing you the industry lens:

Member companies, consumer insights,
research, workforce data and
retail expertise

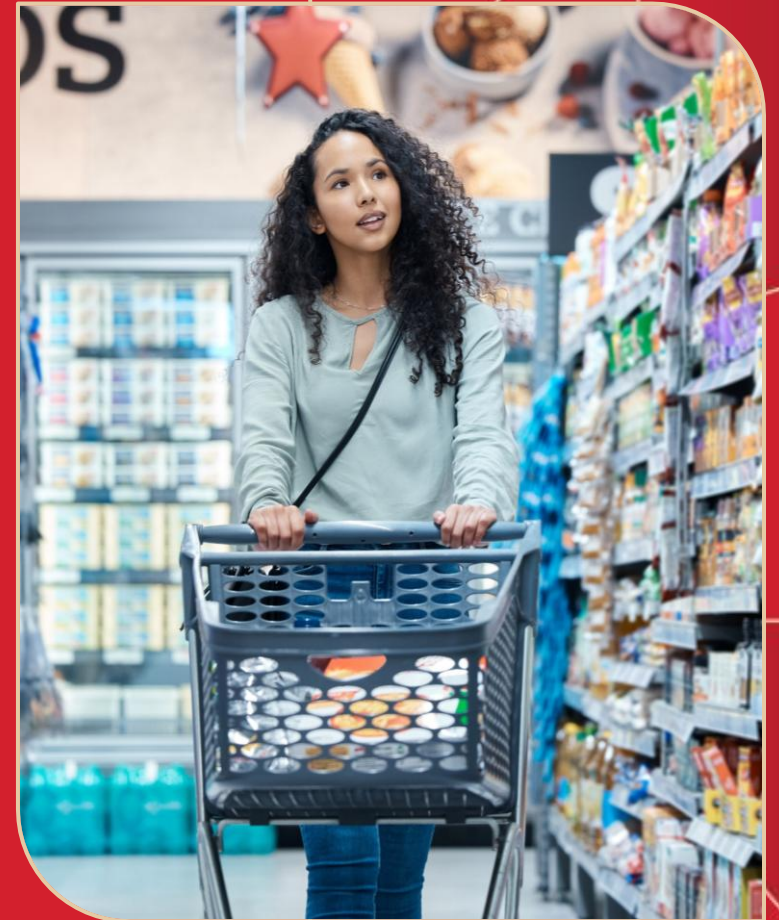




Know Your Consumer: The Foundation of Marketing

Consumer Spending

- Currently the bright spot in the economy – significant proportion of GDP growth driven by consumer spending
- Retail Sales strong at a macro level, despite weak consumer sentiment
- The US Consumer – “Griping, but Swiping”

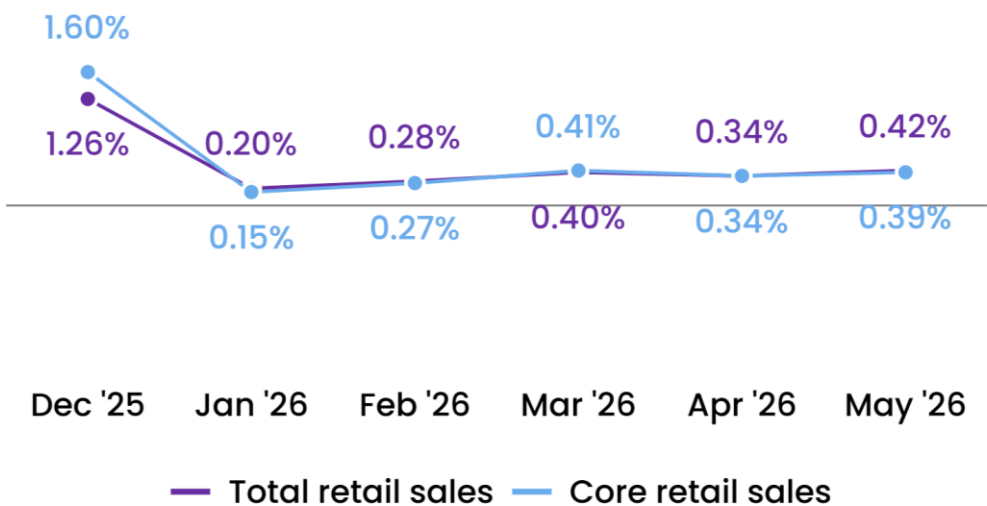


Eight Consecutive Months of Retail Sales Growth

CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor

Powered by Affinity Solutions

May 2026 U.S. Retail Sales
M/M, seasonally adjusted



Source: Affinity Solutions, Consumer Purchase Insights

NRF Center
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CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor

Powered by Affinity Solutions

May 2026 U.S. Retail Sales – Sector Insights

M/M, seasonally adjusted	May '26	Apr '26	Mar '26	Feb '26	Jan '26	Dec '25
Building & Garden Supplies	-0.38%	0.09%	-0.08%	-0.25%	-0.15%	1.11%
Clothing & Accessories	0.60%	0.59%	0.57%	0.66%	0.23%	2.05%
Digital Products	1.22%	1.11%	1.42%	0.98%	1.22%	0.98%
Electronics & Appliances	0.05%	0.16%	0.06%	-0.07%	-0.18%	2.28%
Food Services & Drinking Places	0.56%	0.35%	0.40%	0.33%	0.39%	-0.29%
Furniture & Home Furnishings	-0.09%	-0.06%	-0.11%	-0.27%	-0.31%	0.33%
General Merchandise	0.41%	0.15%	0.38%	0.27%	-0.05%	2.90%
Grocery & Beverage	0.48%	0.36%	0.39%	0.30%	0.37%	0.33%
Health & Personal Care	0.45%	0.45%	0.51%	0.50%	0.66%	1.92%
Misc. Retailers	0.53%	0.46%	0.57%	0.33%	0.39%	1.60%
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Music & Bookstores	0.25%	0.12%	0.40%	-0.02%	-0.37%	3.52%

Source: Affinity Solutions, Consumer Purchase Insights

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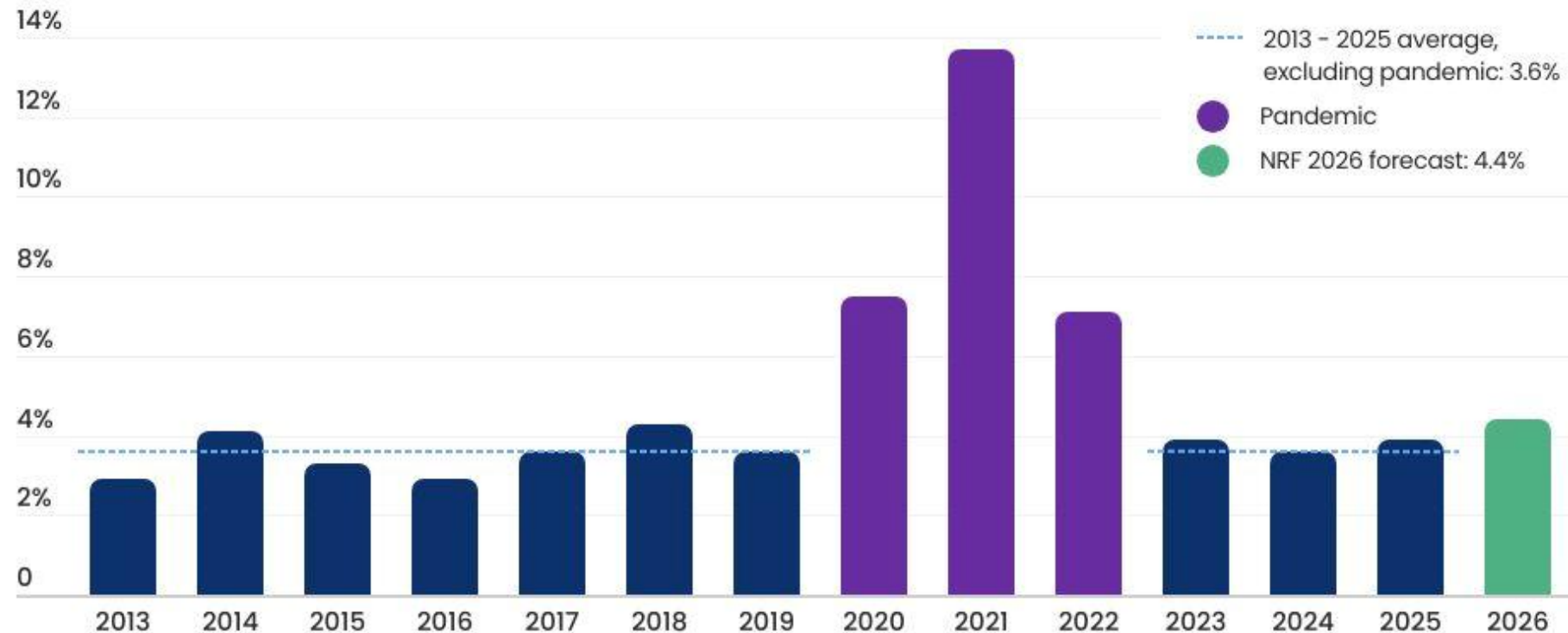
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NRF Forecast Retail Sales to Grow 4.4% in 2026

Historical retail sales and 2026 forecast

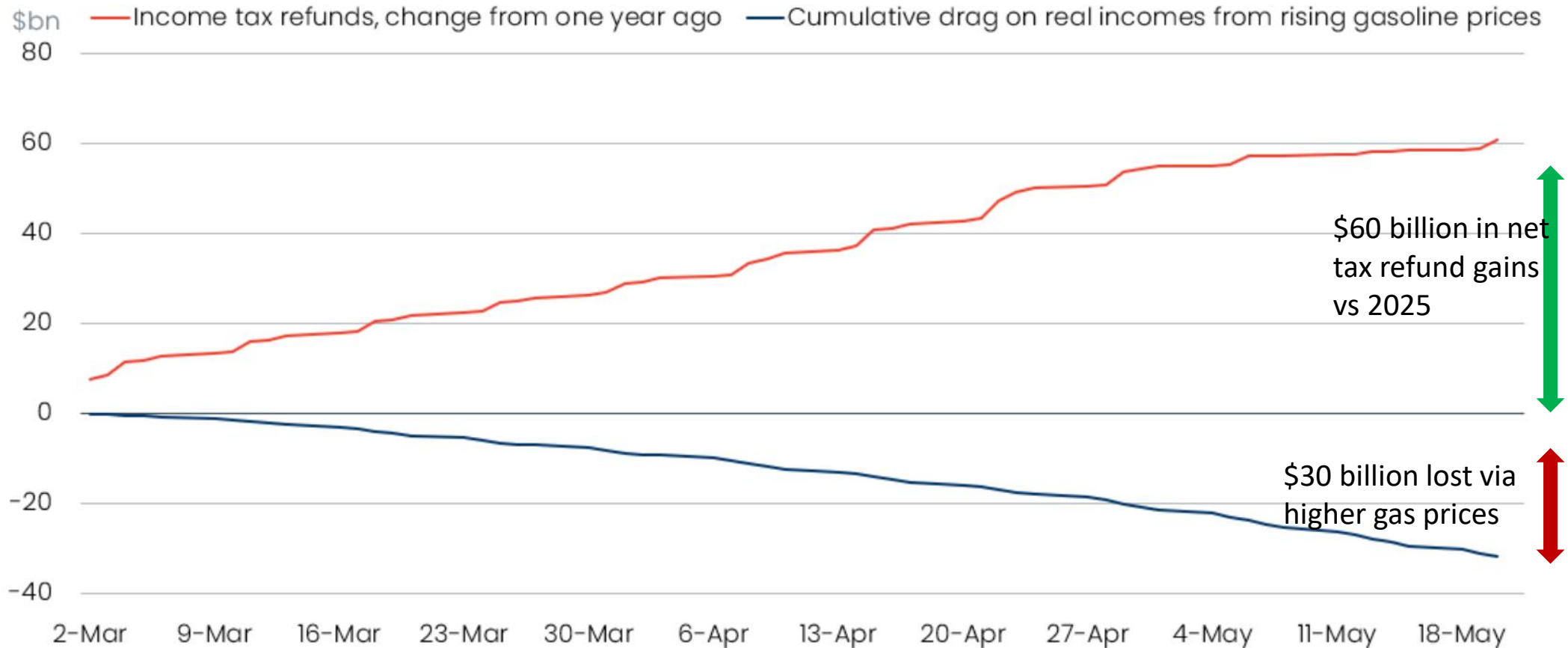
Retail sales for 2026 are expected to increase **4.4%** over 2025.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, NRF, Oxford Economics
Forecast excludes automobile dealers, gasoline stations and restaurants.

Excess tax refunds have more than offset higher gas prices

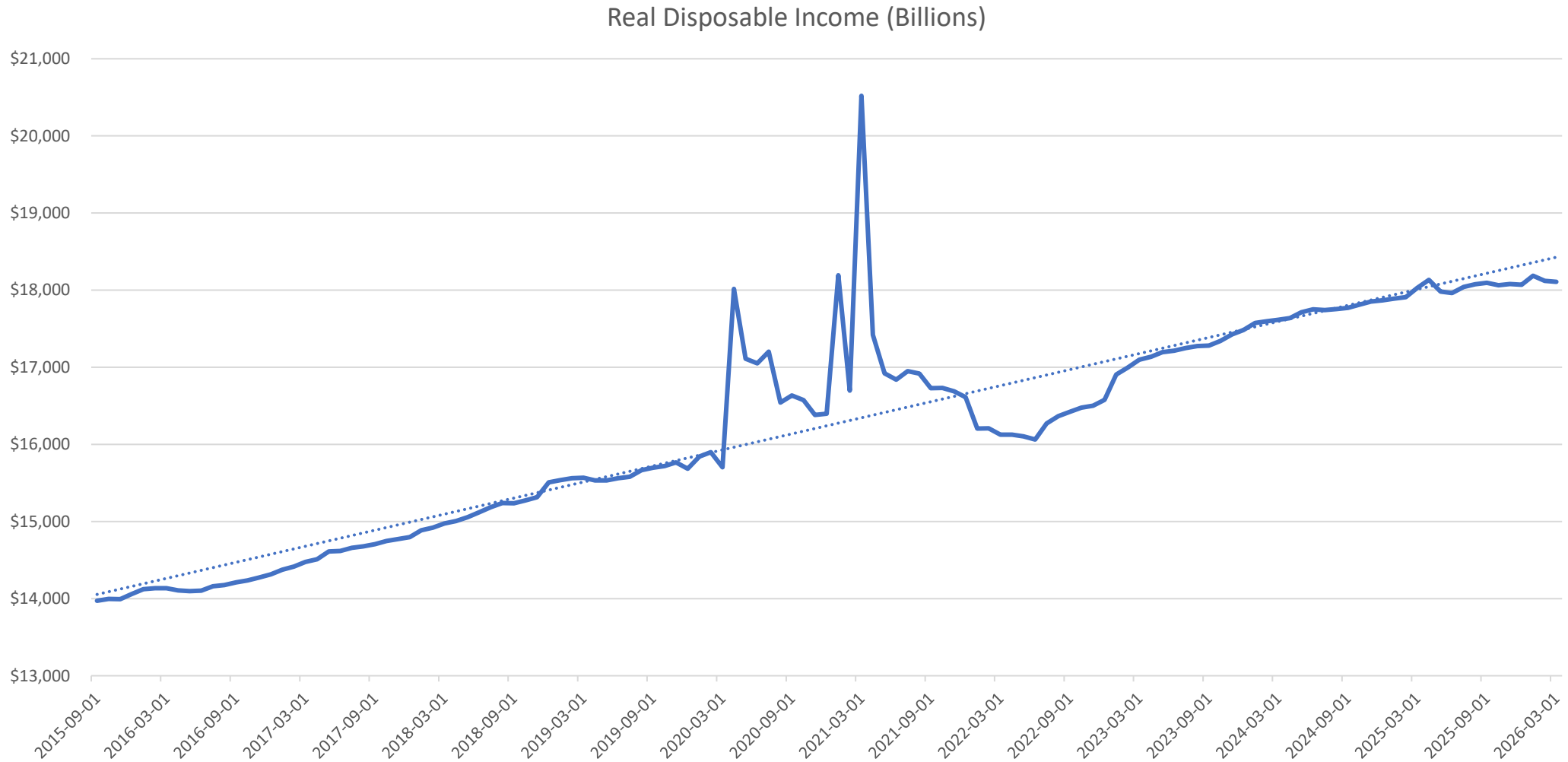
US: Impact of tax refunds and gas prices on real incomes



Sources: Oxford Economics, Haver Analytics

Source: Oxford Economics; NRF analysis

Households still have spending power



Source: US Bureau of Economic Analysis; NRF analysis



**Marketing Is No Longer Just
Ads: It's Experience**

Question:

Where do you currently find real-world marketing examples for your students?

Retail Marketing in Action: What Students Are Seeing Right Now

- Experiential Marketing
- Social Commerce
- Exclusivity & Brand Collaborations
- Creator & Influencer Marketing
- Loyalty & Personalization



- Retailers use stores, pop-ups, events, social media and technology to create memorable brand moments.
- The best retail marketing gives customers something to do, share, try or talk about.
- These experiences help students see how marketing connects to consumer behavior, brand engagement and customer loyalty.

FOOTWEAR NEWS > SHOE INDUSTRY NEWS

Adidas Takes Over 35 Nordstrom Stores in Major World Cup Moment

Adidas' signature footwear leads the offering, reimagined in World Cup colorways.

By STEPHEN GARNER  JUNE 4, 2026, 1:37PM

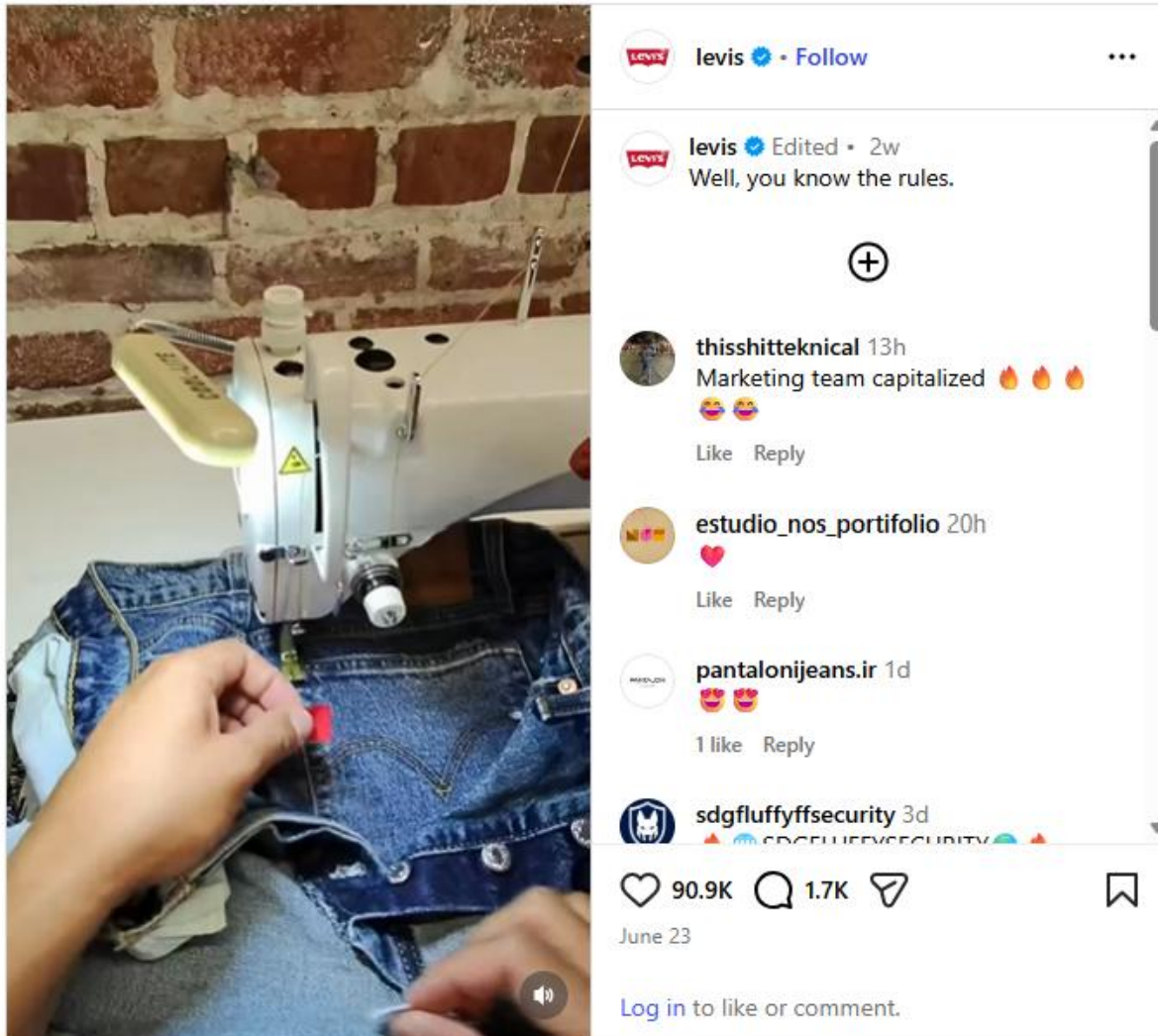


Ulta Beauty CEO announces TikTok Shop launch, 11.8% net sales jump: 'We got our swagger back'

BY LEXY LEBACK • MAR 13, 2026

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Going beyond a pop-up and tapping into real time excitement can elevate a brand and create a viral moment.

Levi's continued humor over the covered logo has been well received.

NRF Foundation Provides Real World Examples

Experiential Marketing: Creating Engaging Customer Experiences at DICKS Sporting Goods

Demand Creation and Loyalty Programs: Providing Incentives to Repeat Customers at Target

Sustainability and Community: Driving Positive Change in the Community with Kroger

All these and more <https://nrffoundation.org/retail-careers/industry-spotlights>

Question:

Why do students care when something is limited, exclusive or only available for a short time?

Exclusivity in Marketing: Why Limited Access Works

- Retailers use limited editions, early access, loyalty perks, collaborations and pop-up experiences to create excitement.
- Scarcity can make customers feel a sense of urgency, belonging and status.
- These strategies turn product launches into moments customers want to follow, share and participate in.



Debuting on November 6, 2025, the Starbucks Bearista cup sparked overnight queues and nationwide sell-outs within hours. The launch day saw a massive 37.8% spike in store visits compared to the 12-month daily average.

From Retail Marketing to Retail Careers

- Retail marketing is powered by people who understand customers, trends and brand experience.
- These same skills show up across a variety of retail career pathways — not just sales roles.
- For students interested in marketing, retail offers a real-world place to see strategy in action.

59%

of Americans
have worked in retail



48%

of people who work in retail
don't work in sales



There are millions of retail job opportunities



Heavy demand for goods put pressure on retailers to hire, driving up job openings to record levels in 2022, creating an extremely tight labor market. Job openings have returned to pre-pandemic levels as demand has eased.

Marketing Labor Market Snapshot

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that overall employment of advertising, promotions and marketing managers is projected to **grow 6%** from **2024 to 2034**, faster than average.

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics lists **median annual wages** of **\$161,030 for marketing managers** and \$126,960 for advertising and promotions managers as of May 2024.

How NRF Foundation Retail Training Supports Marketing Career Readiness

- **Customer insight:** Understand customer needs, expectations and behaviors
- **Communication:** Practice professional communication and service skills
- **Business connection:** See how retail operations, customer experience and marketing work together
- **Career readiness:** Build transferable skills that support careers in retail, marketing and beyond

Business of Retail: Operations & Profit Certification

For budding entrepreneurs and individuals pursuing careers in retail ownership or management

LEARNERS WILL BE ABLE TO:

- Understand the full scope of store operations and running a retail environment
- Utilize merchandising and marketing techniques
- Understand the retail profit model and competition
- Recognize retail policies, regulations and safety
- Plan a career in retail



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University Programs

125 University Members

\$1,000,000 scholarships

Case Competitions

Career Fairs

Resources

- NRF SmartBrief
- Retail Gets Real podcast
- NRF Research
- CNBC/NRF Retail Monitor
- RISE Up Resource Library
- NRF Foundation Case Studies

Use these tools to keep classroom materials up to date with the latest retail industry examples.

Question:

What is one retail marketing example from today that you could turn into a classroom discussion, case prompt or DECA activity?

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Q&A

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