

J. C. Penney (JCP)

\$0.34 (As of 04/10/20)

Price Target (6-12 Months): **\$0.50**

Long Term: 6-12 Months

Zacks Recommendation:
Neutral

(Since: 03/04/19)

Prior Recommendation: Underperform

Short Term: 1-3 Months

Zacks Rank: (1-5)

3-Hold

Zacks Style Scores:

VGM:A

Value: A

Growth: B

Momentum: D

Summary

Shares of J. C. Penney have underperformed the industry in the past six months. A declining year-over-year sales trend continued in fourth-quarter fiscal 2019, marred by soft comps. In fact, the company's exit from major appliance and in-store furniture categories impacted comps to the tune of 230 bps in the fiscal fourth quarter. Absence of promotions to liquidate slow-moving and aged inventory also hurt sales. Also, bottom line fell on lower sales and adjusted EBITDA. Management issued a dismal comps view for fiscal 2020, calling for a decline of 3.5-4.5%. Nevertheless, the company delivered the third straight bottom-line beat in the quarter. Also, top line reverted to positive surprise after three consecutive misses. The company's turnaround efforts, including the implementation of Plan for Renewal, are on track.

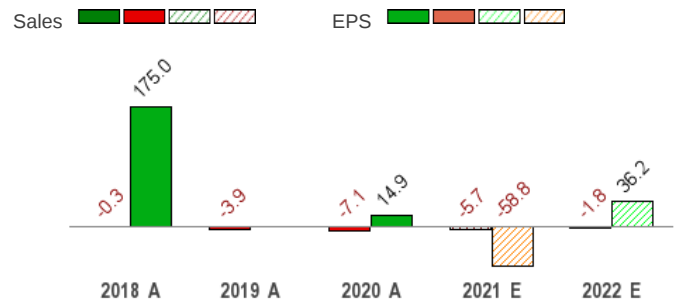
Price, Consensus & Surprise



Data Overview

52 Week High-Low	\$1.37 - \$0.26
20 Day Average Volume (sh)	8,719,947
Market Cap	\$109.7 M
YTD Price Change	-69.5%
Beta	1.94
Dividend / Div Yld	\$0.00 / 0.0%
Industry	Retail - Regional Department Stores
Zacks Industry Rank	Bottom 5% (241 out of 253)

Sales and EPS Growth Rates (Y/Y %)



Last EPS Surprise	262.5%
Last Sales Surprise	1.5%
EPS F1 Est- 4 week change	-81.6%
Expected Report Date	05/19/2020
Earnings ESP	-82.2%

Sales Estimates (millions of \$)

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022					10,348 E
2021	2,318 E	2,468 E	2,397 E	3,350 E	10,533 E
2020	2,555 A	2,619 A	2,500 A	3,493 A	11,167 A

EPS Estimates

	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Annual*
2022	-\$0.28 E	-\$0.05 E	-\$0.21 E	\$0.24 E	-\$0.81 E
2021	-\$0.75 E	-\$0.09 E	-\$0.23 E	\$0.13 E	-\$1.27 E
2020	-\$0.46 A	-\$0.18 A	-\$0.30 A	\$0.13 A	-\$0.80 A

*Quarterly figures may not add up to annual.

P/E TTM	NA
P/E F1	NA
PEG F1	NA
P/S TTM	0.0

The data in the charts and tables, including the Zacks Consensus EPS and Sales estimates, is as of 04/10/2020. The reports text is as of 04/13/2020.

Overview

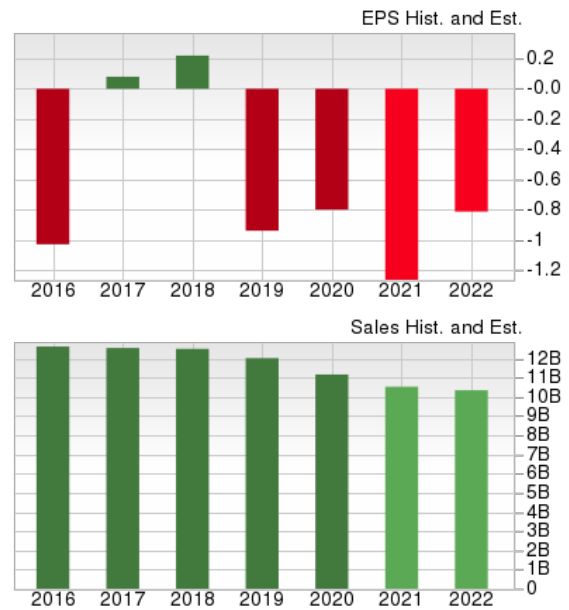
Founded in 1902 and based in Plano, TX, J. C. Penney Company, Inc. through its wholly-owned subsidiary J. C. Penney Corporation, Inc. offers merchandise and services to customers through its department stores, catalogs and website.

Meanwhile, the company fulfills online customer purchases by direct shipment to the customer from its distribution facilities and stores or from its suppliers' warehouses and by in store customer pick up.

The company operates stores at both mall and off-mall locations. The company sells family apparel, footwear, accessories, fine and fashion jewelry, and home furnishings. It also offers beauty products through Sephora shops, which are located inside the J. C. Penney stores.

Furthermore, the company's department stores also offer a variety of other services, which include optical, portrait photography, styling salon, and custom decorating.

Through its integrated channels, the company provides a wide range of national and private brands. J. C. Penney operates approximately 850 stores across the United States and Puerto Rico. In addition, the company runs one of the largest apparel and home furnishing site, jcp.com.



Reasons To Buy:

- ▲ **Q4 Highlights & FY20 View:** J. C. Penney reported better-than-expected results for fourth-quarter fiscal 2019. While the bottom line marked the company's third straight beat, the top line reverted to positive surprise after three consecutive misses. In addition, the quarter witnessed improvement in cost of goods sold and gross margin expansion. Notably, gross margin expanded 200 basis points (bps) in the fiscal fourth quarter, marking the third straight quarter of significant growth. Management expects strength in the women's apparel business to continue. The company's turnaround efforts, including the implementation of Plan for Renewal, bode well. For fiscal 2020, management projects an improvement of 100-130 bps in cost of goods sold (as a percentage of net sales), which is likely to result in gross margin expansion by an equivalent basis point. Moreover, it expects adjusted EBITDA growth of 5-10% over \$583 million recorded in fiscal 2019. Management estimates positive free cash flow for the fiscal year.
- J. C. Penney has been making strategic efforts to drive traffic. Its partnership with thredUP to offer second-hand women's clothing and handbags is also impressive.
- ▲ **Efforts to Aid Turnaround Process Bodes Well:** J. C. Penney has been undertaking a slew of initiatives in a bid to make a turnaround. Recently, the company plans to expand curbside pickup services to 50 additional stores across the United States. J. C. Penney Style on the Go Curbside Pickup allows customers to grab online orders directly. This expansion follows a successful pilot at the company's brand-defining store, for which it received positive customer response. Further, in a bid to lure customers, it is testing a new store format, which includes yoga studio, videogame lounge and lifestyle workshops. Additionally, the company has been expanding its key national brands — Instant Pot, Keurig and Sharper Image — to boost the top line. Also, J. C. Penney has launched an in-house brand — St. John's Bay Outdoor — within the men's department in its stores along with an Outdoor Shop featuring St. John's Bay Outdoor along with three new product lines namely American Threads, The American Outdoorsman and HI-TEC. Management noted that consumers have been responding positively to this initiative.
- Prior to this, it had teamed up with thredUP to offer second-hand women's clothing and handbags. Through such a move, management expects to cash in on the growing demand for high-quality second-hand products, provided at lower prices. This new in-store experience is likely to cater to consumers who crave for sustainable apparel options. The company launched a store checkout process, which is expected to streamline tasks and enhance customer experience. In this regard, it has tested a centralized pickup in returns to improve the in-store experience, and in turn, omni-channel customer experience. Also, it has been shutting down underperforming stores and revamping existing ones to revive sales.
- ▲ **Merchandise Endeavors:** J. C. Penney is reaping benefits from its merchandise initiatives. Despite a decline in the company's overall comparable store sales (comps), it continued to experience strength in Women's and Men's apparel and footwear businesses in the fourth quarter of fiscal 2019. Moreover, the company's denim business has been performing well. In addition, six of the company's eight merchandize divisions' comps improved in the second half of fiscal 2019 over the first half. Categories such as women's apparel, women's accessories, footwear and home witnessed notable improvement. In addition, the company has enhanced partnerships with bigwigs like Nike, Adidas, Champion and Puma, and seeks to increase the number of stores carrying such brands. Furthermore, the company has integrated Fit Bit in its assortments of health and wellness products. It is also taking initiatives to boost sales with special size offerings. The company also unveiled Shaquille O'Neal XLG brand specially designed for big & tall customers. Earlier, it had launched fashion tween brand, Obsess and redesigned Okie Dokie children's private brand. Further, the company has launched Fanatics shops designed to attract sports fans to purchase the newest and popular team apparel inside their local JCPenney store.
- ▲ **Excellent Performance of Sephora Continues:** The in-store Sephora department continues to outperform by drawing more customers. Since Sephora is part of J. C. Penney's long-term growth strategy, the company not only intends to add more stores but has also started selling Sephora products online. During the nine months of fiscal 2019, the company made investments in 27 new Sephora inside J. C. Penney stores. At the end of 2018, the total count of Sephora locations inside J. C. Penney was 668 stores. These shops are part of J. C. Penney's strategy to gain a competitive advantage over other beauty product retailers and drugstores, which have significantly enhanced their cosmetics sections in the recent years.
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Reasons To Sell:

- ▼ **Top and Bottom Lines Fall Y/Y in Q4:** Despite reporting better-than-expected results for fourth-quarter fiscal 2019, both revenues and earnings declined year over year. Earnings declined 27.8% on lower sales and adjusted EBITDA. In addition, the company continues to witness soft comps. Adjusted EBITDA fell 8.6% year over year. As a percentage of net sales, SG&A expenses increased 220 bps to 29.7%. We note that shares of J. C. Penney have lost 65.9% in the past six months, wider than the industry's 59% decline.
- ▼ **Declining Y/Y Sales Trend a Worry:** In fourth-quarter fiscal 2019, J. C. Penney's top line deteriorated 7.7% year over year. The metric had declined 8.5%, 7.4% and 4.3% in the fiscal third, second and first quarter, respectively. Also, total quarterly net sales fell 7.7% year over year owing to a soft comps performance. We note that the company had made aggressive promotions to liquidate slow-moving and aged inventory in the year-ago quarter. Comps in the quarter declined 7% year over year. This can be attributed to the company's exit from major appliance and in-store furniture categories, which impacted comps to the tune of 230 bps. Excluding these exits, adjusted comps declined 4.7% in the quarter under review. We note that the company made aggressive promotions to liquidate slow-moving and aged inventory in the year-ago quarter. Persistence of such trends is hurting the company's profitability. Moreover, J. C. Penney has repeatedly failed to bring fashionable and trendy brands, thereby losing customers. Consequently, management issued a dismal comps view for fiscal 2020, calling for a decline of 3.5-4.5%.
- ▼ **Dip in Consumer Sentiment May Impact Sales:** Any dip in consumer confidence – a key determinant of the economy's health – may have serious bearing on spending. The company's customers remain sensitive to macroeconomic factors including interest rate hikes, increase in fuel and energy costs, credit availability, unemployment levels, and high household debt levels, which may negatively impact their sentiment. This may adversely impact its growth.
- ▼ **Competitive Pressure:** In the retail segment, J. C. Penney faces stiff competition from other department stores, discounters, home furnishing stores, specialty retailers, wholesale clubs, and direct-to-consumer businesses on attributes, such as merchandise assortment, price, quality, location, and credit facility. This may affect the company's top and bottom-line results.

J. C. Penney's exit from major appliance and in-store furniture categories hurt comps by 230 bps in fourth quarter. The metric is expected to decline in the range of 3.5-4.5% in fiscal 2020.

Last Earnings Report

J. C. Penney Posts Q4 Earnings Beat

J. C. Penney reported better-than-expected results for fourth-quarter fiscal 2019. We note that both revenues and earnings declined year over year. Also, the company continues to witness soft comparable store sales (comps). Management issued a dismal comps view for fiscal 2020, calling for a decline of 3.5-4.5%.

Nevertheless, some of the highlights of the fourth quarter include improvement in cost of goods sold and gross margin expansion. Notably, gross margin expanded 200 basis points (bps) in fiscal fourth quarter, marking the third straight quarter of significant growth. Management expects strength in the women's apparel business to continue. Moving on, the company's turnaround efforts, including the implementation of Plan for Renewal, bode well.

Quarter Ending 01/2020

Report Date	Feb 27, 2020
Sales Surprise	1.48%
EPS Surprise	262.50%
Quarterly EPS	0.13
Annual EPS (TTM)	-0.81

Let's Analyze the Results

The company posted adjusted earnings of 13 cents in the fiscal fourth quarter against the Zacks Consensus Estimate of a loss of 8 cents. However, the reported figure showcases a decline of 27.8% from 18 cents earned in the year-ago quarter.

Total revenues (including total net sales, and credit income and other) in the quarter were \$3,493 million, down 7.7% from the prior-year quarter. However, the metric beat the Zacks Consensus Estimate of \$3,442 million. This marked a sales beat after three consecutive quarters of a miss. Moreover, total quarterly net sales of \$3,384 million fell 7.7% year over year owing to soft comps performance. We note that the company made aggressive promotions to liquidate slow-moving and aged inventory in the year-ago quarter.

Comps in the quarter declined 7% year over year. This can be attributed to the company's exit from major appliance and in-store furniture categories, which impacted comps to the tune of 230 basis points (bps). These exits were carried out as part of the company's turnaround initiatives to focus on profitable areas. Further, adjusted comps declined 4.7% in the quarter under review.

Nevertheless, six of the company's eight merchandize divisions' comps improved in the second half of fiscal 2019 over the first half. Further, credit income and others totaled \$109 million, down 9.9% on a year-over-year basis.

Cost of goods sold was \$2,257 million, down 10.4% from the prior-year quarter's figure. As a percentage of net sales, the metric improved 200 bps to 66.7%, courtesy of improved shrink performance and higher enterprise clearance selling margins from lower permanent markdowns as well as the exit of major appliance and in-store furniture categories this year.

Furthermore, adjusted EBITDA fell 8.6% to \$243 million. However, SG&A expenses dropped 0.2% to \$1,005 million. We note that the company realized savings in controllable expenses, which compensated higher incentive compensation and home office lease costs. As percentage of net sales, SG&A expenses increased 220 bps to 29.7%.

Other Financial Details

J. C. Penney ended fiscal 2019 with cash and cash equivalents of \$386 million compared with \$333 million in the year-ago period. Meanwhile, long-term debt was \$3,574 million, down 3.8% from the year-ago quarter's figure. Shareholders' equity totaled \$829 million at the end of fiscal 2019. Merchandise inventory levels declined 11.1% to \$2,166 million.

During fiscal 2019, the company repaid debt of \$97 million, which included \$50 million of unsecured notes paid at maturity. The company had free cash flow of \$145 million in fiscal 2019. Further, during this period it incurred capital expenditure of \$309 million.

Store Update

J. C. Penney ended fiscal 2019 with 846 stores. Of these, roughly 72% are mall-based while the balance 28% is off-mall locations. Moreover, the company closed 18 full-line stores this fiscal.

During the next fiscal, management expects to shut down a minimum of six stores. Including these stores, the company has shuttered 173 stores since the start of fiscal 2017.

Outlook

Management issued a view for fiscal 2020, which includes the impact of the currently-imposed China tariff but excludes the effect of coronavirus. J. C. Penney projects an improvement of 100-130 bps in cost of goods sold (as a percentage of net sales), which is likely to result in gross margin expansion by an equivalent basis point. Depreciation and amortization is likely to be roughly \$515 million for fiscal. It anticipates net interest expense of about \$290 million.

Moving on, the company expects adjusted EBITDA growth of 5-10% over \$583 million recorded in fiscal 2019. Management estimates positive free cash flow for the fiscal year. Capital expenditures for fiscal 2020 are forecasted at \$300 million.

Recent News

J. C. Penney Extends Closure, Furloughs Workers Amid Coronavirus - Mar 31, 2020

J. C. Penney said that it will prolong its temporary store closure plan and expects to gradually reopen them when it is safe. Due to the store closures, the company also decided to temporarily furlough most of its store hourly associates from Apr 2. In fact, management stated that many of its supply chain and logistic center associates were already furloughed on Mar 20.

Notably, all furloughed workers (enrolled with the company's benefits program) will keep getting full health benefits. Moreover, the company intends to sponsor all employee-paid premiums during the period. Apart from this, J.C. Penney has taken various moves to enhance its financial flexibility. These include curtailing expenditure, keeping recruitment on hold, delaying capital expenditure and utilizing funds under the revolving credit facility, to name a few.

J. C. Penney to Expand Curbside Pickup Service - Mar 2, 2020

J. C. Penney plans to expand curbside pickup services to 50 additional stores across the United States. J. C. Penney Style on the Go Curbside Pickup allows customers to grab online orders directly. This expansion follows a successful pilot at the company's brand-defining store, for which it received positive customer response.

Valuation

J. C. Penney shares are down 69.5% in the year-to-date period and 72.5% over the trailing 12-month period. Stocks in the Zacks sub-industry and Zacks Retail-Wholesale sector are down 60.4% and 7%, respectively, in the year-to-date period. Over the past year, the sub-industry and the sector are down 71.4% and 1%, respectively.

The S&P 500 index is down 13.7% in the year-to-date period and 4.6% in the past year.

The stock is currently trading at 0.01X forward 12-month sales, which compares to 0.12X for the Zacks sub-industry, 0.94X for the Zacks sector and 3.08X for the S&P 500 index.

Over the past five years, the stock has traded as high as 0.28X and as low as 0.01X, with a 5-year median of 0.1X. Our Neutral recommendation indicates that the stock will perform in-line with the market. Our \$0.50 price target reflects 0.01X forward 12-month sales.

The table below shows summary valuation data for JCP

Valuation Multiples - JCP					
		Stock	Sub-Industry	Sector	S&P 500
P/S F12M	Current	0.01	0.12	0.94	3.08
	5-Year High	0.28	0.7	1.11	3.44
	5-Year Low	0.01	0.1	0.8	2.54
	5-Year Median	0.1	0.41	0.93	3.01
P/B TTM	Current	0.13	0.54	4.26	3.69
	5-Year High	2.9	3.66	5.88	4.55
	5-Year Low	0.1	0.35	3.6	2.84
	5-Year Median	1.02	2.07	4.82	3.63
EV/EBITDA TTM	Current	8.45	4.67	14.37	10.23
	5-Year High	20.87	8.42	16.31	12.87
	5-Year Low	4.15	4.19	10.89	8.27
	5-Year Median	9.2	6.37	12.52	10.78

As of 04/09/2020

Industry Analysis Zacks Industry Rank: Bottom 5% (241 out of 253)



Top Peers

Burlington Stores, Inc. (BURL)	Neutral
Costco Wholesale Corporation (COST)	Neutral
Dollar General Corporation (DG)	Neutral
Dollar Tree, Inc. (DLTR)	Neutral
Macys, Inc. (M)	Neutral
Target Corporation (TGT)	Neutral
Dillards, Inc. (DDS)	Underperform
Kohls Corporation (KSS)	Underperform

Industry Comparison Industry: Retail - Regional Department Stores				Industry Peers		
	JCP Neutral	X Industry	S&P 500	DDS Underperform	KSS Underperform	M Neutral
VGM Score	A	-	-	A	B	B
Market Cap	109.68 M	2.06 B	19.66 B	821.28 M	3.09 B	2.06 B
# of Analysts	6	6	13	5	9	7
Dividend Yield	0.00%	0.90%	2.18%	1.80%	14.14%	0.00%
Value Score	A	-	-	A	A	A
Cash/Price	4.45	0.46	0.06	0.47	0.40	0.46
EV/EBITDA	7.70	4.09	11.72	2.83	4.05	4.13
PEG Ratio	NA	0.85	2.04	NA	1.16	0.53
Price/Book (P/B)	0.13	0.51	2.66	0.51	0.57	0.32
Price/Cash Flow (P/CF)	0.38	1.85	10.44	2.49	1.85	1.09
P/E (F1)	NA	9.27	17.51	36.78	9.27	6.34
Price/Sales (P/S)	0.01	0.11	2.12	0.13	0.15	0.08
Earnings Yield	-373.53%	6.75%	5.65%	2.71%	10.80%	15.77%
Debt/Equity	5.65	1.05	0.70	0.37	1.07	1.03
Cash Flow (\$/share)	0.90	6.12	7.01	13.37	10.77	6.12
Growth Score	B	-	-	B	B	B
Hist. EPS Growth (3-5 yrs)	NA%	-1.84%	10.92%	-8.57%	7.34%	-1.84%
Proj. EPS Growth (F1/F0)	-58.13%	-58.21%	-1.14%	-78.32%	-55.81%	-63.92%
Curr. Cash Flow Growth	10.38%	-10.84%	5.93%	-16.01%	-10.84%	-15.88%
Hist. Cash Flow Growth (3-5 yrs)	28.85%	-3.55%	8.55%	-10.66%	-0.78%	-6.32%
Current Ratio	1.41	1.55	1.24	1.99	1.68	1.18
Debt/Capital	84.96%	51.18%	42.36%	26.96%	51.74%	50.63%
Net Margin	-2.40%	2.04%	11.64%	1.77%	3.46%	2.30%
Return on Equity	-27.83%	10.16%	16.74%	6.15%	14.17%	14.47%
Sales/Assets	1.34	1.34	0.54	1.73	1.35	1.15
Proj. Sales Growth (F1/F0)	-5.67%	-4.59%	0.45%	-3.50%	-3.20%	-8.38%
Momentum Score	D	-	-	C	F	F
Daily Price Chg	5.11%	3.25%	2.48%	0.03%	13.64%	10.81%
1 Week Price Chg	-29.58%	-25.43%	-4.40%	-40.35%	-34.42%	-13.02%
4 Week Price Chg	-16.68%	-11.61%	11.26%	-14.08%	-13.47%	-9.76%
12 Week Price Chg	-59.42%	-55.11%	-20.02%	-52.55%	-57.67%	-62.01%
52 Week Price Chg	-72.44%	-63.99%	-11.31%	-55.29%	-71.62%	-72.62%
20 Day Average Volume	8,719,947	4,676,139	3,931,994	632,330	11,017,581	38,212,760
(F1) EPS Est 1 week change	0.00%	-3.42%	-0.12%	0.00%	-18.54%	-6.84%
(F1) EPS Est 4 week change	-81.58%	-66.20%	-5.78%	-74.58%	-51.30%	-57.83%
(F1) EPS Est 12 week change	-45.07%	-53.61%	-7.64%	-76.07%	-52.68%	-54.55%
(Q1) EPS Est Mthly Chg	-114.86%	-220.00%	-10.13%	-74.14%	-325.14%	-457.81%

Zacks Style Scores

The Zacks Style Score is as a complementary indicator to the Zacks rating system, giving investors a way to focus on the highest rated stocks that best fit their own stock picking preferences.

Academic research has proven that stocks with the best Value, Growth and Momentum characteristics outperform the market. The Zacks Style Scores rate stocks on each of these individual styles and assigns a rating of A, B, C, D and F. We also produce the VGM Score (V for Value, G for Growth and M for Momentum), which combines the weighted average of the individual Style Scores into one score. This is perfectly suited for those who want their stocks to have the best scores across the board.

Value Score	A
Growth Score	B
Momentum Score	D
VGM Score	A

As an investor, you want to buy stocks with the highest probability of success. That means buying stocks with a Zacks Recommendation of Outperform, which also has a Style Score of an A or a B.

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