Featured Stock in July's Dividend Growth Model Portfolio

One new stock made July's Dividend Growth Stocks Model Portfolio, which was made available to members on July 27, 2023.

Recap from June's Picks

On a price return basis, our Dividend Growth Stocks Model Portfolio (+5.1%) outperformed the S&P 500 (+4.0%) by 1.1% from June 29, 2023 through July 25, 2023. On a total return basis, the Model Portfolio (+5.2%) outperformed the S&P 500 (+4.0%) by 1.2% over the same time. The best performing stock was up 21%. Overall, 16 out of 28 Dividend Growth stocks outperformed their respective benchmarks (S&P 500 and Russell 2000) from June 29, 2023 through July 25, 2023.

This report leverages our cutting-edge Robo-Analyst technology to deliver proven-superior[1] fundamental research and support more cost-effective fulfillment of the fiduciary duty of care.

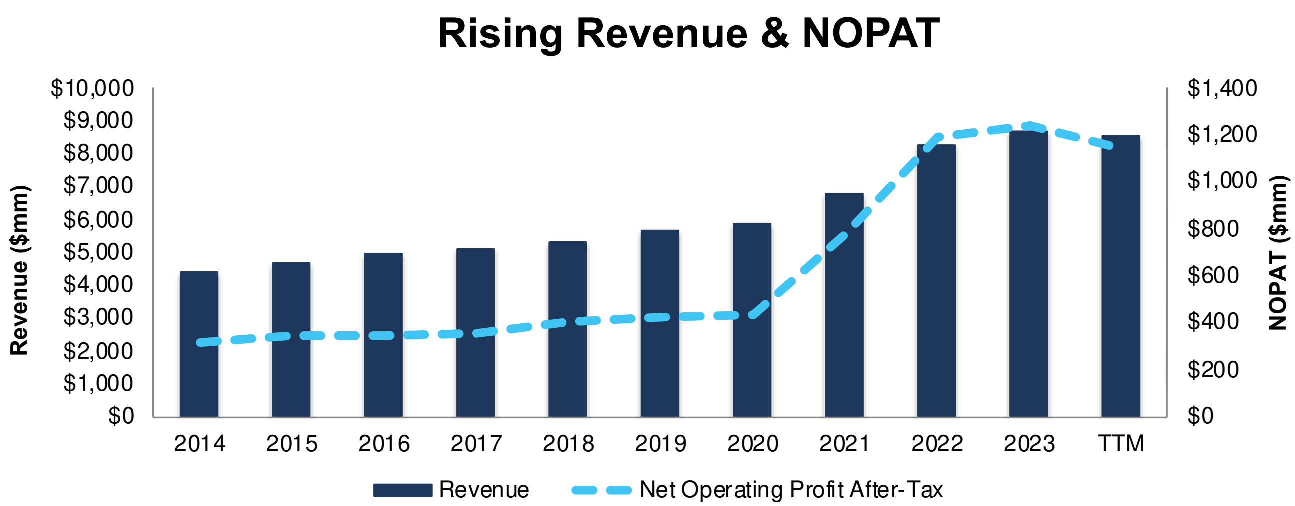
This Model Portfolio mimics an "All Cap Blend" style with a focus on dividend growth. Selected stocks earn an Attractive or Very Attractive rating, generate positive free cash flow (FCF) and economic earnings, offer a current dividend yield >1%, and have a 5+ year track record of consecutive dividend growth. This Model Portfolio is designed for investors who favor long-term capital appreciation over current income, but still appreciate the power of growing dividends.

Featured Stock for July: Williams-Sonoma Inc. (WSM: $139/share)

Williams-Sonoma Inc. (WSM) is the featured stock in July's Dividend Growth Stocks Model Portfolio. We first made Williams-Sonoma a Long Idea in September 2016, and the stock has outperformed the S&P 500 by 84% since then. See our most recent report on WSM here.

Williams-Sonoma has grown revenue by 10% compounded annually and net operating profit after tax (NOPAT) by a whopping 22% compounded annually from fiscal 2018 through the trailing-twelve-months (TTM). The company's NOPAT margin increased from 8% in fiscal 2018 to 13% over the TTM, while invested capital turns rose from 1.8 to 2.3 over the same time. Higher invested capital turns and NOPAT margins drive return on invested capital (ROIC) from 13% in fiscal 2018 to 31% in TTM.

Figure 1: Williams-Sonoma's Revenue & NOPAT Since Fiscal 2014



Sources: New Constructs, LLC and company filings

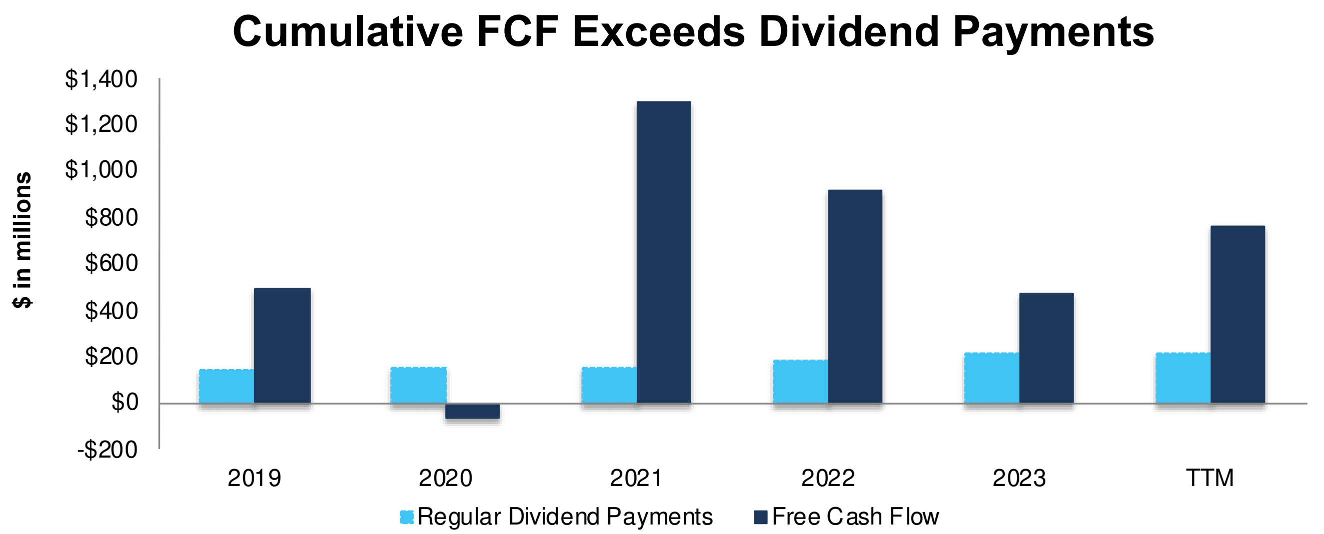
[1] Our research utilizes our Core Earnings, a more reliable measure of profits, as proven in Core Earnings: New Data & Evidence, written by professors at Harvard Business School (HBS) & MIT Sloan and published in The Journal of Financial Economics.

Free Cash Flow Supports Regular Dividend Payments

Williams-Sonoma has increased its regular dividend from $0.39/share in 1Q18 to $0.90/share in 3Q23. The current quarterly dividend, when annualized, equals $3.60/share and provides a 2.6% dividend yield.

More importantly, Williams-Sonoma's free cash flow (FCF) easily exceeds its regular dividend payments. From fiscal 2018 through fiscal 1Q24, Williams-Sonoma generated $3.8 billion (34% of current enterprise value) in FCF while paying $912 million in dividends. See Figure 2.

Figure 2: Williams-Sonoma's FCF vs. Regular Dividends Since Fiscal 2019



Sources: New Constructs, LLC and company filings

Companies with FCF well above dividend payments provide higher-quality dividend growth opportunities. On the other hand, dividends that exceed FCF cannot be trusted to grow or even be maintained.

WSM Is Undervalued

At its current price of $139/share, Williams-Sonoma has a price-to-economic book value (PEBV) ratio of 0.8. This ratio means the market expects Williams-Sonoma's NOPAT to permanently fall 20% from current levels. This expectation seems overly pessimistic given that Williams-Sonoma has grown NOPAT by 22% compounded annually since fiscal 2018 and 15% compounded annually over the past decade.

Even if Williams-Sonoma's NOPAT margin falls to 10% (compared to 13% in the TTM), and it grows revenue by just 3% compounded annually (below 8% compounded annually since fiscal 2013) over the next decade, the stock would be worth $168/share today – a 21% upside. See the math behind this reverse DCF scenario. In this scenario, Williams-Sonoma's NOPAT would decline <1% compounded annually through 2032. Should the company's NOPAT grow more in line with historical growth rates, the stock has even more upside.

Add in Williams-Sonoma's 2.6% dividend yield and a history of dividend growth, and it's clear why this stock is in July's Dividend Growth Stocks Model Portfolio.

Critical Details Found in Financial Filings by Our Robo-Analyst Technology

Below are specifics on the adjustments we make based on Robo-Analyst findings in Williams-Sonoma's 10-K and 10-Qs:

Income Statement: we made $121 million in adjustments with a net effect of removing $90 million in non-operating expenses (1% of revenue). Clients can see all adjustments made to Williams-Sonoma's income statement on the GAAP Reconciliation tab on the Ratings page on our website.

Balance Sheet: we made $1.4 billion in adjustments to calculate invested capital with a net increase of $367 million. The most notable adjustment was $680 million (22% of reported net assets) in operating leases. See all adjustments made to Williams-Sonoma's balance sheet on the GAAP Reconciliation tab on the Ratings page on our website.

Valuation: we made $2 billion in adjustments, with a net decrease in shareholder value of $2 billion. The most notable adjustment to shareholder value was $2.0 billion in total debt. This adjustment represents 22% of Williams-Sonoma's market value. See all adjustments to Williams-Sonoma's valuation on the GAAP Reconciliation tab on the Ratings page on our website.

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Disclosure: David Trainer, Kyle Guske II, Italo Mendonça, and Hakan Salt receive no compensation to write about any specific stock, style, or theme.

Questions on this report or others? Join our Society of Intelligent Investors and connect with us directly.

It's Official: We Offer the Best Fundamental Data in the World

Many firms claim their research is superior, but none of them can prove it with independent studies from highly-respected institutions as we can. Three different papers from both the public and private sectors show:

1. Legacy fundamental datasets suffer from significant inaccuracies, omissions and biases.
2. Only our "novel database" enables investors to overcome these flaws and apply reliable fundamental data in their research.
3. Our proprietary measures of Core Earnings and Earnings Distortion materially improve stock picking and forecasting of profits.

Best Fundamental Data in the World

Forthcoming in The Journal of Financial Economics, a top peer-reviewed journal, Core Earnings: New Data & Evidence proves our Robo-Analyst technology overcomes material shortcomings in legacy firms' data collection processes to provide superior fundamental data, earnings models, and research. More details.

Key quotes from the paper:

- "[New Constructs'] *Total Adjustments* differs significantly from the items identified and excluded from Compustat's adjusted earnings measures. For example… 50% to 70% of the variation in *Total Adjustments* is not explained by *S&P Global's (SPGI) Adjustments* individually." – pp. 14, 1st para.
- "A final source of differences [between New Constructs' and S&P Global's data] is due to data collection oversights…we identified cases where Compustat did not collect information relating to firms' income that is useful in assessing core earnings." – pp. 16, 2nd para.

Superior Models

A top accounting firm features the superiority of our ROIC, NOPAT and Invested Capital research to Capital IQ & Bloomberg's in Getting ROIC Right. See the Appendix for direct comparison details.

Key quotes from the paper:

- "…an accurate calculation of ROIC requires more diligence than often occurs in some of the common, off-the-shelf ROIC calculations. Only by scouring the footnotes and the MD&A [as New Constructs does] can investors get an accurate calculation of ROIC." – pp. 8, 5th para.
- "The majority of the difference…comes from New Constructs' machine learning approach, which leverages technology to calculate ROIC by applying accounting adjustments that may be buried deeply in the footnotes across thousands of companies." – pp. 4, 2nd para.

Superior Stock Ratings

Robo-Analysts' stock ratings outperform those from human analysts as shown in this paper from Indiana's Kelley School of Business. Bloomberg features the paper here.

Key quotes from the paper:

- "the portfolios formed following the buy recommendations of Robo-Analysts earn abnormal returns that are statistically and economically significant." – pp. 6, 3rd para.
- "Our results ultimately suggest that Robo-Analysts are a valuable, alternative information intermediary to traditional sell-side analysts." – pp. 20, 3rd para.

Our mission is to provide the best fundamental analysis of public and private businesses in the world and make it affordable for all investors, not just Wall Street insiders.

We believe every investor deserves to know the whole truth about the profitability and valuation of any company they consider for investment. More details on our cutting-edge technology and how we use it are here.

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