

## Apparel Brands

## The next leg of outperformance will be tougher; maintain Buy on RL, PVH

Industry Overview

## Key themes to watch for the vendors

Apparel vendors (RL, PVH, LEVI, CRI) are up 30% on average since the XRT trough on 10/27 (vs S&P +14%), driven almost entirely by multiple expansion. We think multiples could remain structurally higher in an environment where investors are less concerned about a recession, but acknowledge global headwinds remain (particularly in Europe). The next leg higher in the group will likely be driven by execution and better visibility that ests are moving higher. Below we review key themes that will drive stock performance in '24. We have a balanced view across the group and are most positive on RL/PVH as we think '24 ests are too low. See notes: [RL \(Buy\)](#), [PVH \(Buy\)](#), [LEVI \(Neutral\)](#), [CRI \(Underperform\)](#).

## Wholesale: Can it only get better? Not so fast

We are more cautious on Europe but remain wary on a near term recovery in global wholesale and expect cautious commentary on spring/summer order books. With wholesale down 5% in C23 for the group, we think any signs of improving commentary on trends into 2H24 will be quickly rewarded in the stocks. Out of the vendors, LEVI is most exposed to US wholesale while PVH is most exposed to EU wholesale. Relative winner in the current environment: **RL**. Beneficiary of restocking cycle: **LEVI**.

## International: Keeping an eye on Europe

The outlook for Europe remains murky after a volatile 2023. We expect much of the same in '24, with DTC expected to outpace wholesale and the promotional environment remaining a key wild card. Asia remains a bright spot for the group (CRI immaterial) and we expect continued strength. We acknowledge comps continue to get tougher in Asia, but each brand has significant market share opportunity, particularly in China. Finally, the potential for continued USD weakening in a rate cutting cycle should be a net positive. Relative winner w/ Europe bounce back: **PVH**. Stock to avoid EU/Asia volatility: **CRI**.

## Gross margins: should grind higher led by lower cotton

Cotton is the major tailwind for the group in 2024; we estimate a potential 100bp+ benefit for each company, in addition to continued structural benefits from int'l and DTC. Offsetting factors may include elevated freight costs from the Suez Canal disruption (see [our Dec 22 note](#)), which could impact the vendors more given more European exposure relative to our coverage universe. Another offsetting factor to watch for is additional pricing cuts and an elevated promo environment. Relative winner: **All**. Most at risk to pricing cuts: **CRI**.

## Cost savings programs to buffer lower sales expectations

We are forecasting 3% sales growth on average in '24 for the group, led by RL (+5.4%), LEVI (+3.6%), PVH (+2% ex Heritage sale), and CRI (0%), and expect the group to grow EPS by 14% on average. Besides the previously discussed GM tailwinds, we think cost cutting programs at RL, PVH, and LEVI will drive SG&A leverage in '24. Our base case for each company includes sales increasing below their respective medium term algos, therefore execution here will be crucial to drive earnings growth. Relative winners: **PVH**, **RL**, **LEVI**.

BofA Securities does and seeks to do business with issuers covered in its research reports. As a result, investors should be aware that the firm may have a conflict of interest that could affect the objectivity of this report. Investors should consider this report as only a single factor in making their investment decision. Refer to important disclosures on page 6 to 10. Analyst Certification on page 5. Price Objective Basis/Risk on page 4.

12641598

Timestamp: 05 January 2024 12:01AM EST

05 January 2024

Equity  
United States  
Apparel

**Christopher Nardone**  
Research Analyst  
BofAS  
+1 646 743 2016  
[christopher.nardone@bofa.com](mailto:christopher.nardone@bofa.com)

**Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA**  
Research Analyst  
BofAS  
+1 646 855 0951  
[lorraine.hutchinson@bofa.com](mailto:lorraine.hutchinson@bofa.com)

## Key terms

XRT: Retail ETF  
CRI: Carter's Inc  
LEVI: Levi Strauss  
PVH: PVH Corp  
RL: Ralph Lauren

## Key themes in charts

### Exhibit 1: PO changes

We are increasing our POs by 14% on average due to the rerating in market multiples

	Rating	PO		Implied Multiple (EV/EBITDA)		
		New	Old	New	Old	Current
RL	Buy	\$165	\$145	9.0x	8.0x	7.7x
PVH	Buy	\$135	\$114	8.0x	7.0x	6.6x
LEVI	Neutral	\$16	\$14	8.0x	7.0x	7.6x
CRI	Underperform	\$65	\$60	7.0x	6.5x	8.2x
<b>Avg</b>				<b>8.0x</b>	<b>7.1x</b>	<b>7.5x</b>

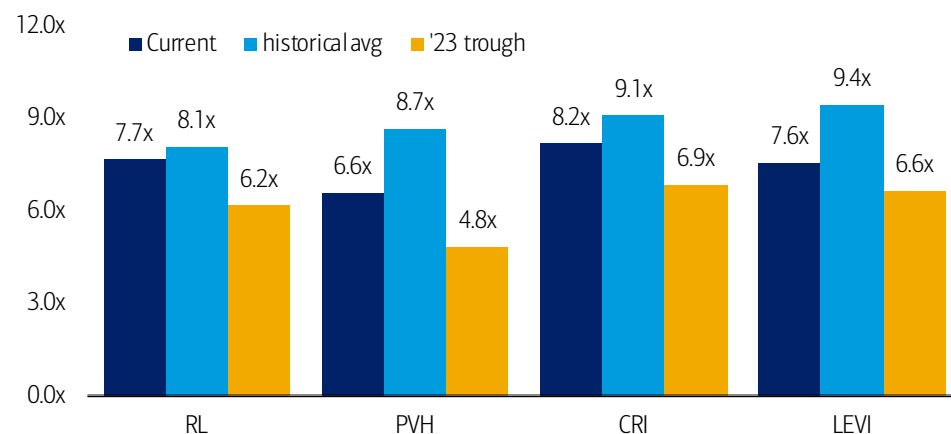
Source: BofA Global Research

BofA GLOBAL RESEARCH

## Valuation: multiples remain below historic avg

### Exhibit 2: Valuation compared to historical average and '23 trough levels (EV/EBITDA)

Multiples have bounced from '23 lows but still remain below historical averages

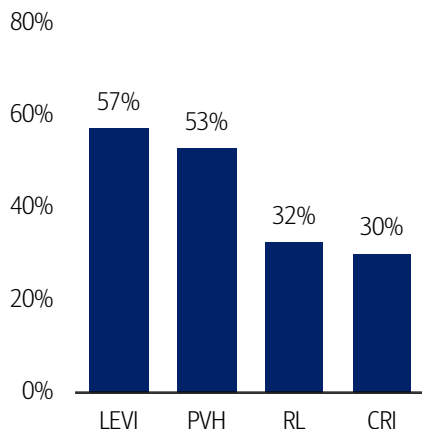


Source: Bloomberg

BofA GLOBAL RESEARCH

## Wholesale: LEVI/PVH highest global exposure

**Exhibit 3: Global wholesale % of total sales**  
LEVI and PVH have the highest concentration

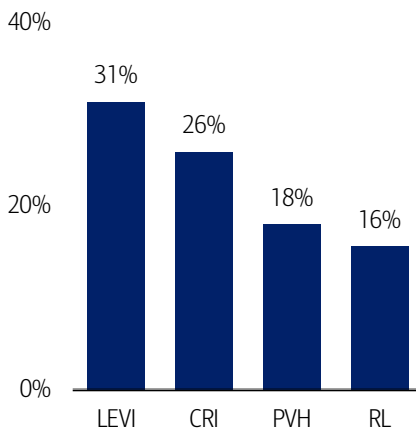


Source: Company reports

Note: LEVI F23E, PVH YTD, RL F24E, CRI YTD

BofA GLOBAL RESEARCH

**Exhibit 4: US wholesale % of total sales**  
LEVI has the highest concentration

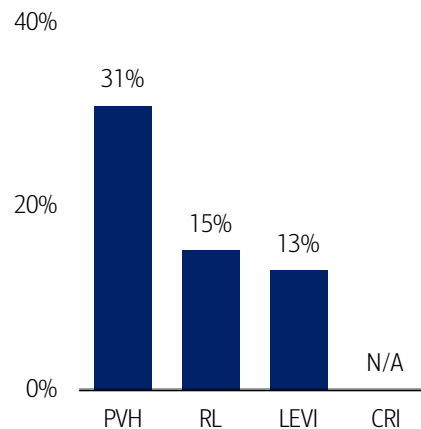


Source: Company reports

Note: LEVI Americas ex other brands F23E, PVH F21 estimated, RL N.A. F24E, CRI US YTD

BofA GLOBAL RESEARCH

**Exhibit 5: Europe wholesale % of total sales**  
PVH has the highest concentration



Source: Company reports

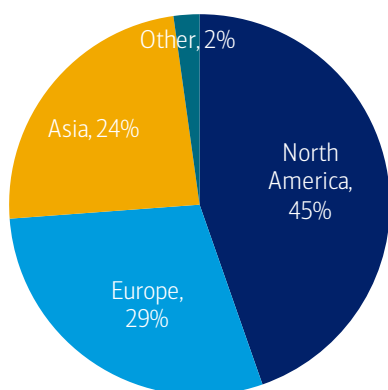
Note: LEVI F23E, PVH F21 estimated, RL N.A. F24E, CRI immaterial

BofA GLOBAL RESEARCH

## International: PVH highest non US exposure

**Exhibit 6: RL sales mix (F24E)**

North America represents a little less than half of total sales

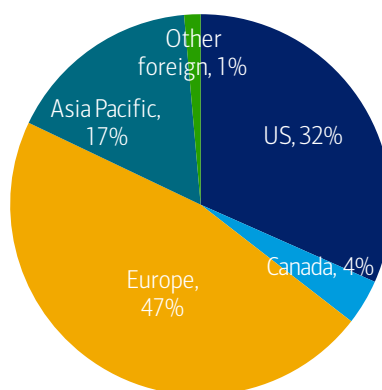


Source: Company filings

BofA GLOBAL RESEARCH

**Exhibit 7: PVH sales mix (F22)**

Europe represents a little less than half of total sales

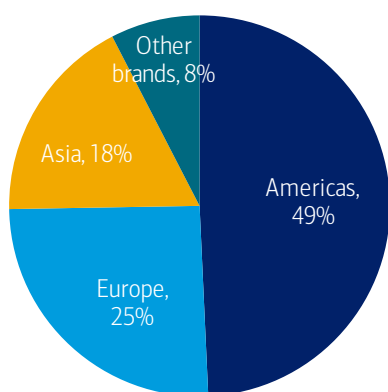


Source: Company filings

BofA GLOBAL RESEARCH

**Exhibit 8: LEVI sales mix (F23E)**

Americas represents roughly half of total sales

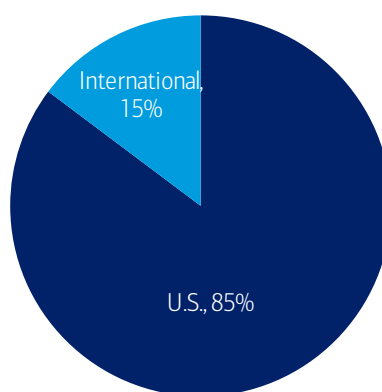


Source: Company filings

BofA GLOBAL RESEARCH

**Exhibit 9: CRI sales mix (F23E)**

U.S. represents 85% of total sales



Source: Company filings

BofA GLOBAL RESEARCH

**Exhibit 10: Stocks mentioned**

Rating and price summary

BofA Ticker	Bloomberg ticker	Company name	Price	Rating
CRI	CRI US	Carter's Inc	US\$ 73.44	B-3-7
LEVI	LEVI US	Levi Strauss	US\$ 15.6	B-2-7
PVH	PVH US	PVH Corp	US\$ 117.25	C-1-7
RL	RL US	Ralph Lauren	US\$ 142.64	B-1-7

Source: BofA Global Research

BofA GLOBAL RESEARCH

**Price objective basis & risk****Carter's Inc (CRI)**

Our \$65 price objective is based on a 7x EV/EBITDA ('24E) multiple, lower than its historical average given the ongoing macro uncertainty and downside EPS risks.

Upside risks to our price objective are better-than-expected children's apparel sales, successful market share gains through the company's Age Up strategy, and a more defensive business model during a potential recession.

Downside risks to our price objective are emphasis by wholesale partners on private label, exposure to weakening outlet centers, and a heightened competitive pricing environment.

**Levi Strauss & Co. (LEVI)**

Our \$16 PO is based on a 8x EV/EBITDA multiple on our F2024 estimates. This is inline with peers given similar headwind and long term margin potential as peers.

Upside risks: better-than-expected margin expansion, higher consumer demand drives significantly higher sales and earnings growth, and a faster than expected recovery in denim.

Downside risks: fashion trends shift away from denim and the Levi's brand, the

consumer environment materially weakens, promotions weighs on margins, and the company needs to ramp spending to drive brand momentum.

**PVH Corp (PVH)**

Our \$135 PO is based on 8x EV/EBITDA ('24e), which is in line with peers given a similar margin profile.

Risks to the downside are a weaker macro economic environment, FX fluctuations, and higher promotional environment. Risks to the upside are a faster-than-expected recovery in international travel, more favorable FX trends, and improving global macro trends.

**Ralph Lauren (RL)**

Our PO of \$165 is based on 9x FY25E EV/EBITDA, slightly higher than peers due stronger margins and sales growth. We think RL should trade at a slight premium to peers given its long-term brand value, strong balance sheet, and stronger margins.

Upside risks to our PO are a faster-than-expected sales turnaround, higher-than-expected benefits from ongoing cost savings initiatives, and significant improvements in the overall global apparel retail environment. Downside risks are worse-than-expected trends at wholesale, incremental US department store closures, higher-than-expected reinvestment spending, and deterioration in the global macro environment.

**Analyst Certification**

I, Christopher Nardone, hereby certify that the views expressed in this research report accurately reflect my personal views about the subject securities and issuers. I also certify that no part of my compensation was, is, or will be, directly or indirectly, related to the specific recommendations or view expressed in this research report.

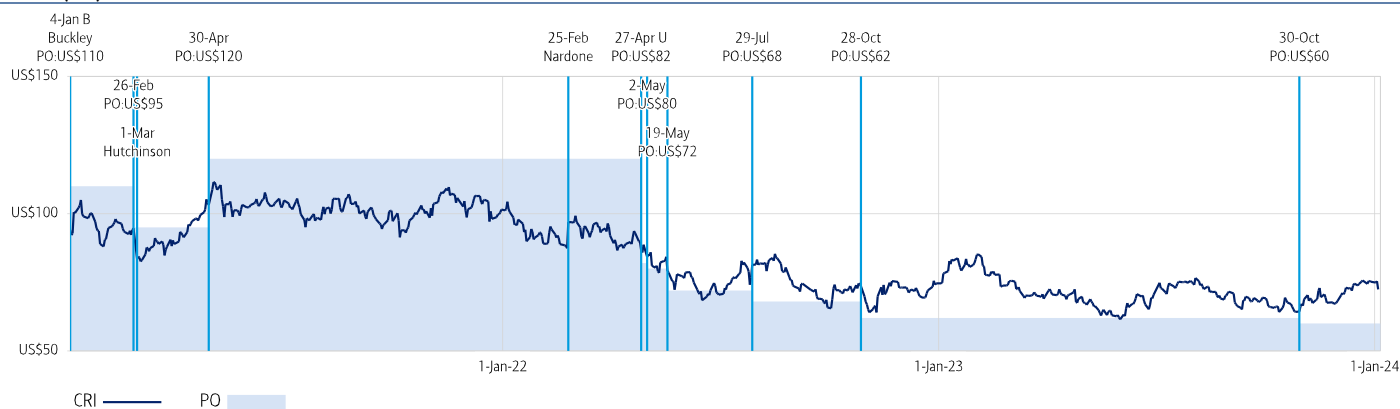
## US - Softline Retailing and Dept Stores Coverage Cluster

Investment rating	Company	BofA Ticker	Bloomberg symbol	Analyst
<b>BUY</b>				
	Bath & Body Works Inc	BBWI	BBWI US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	Burlington Stores	BURL	BURL US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	Crocs, Inc.	CROX	CROX US	Christopher Nardone
	Deckers Outdoor Corp	DECK	DECK US	Christopher Nardone
	European Wax Center	EW CZ	EW CZ US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	lululemon athletica Inc	LULU	LULU US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	Oddity Tech	ODD	ODD US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	PVH Corp	PVH	PVH US	Christopher Nardone
	Ralph Lauren	RL	RL US	Christopher Nardone
	Ross Stores Inc	ROST	ROST US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	Tapestry Inc.	TPR	TPR US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	TJX Companies	TJX	TJX US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	Urban Outfitters	URBN	URBN US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	Victoria's Secret & Co	VSCO	VSCO US	Alice Xiao
<b>NEUTRAL</b>				
	American Eagle	AEO	AEO US	Christopher Nardone
	Birkenstock	BIRK	BIRK US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	FIGS, Inc.	FIGS	FIGS US	Alice Xiao
	Foot Locker	FL	FL US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	Levi Strauss & Co.	LEVI	LEVI US	Christopher Nardone
	Nike	NKE	NKE US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	Signet Jewelers	SIG	SIG US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	Ulta Beauty	ULTA	ULTA US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	Under Armour Inc	UAA	UAA US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
<b>UNDERPERFORM</b>				
	Aritzia	YATZ	ATZ CN	Alice Xiao
	Aritzia	ATZAF	ATZAF US	Alice Xiao
	Carter's Inc	CRI	CRI US	Christopher Nardone
	Gap Inc.	GPS	GPS US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	Kohl's	KSS	KSS US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	Nordstrom	JWN	JWN US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA
	Revolve	RVLV	RVLV US	Alice Xiao
	V F Corp	VFC	VFC US	Lorraine Hutchinson, CFA

## Disclosures

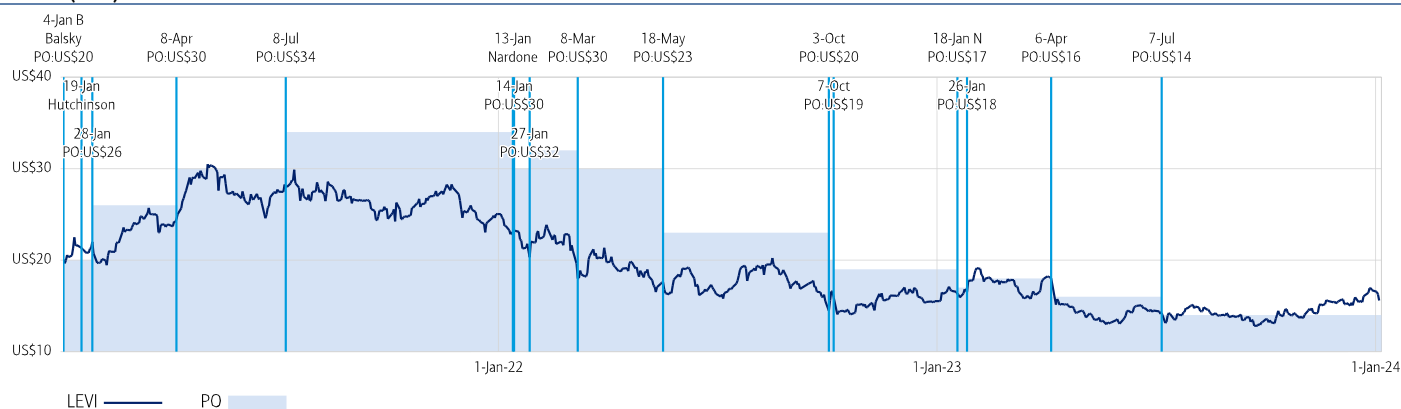
## Important Disclosures

## Carter's Inc (CRI) Price Chart



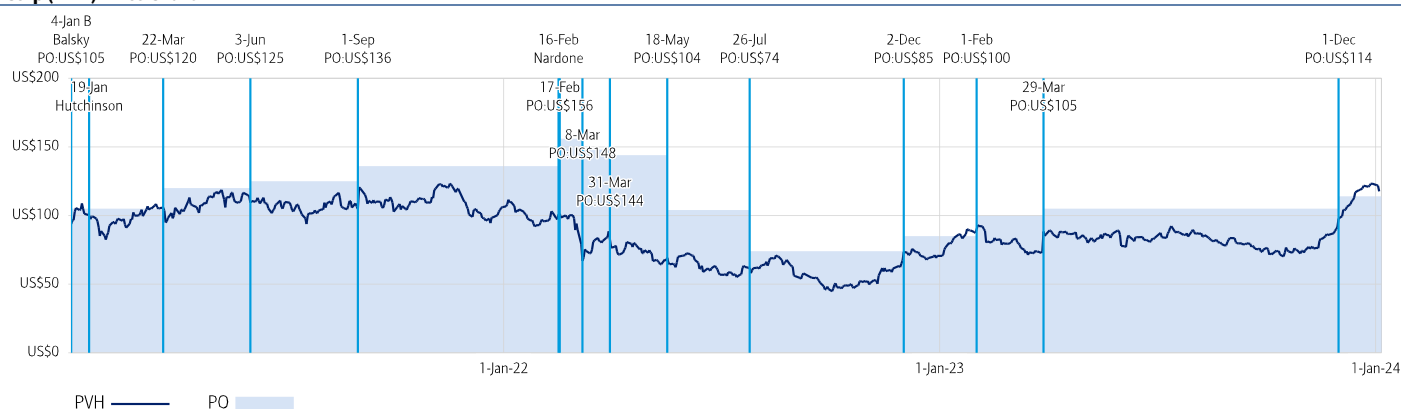
B: Buy, N: Neutral, U: Underperform, PO: Price Objective, NA: No longer valid, NR: No Rating

The Investment Opinion System is contained at the end of the report under the heading "Fundamental Equity Opinion Key". Dark grey shading indicates the security is restricted with the opinion suspended. Medium grey shading indicates the security is under review with the opinion withdrawn. Light grey shading indicates the security is not covered. Chart is current as of a date no more than one trading day prior to the date of the report.

**Levi Strauss (LEVI) Price Chart**

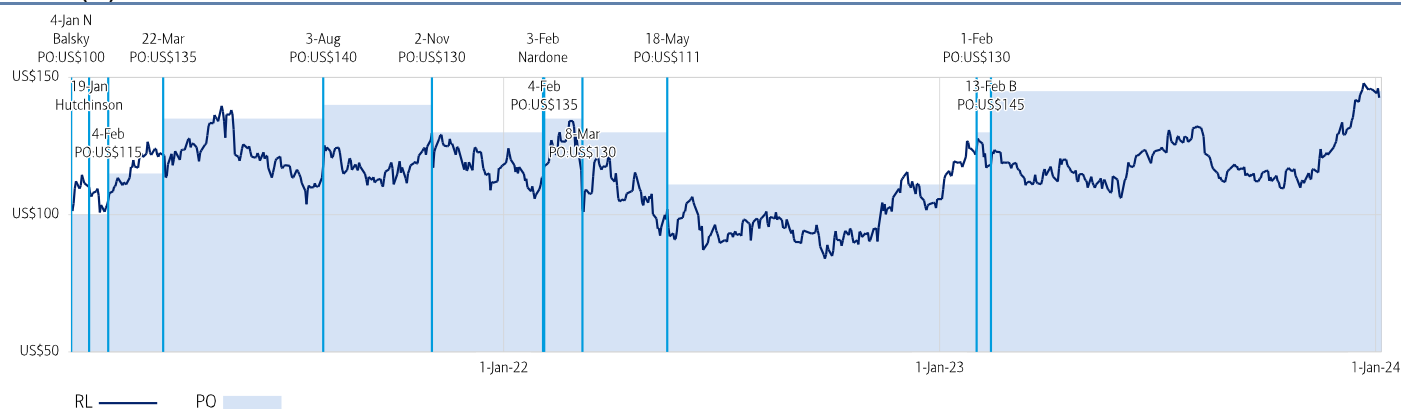
B: Buy, N: Neutral, U: Underperform, PO: Price Objective, NA: No longer valid, NR: No Rating

The Investment Opinion System is contained at the end of the report under the heading "Fundamental Equity Opinion Key". Dark grey shading indicates the security is restricted with the opinion suspended. Medium grey shading indicates the security is under review with the opinion withdrawn. Light grey shading indicates the security is not covered. Chart is current as of a date no more than one trading day prior to the date of the report.

**PVH Corp (PVH) Price Chart**

B: Buy, N: Neutral, U: Underperform, PO: Price Objective, NA: No longer valid, NR: No Rating

The Investment Opinion System is contained at the end of the report under the heading "Fundamental Equity Opinion Key". Dark grey shading indicates the security is restricted with the opinion suspended. Medium grey shading indicates the security is under review with the opinion withdrawn. Light grey shading indicates the security is not covered. Chart is current as of a date no more than one trading day prior to the date of the report.

**Ralph Lauren (RL) Price Chart**

B: Buy, N: Neutral, U: Underperform, PO: Price Objective, NA: No longer valid, NR: No Rating

The Investment Opinion System is contained at the end of the report under the heading "Fundamental Equity Opinion Key". Dark grey shading indicates the security is restricted with the opinion suspended. Medium grey shading indicates the security is under review with the opinion withdrawn. Light grey shading indicates the security is not covered. Chart is current as of a date no more than one trading day prior to the date of the report.

**Equity Investment Rating Distribution: Retailing Group (as of 31 Dec 2023)**

Coverage Universe	Count	Percent	Inv. Banking Relationships <sup>R1</sup>	Count	Percent
Buy	96	57.83%	Buy	39	40.63%
Hold	32	19.28%	Hold	12	37.50%
Sell	38	22.89%	Sell	18	47.37%

**Equity Investment Rating Distribution: Textiles/Apparel Group (as of 31 Dec 2023)**

Coverage Universe	Count	Percent	Inv. Banking Relationships <sup>R1</sup>	Count	Percent
Buy	13	52.00%	Buy	8	61.54%
Hold	6	24.00%	Hold	3	50.00%
Sell	6	24.00%	Sell	2	33.33%

**Equity Investment Rating Distribution: Global Group (as of 31 Dec 2023)**

Coverage Universe	Count	Percent	Inv. Banking Relationships <sup>R1</sup>	Count	Percent
Buy	1895	53.62%	Buy	1083	57.15%
Hold	832	23.54%	Hold	454	54.57%
Sell	807	22.84%	Sell	383	47.46%

<sup>R1</sup> Issuers that were investment banking clients of BofA Securities or one of its affiliates within the past 12 months. For purposes of this Investment Rating Distribution, the coverage universe includes only stocks. A stock rated Neutral is included as a Hold, and a stock rated Underperform is included as a Sell.

**FUNDAMENTAL EQUITY OPINION KEY:** Opinions include a Volatility Risk Rating, an Investment Rating and an Income Rating. **VOLATILITY RISK RATINGS**, indicators of potential price fluctuation, are: A - Low, B - Medium and C - High. **INVESTMENT RATINGS** reflect the analyst's assessment of both a stock's absolute total return potential as well as its attractiveness for investment relative to other stocks within its Coverage Cluster (defined below). Our investment ratings are: 1 - Buy stocks are expected to have a total return of at least 10% and are the most attractive stocks in the coverage cluster; 2 - Neutral stocks are expected to remain flat or increase in value and are less attractive than Buy rated stocks and 3 - Underperform stocks are the least attractive stocks in a coverage cluster. An investment rating of 6 (No Rating) indicates that a stock is no longer trading on the basis of fundamentals. Analysts assign investment ratings considering, among other things, the 0-12 month total return expectation for a stock and the firm's guidelines for ratings dispersions (shown in the table below). The current price objective for a stock should be referenced to better understand the total return expectation at any given time. The price objective reflects the analyst's view of the potential price appreciation (depreciation).

Investment rating	Total return expectation (within 12-month period of date of initial rating)	Ratings dispersion guidelines for coverage cluster <sup>R2</sup>
Buy	≥ 10%	≤ 70%
Neutral	≥ 0%	≤ 30%
Underperform	N/A	≥ 20%

<sup>R2</sup> Ratings dispersions may vary from time to time where BofA Global Research believes it better reflects the investment prospects of stocks in a Coverage Cluster.

**INCOME RATINGS**, indicators of potential cash dividends, are: 7 - same/higher (dividend considered to be secure), 8 - same/lower (dividend not considered to be secure) and 9 - pays no cash dividend. **Coverage Cluster** is comprised of stocks covered by a single analyst or two or more analysts sharing a common industry, sector, region or other classification(s). A stock's coverage cluster is included in the most recent BofA Global Research report referencing the stock.

Price Charts for the securities referenced in this research report are available on the [Price Charts website](#), or call 1-800-MERRILL to have them mailed.

BofAS or one of its affiliates acts as a market maker for the equity securities recommended in the report: Carter's Inc, Levi Strauss, PVH Corp, Ralph Lauren.

The issuer is or was, within the last 12 months, an investment banking client of BofAS and/or one or more of its affiliates: Carter's Inc, Levi Strauss, PVH Corp, Ralph Lauren.

BofAS or an affiliate has received compensation from the issuer for non-investment banking services or products within the past 12 months: Carter's Inc, Levi Strauss, PVH Corp, Ralph Lauren.

The issuer is or was, within the last 12 months, a non-securities business client of BofAS and/or one or more of its affiliates: Carter's Inc, Levi Strauss, PVH Corp, Ralph Lauren.

BofAS or an affiliate has received compensation for investment banking services from this issuer within the past 12 months: Levi Strauss, PVH Corp, Ralph Lauren.

BofAS or an affiliate expects to receive or intends to seek compensation for investment banking services from this issuer or an affiliate of the issuer within the next three months: Carter's Inc, Levi Strauss, PVH Corp, Ralph Lauren.

BofAS together with its affiliates beneficially owns one percent or more of the common stock of this issuer. If this report was issued on or after the 9th day of the month, it reflects the ownership position on the last day of the previous month. Reports issued before the 9th day of a month reflect the ownership position at the end of the second month preceding the date of the report: PVH Corp, Ralph Lauren.

BofAS or one of its affiliates is willing to sell to, or buy from, clients the common equity of the issuer on a principal basis: Carter's Inc, Levi Strauss, PVH Corp, Ralph Lauren.

The issuer is or was, within the last 12 months, a securities business client (non-investment banking) of BofAS and/or one or more of its affiliates: Carter's Inc, Levi Strauss, PVH Corp, Ralph Lauren.

BofA Global Research personnel (including the analyst(s) responsible for this report) receive compensation based upon, among other factors, the overall profitability of Bank of America Corporation, including profits derived from investment banking. The analyst(s) responsible for this report may also receive compensation based upon, among other factors, the overall profitability of the Bank's sales and trading businesses relating to the class of securities or financial instruments for which such analyst is responsible.

**Other Important Disclosures**

From time to time research analysts conduct site visits of covered issuers. BofA Global Research policies prohibit research analysts from accepting payment or reimbursement for travel expenses from the issuer for such visits.

Prices are indicative and for information purposes only. Except as otherwise stated in the report, for any recommendation in relation to an equity security, the price referenced is the publicly traded price of the security as of close of business on the day prior to the date of the report or, if the report is published during intraday trading, the price referenced is indicative of the traded price as of the date and time of the report and in relation to a debt security (including equity preferred and CDS), prices are indicative as of the date and time of the report and are from various sources including BofA Securities trading desks.

The date and time of completion of the production of any recommendation in this report shall be the date and time of dissemination of this report as recorded in the report timestamp.

Recipients who are not institutional investors or market professionals should seek the advice of their independent financial advisor before considering information in this report in connection with any investment decision, or for a necessary explanation of its contents.

Officers of BofAS or one or more of its affiliates (other than research analysts) may have a financial interest in securities of the issuer(s) or in related investments.

Refer to [BofA Global Research policies relating to conflicts of interest](#).

**"BofA Securities" includes BofA Securities, Inc. ("BofAS") and its affiliates. Investors should contact their BofA Securities representative or Merrill Global Wealth Management financial advisor if they have questions concerning this report or concerning the appropriateness of any investment idea described herein for such investor. "BofA Securities" is a global brand for BofA Global Research.**

**Information relating to Non-US affiliates of BofA Securities and Distribution of Affiliate Research Reports:**

BofAS and/or Merrill Lynch, Pierce, Fenner & Smith Incorporated ("MLPF&S") may in the future distribute, information of the following non-US affiliates in the US (short name: legal name, regulator): Merrill Lynch (South Africa): Merrill Lynch South Africa (Pty) Ltd., regulated by The Financial Service Board; MLI (UK): Merrill Lynch International, regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the Prudential Regulation Authority (PRA); BofASE (France): BofA Securities Europe SA is authorized by the Autorité de Contrôle Prudentiel et de Résolution (ACPR) and



regulated by the ACPR and the Autorité des Marchés Financiers (AMF). BofA Securities Europe SA ("BofASE") with registered address at 51, rue La Boétie, 75008 Paris is registered under no 842 602 690 RCS Paris. In accordance with the provisions of French Code Monétaire et Financier (Monetary and Financial Code), BofASE is an établissement de crédit et d'investissement (credit and investment institution) that is authorised and supervised by the European Central Bank and the Autorité de Contrôle Prudentiel et de Résolution (ACPR) and regulated by the ACPR and the Autorité des Marchés Financiers. BofASE's share capital can be found at [www.bofam.com/BofASEdiscclaimer](http://www.bofam.com/BofASEdiscclaimer); BofA Europe (Milan): Bank of America Europe Designated Activity Company, Milan Branch, regulated by the Bank of Italy, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the Central Bank of Ireland (CBI); BofA Europe (Frankfurt): Bank of America Europe Designated Activity Company, Frankfurt Branch regulated by BaFin, the ECB and the CBI; BofA Europe (Madrid): Bank of America Europe Designated Activity Company, Sucursal en España, regulated by the Bank of Spain, the ECB and the CBI; Merrill Lynch (Australia): Merrill Lynch Equities (Australia) Limited, regulated by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission; Merrill Lynch (Hong Kong): Merrill Lynch (Asia Pacific) Limited, regulated by the Hong Kong Securities and Futures Commission (HKSF); Merrill Lynch (Singapore): Merrill Lynch (Singapore) Pte Ltd, regulated by the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS); Merrill Lynch (Canada): Merrill Lynch Canada Inc, regulated by the Canadian Investment Regulatory Organization; Merrill Lynch (Mexico): Merrill Lynch Mexico, SA de CV, Casa de Bolsa, regulated by the Comisión Nacional Bancaria y de Valores; Merrill Lynch (Argentina): Merrill Lynch Argentina SA, regulated by Comisión Nacional de Valores; BofA Japan: BofA Securities Japan Co., Ltd., regulated by the Financial Services Agency; Merrill Lynch (Seoul): Merrill Lynch International, LLC Seoul Branch, regulated by the Financial Supervisory Service; Merrill Lynch (Taiwan): Merrill Lynch Securities (Taiwan) Ltd., regulated by the Securities and Futures Bureau; BofA India: BofA Securities India Limited, regulated by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI); Merrill Lynch (Israel): Merrill Lynch Israel Limited, regulated by Israel Securities Authority; Merrill Lynch (DIFC): Merrill Lynch International (DIFC Branch), regulated by the Dubai Financial Services Authority (DFSA); Merrill Lynch (Brazil): Merrill Lynch S.A. Corretora de Títulos e Valores Mobiliários, regulated by Comissão de Valores Mobiliários; Merrill Lynch KSA Company: Merrill Lynch Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Company, regulated by the Capital Market Authority.

This information: has been prepared for publication and is distributed in the United Kingdom (UK) to professional clients and eligible counterparties (as each is defined in the rules of the FCA and the PRA) by MLI (UK), which is authorized by the PRA and regulated by the FCA and the PRA - details about the extent of our regulation by the FCA and PRA are available from us on request; has been approved for publication and is distributed in the European Economic Area (EEA) by BofASE (France), which is authorized by the ACPR and regulated by the ACPR and the AMF; has been considered and distributed in Japan by BofAS Japan, a registered securities dealer under the Financial Instruments and Exchange Act in Japan, or its permitted affiliates; is issued and distributed in Hong Kong by Merrill Lynch (Hong Kong) which is regulated by HKSF; is issued and distributed in Taiwan by Merrill Lynch (Taiwan); is issued and distributed in India by BofAS India; and is issued and distributed in Singapore to institutional investors and/or accredited investors (each as defined under the Financial Advisers Regulations) by Merrill Lynch (Singapore) (Company Registration No 198602883D). Merrill Lynch (Singapore) is regulated by MAS. Merrill Lynch Equities (Australia) Limited (ABN 65 006 276 795), AFS License 235132 (MLEA) distributes this information in Australia only to 'Wholesale' clients as defined by s.761G of the Corporations Act 2001. With the exception of Bank of America N.A., Australia Branch, neither MLEA nor any of its affiliates involved in preparing this information is an Authorised Deposit-Taking Institution under the Banking Act 1959 nor regulated by the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority. No approval is required for publication or distribution of this information in Brazil and its local distribution is by Merrill Lynch (Brazil) in accordance with applicable regulations. Merrill Lynch (DIFC) is authorized and regulated by the DFSA. Information prepared and issued by Merrill Lynch (DIFC) is done so in accordance with the requirements of the DFSA conduct of business rules. BofA Europe (Frankfurt) distributes this information in Germany and is regulated by BaFin, the ECB and the CBI. BofA Securities entities, including BofA Europe and BofASE (France), may outsource/delegate the marketing and/or provision of certain research services or aspects of research services to other branches or members of the BofA Securities group. You may be contacted by a different BofA Securities entity acting for and on behalf of your service provider where permitted by applicable law. This does not change your service provider. Please refer to the [Electronic Communications Disclosures](#) for further information.

This information has been prepared and issued by BofAS and/or one or more of its non-US affiliates. The author(s) of this information may not be licensed to carry on regulated activities in your jurisdiction and, if not licensed, do not hold themselves out as being able to do so. BofAS and/or MLPF&S is the distributor of this information in the US and accepts full responsibility for information distributed to BofAS and/or MLPF&S clients in the US by its non-US affiliates. Any US person receiving this information and wishing to effect any transaction in any security discussed herein should do so through BofAS and/or MLPF&S and not such foreign affiliates. Hong Kong recipients of this information should contact Merrill Lynch (Asia Pacific) Limited in respect of any matters relating to dealing in securities or provision of specific advice on securities or any other matters arising from, or in connection with, this information. Singapore recipients of this information should contact Merrill Lynch (Singapore) Pte Ltd in respect of any matters arising from, or in connection with, this information. For clients that are not accredited investors, expert investors or institutional investors Merrill Lynch (Singapore) Pte Ltd accepts full responsibility for the contents of this information distributed to such clients in Singapore.

#### General Investment Related Disclosures:

Taiwan Readers: Neither the information nor any opinion expressed herein constitutes an offer or a solicitation of an offer to transact in any securities or other financial instrument. No part of this report may be used or reproduced or quoted in any manner whatsoever in Taiwan by the press or any other person without the express written consent of BofA Securities. This document provides general information only, and has been prepared for, and is intended for general distribution to, BofA Securities clients. Neither the information nor any opinion expressed constitutes an offer or an invitation to make an offer, to buy or sell any securities or other financial instrument or any derivative related to such securities or instruments (e.g., options, futures, warrants, and contracts for differences). This document is not intended to provide personal investment advice and it does not take into account the specific investment objectives, financial situation and the particular needs of, and is not directed to, any specific person(s). This document and its content do not constitute, and should not be considered to constitute, investment advice for purposes of ERISA, the US tax code, the Investment Advisers Act or otherwise. Investors should seek financial advice regarding the appropriateness of investing in financial instruments and implementing investment strategies discussed or recommended in this document and should understand that statements regarding future prospects may not be realized. Any decision to purchase or subscribe for securities in any offering must be based solely on existing public information on such security or the information in the prospectus or other offering document issued in connection with such offering, and not on this document.

Securities and other financial instruments referred to herein, or recommended, offered or sold by BofA Securities, are not insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and are not deposits or other obligations of any insured depository institution (including, Bank of America, N.A.). Investments in general and, derivatives, in particular, involve numerous risks, including, among others, market risk, counterparty default risk and liquidity risk. No security, financial instrument or derivative is suitable for all investors. Digital assets are extremely speculative, volatile and are largely unregulated. In some cases, securities and other financial instruments may be difficult to value or sell and reliable information about the value or risks related to the security or financial instrument may be difficult to obtain. Investors should note that income from such securities and other financial instruments, if any, may fluctuate and that price or value of such securities and instruments may rise or fall and, in some cases, investors may lose their entire principal investment. Past performance is not necessarily a guide to future performance. Levels and basis for taxation may change.

This report may contain a short-term trading idea or recommendation, which highlights a specific near-term catalyst or event impacting the issuer or the market that is anticipated to have a short-term price impact on the equity securities of the issuer. Short-term trading ideas and recommendations are different from and do not affect a stock's fundamental equity rating, which reflects both a longer term total return expectation and attractiveness for investment relative to other stocks within its Coverage Cluster. Short-term trading ideas and recommendations may be more or less positive than a stock's fundamental equity rating.

BofA Securities is aware that the implementation of the ideas expressed in this report may depend upon an investor's ability to "short" securities or other financial instruments and that such action may be limited by regulations prohibiting or restricting "shortselling" in many jurisdictions. Investors are urged to seek advice regarding the applicability of such regulations prior to executing any short idea contained in this report.

Foreign currency rates of exchange may adversely affect the value, price or income of any security or financial instrument mentioned herein. Investors in such securities and instruments, including ADRs, effectively assume currency risk.

BofAS or one of its affiliates is a regular issuer of traded financial instruments linked to securities that may have been recommended in this report. BofAS or one of its affiliates may, at any time, hold a trading position (long or short) in the securities and financial instruments discussed in this report.

BofA Securities, through business units other than BofA Global Research, may have issued and may in the future issue trading ideas or recommendations that are inconsistent with, and reach different conclusions from, the information presented herein. Such ideas or recommendations may reflect different time frames, assumptions, views and analytical methods of the persons who prepared them, and BofA Securities is under no obligation to ensure that such other trading ideas or recommendations are brought to the attention of any recipient of this information.

In the event that the recipient received this information pursuant to a contract between the recipient and BofAS for the provision of research services for a separate fee, and in connection therewith BofAS may be deemed to be acting as an investment adviser, such status relates, if at all, solely to the person with whom BofAS has contracted directly and does not extend beyond the delivery of this report (unless otherwise agreed specifically in writing by BofAS). If such recipient uses the services of BofAS in connection with the sale or purchase of a security referred to herein, BofAS may act as principal for its own account or as agent for another person. BofAS is and continues to act solely as a broker-dealer in connection with the execution of any transactions, including transactions in any securities referred to herein.

#### BofA ESGMeter Methodology:

ESGMeter is a proprietary metric based on quantitative analysis and fundamental analyst inputs that reflects our assessment of a company's Environmental, Social and Governance-related

attributes. The ESGMeter is intended to indicate a company's likelihood of experiencing stronger financial stability (higher return on equity and lower earnings and price volatility) over the next three years relative to peer group. There are three ESGMeter levels - Low, Medium, and High - which indicate whether a company has attributes most likely to translate into superior financial stability (in the case of a High level) or weaker financial stability (in the case of a Low level) over the next three years relative to its peer group. A Medium level suggests that a company exhibits ESG characteristics that are likely associated with financial stability results in line with its peer group over the next three years. Full details of our methodology, financial stability definition and disclaimers are available at [BofA ESGMeter methodology](#). ESGMeter is not indicative of a company's future stock price performance and is not an investment recommendation or rating. ESGMeter is independent of the BofA Global Research fundamental equity analyst's investment rating, volatility risk rating, income rating or price objective for that company.

#### Copyright and General Information:

Copyright 2024 Bank of America Corporation. All rights reserved. iQDatabase® is a registered service mark of Bank of America Corporation. This information is prepared for the use of BofA Securities clients and may not be redistributed, retransmitted or disclosed, in whole or in part, or in any form or manner, without the express written consent of BofA Securities. BofA Global Research information is distributed simultaneously to internal and client websites and other portals by BofA Securities and is not publicly-available material. Any unauthorized use or disclosure is prohibited. Receipt and review of this information constitutes your agreement not to redistribute, retransmit, or disclose to others the contents, opinions, conclusion, or information contained herein (including any investment recommendations, estimates or price targets) without first obtaining express permission from an authorized officer of BofA Securities.

Materials prepared by BofA Global Research personnel are based on public information. Facts and views presented in this material have not been reviewed by, and may not reflect information known to, professionals in other business areas of BofA Securities, including investment banking personnel. BofA Securities has established information barriers between BofA Global Research and certain business groups. As a result, BofA Securities does not disclose certain client relationships with, or compensation received from, such issuers. To the extent this material discusses any legal proceeding or issues, it has not been prepared as nor is it intended to express any legal conclusion, opinion or advice. Investors should consult their own legal advisers as to issues of law relating to the subject matter of this material. BofA Global Research personnel's knowledge of legal proceedings in which any BofA Securities entity and/or its directors, officers and employees may be plaintiffs, defendants, co-defendants or co-plaintiffs with or involving issuers mentioned in this material is based on public information. Facts and views presented in this material that relate to any such proceedings have not been reviewed by, discussed with, and may not reflect information known to, professionals in other business areas of BofA Securities in connection with the legal proceedings or matters relevant to such proceedings.

This information has been prepared independently of any issuer of securities mentioned herein and not in connection with any proposed offering of securities or as agent of any issuer of any securities. None of BofAS or any of its affiliates or their research analysts has any authority whatsoever to make any representation or warranty on behalf of the issuer(s). BofA Global Research policy prohibits research personnel from disclosing a recommendation, investment rating, or investment thesis for review by an issuer prior to the publication of a research report containing such rating, recommendation or investment thesis.

Any information relating to the tax status of financial instruments discussed herein is not intended to provide tax advice or to be used by anyone to provide tax advice. Investors are urged to seek tax advice based on their particular circumstances from an independent tax professional.

The information herein (other than disclosure information relating to BofA Securities and its affiliates) was obtained from various sources and we do not guarantee its accuracy. This information may contain links to third-party websites. BofA Securities is not responsible for the content of any third-party website or any linked content contained in a third-party website. Content contained on such third-party websites is not part of this information and is not incorporated by reference. The inclusion of a link does not imply any endorsement by or any affiliation with BofA Securities. Access to any third-party website is at your own risk, and you should always review the terms and privacy policies at third-party websites before submitting any personal information to them. BofA Securities is not responsible for such terms and privacy policies and expressly disclaims any liability for them.

All opinions, projections and estimates constitute the judgment of the author as of the date of publication and are subject to change without notice. Prices also are subject to change without notice. BofA Securities is under no obligation to update this information and BofA Securities ability to publish information on the subject issuer(s) in the future is subject to applicable quiet periods. You should therefore assume that BofA Securities will not update any fact, circumstance or opinion contained herein.

Subject to the quiet period applicable under laws of the various jurisdictions in which we distribute research reports and other legal and BofA Securities policy-related restrictions on the publication of research reports, fundamental equity reports are produced on a regular basis as necessary to keep the investment recommendation current.

Certain outstanding reports or investment opinions relating to securities, financial instruments and/or issuers may no longer be current. Always refer to the most recent research report relating to an issuer prior to making an investment decision.

In some cases, an issuer may be classified as Restricted or may be Under Review or Extended Review. In each case, investors should consider any investment opinion relating to such issuer (or its security and/or financial instruments) to be suspended or withdrawn and should not rely on the analyses and investment opinion(s) pertaining to such issuer (or its securities and/or financial instruments) nor should the analyses or opinion(s) be considered a solicitation of any kind. Sales persons and financial advisors affiliated with BofAS or any of its affiliates may not solicit purchases of securities or financial instruments that are Restricted or Under Review and may only solicit securities under Extended Review in accordance with firm policies.

Neither BofA Securities nor any officer or employee of BofA Securities accepts any liability whatsoever for any direct, indirect or consequential damages or losses arising from any use of this information.