



ACTIVATE<sup>®</sup>

**JBA**  
JOE BERRY  
AWARD

# TOPIC & QUESTIONS

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2026 JOE BERRY AWARD

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# Essay Rules

- 01 Essays must be **your own work** and express your opinions on your chosen topic.
- 02 The TOTAL essay must be no more than **2000 words**, excluding the Cover Page and Index.
- 03 Artificially, (A.I.) composed essays, will **not be** accepted.
- 04 Font must be **ARIAL 12pt** at 1.15 spacing.
- 05 An **Executive Summary** is required for all essays.
- 06 Submissions must be '**WORD**' documents only, using the provided template.
- 07 **Referencing** is 'Word - **footnote style**' with the word-count box 'unticked'.
- 08 You must be under 35 at the **31st December 2025** (i.e., born in 1991 or later).
- 09 **Read your 'Rules of Competition' PDF, all the information is included!**

# Essay Rules

# AI Usage



While the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is inevitable to some, it is, in the main, against the rules of this competition.

Success in the Joe Berry Award is based on your own personal talents and if selected for a finals appearance, it is you, not AI, that must face the judging panel.

Show us your raw talent; that is where your future lies.

We will check essays for compliance however, if you choose to use some AI in constructing an essay, you must treat it as research and indicate it as a reference where it has been inserted.

Clever use of AI is a talent in itself, but it will not win you any rewards.

Read your 'Rules of Competition' PDF, all the information is included!

# Your Topic Choices

Topics devised by Craig Woolford, MST Marquee, David Nichols, B Brand Design and Mark McCaffrey, Nielsen

- 01.** **Topic Group 1**  
**Retail Opportunities – In Offshore Markets**
- 02.** **Topic Group 2**  
**Category Growth – Responsibility for Growth**
- 03.** **Topic Group 3**  
**GLP-1 - A Risk or a Transformation**
- 04.** **Topic Group 4**  
**Channel Expansion - The Value of Differentiation**
- 05.** **Topic Group 5**  
**Supply Chains – Vulnerable or Impregnable**
- 06.** **Topic Group 5**  
**“Freechoice” Construct Your Own Topic**

## 2026 Topic Choices

The Topics for 2026 have a wider coverage of current trends. This year you have choice options from the following groups.

# Rules & Info

JBA

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Follow the rules, use the templates & stay within the limits



## Rule

Select only one, A or B of the above questions for your essay & research.



## 2000 word limit

Keep your writing to the 2000-word limit and be punchy and precise.



## Essay Template

Use the provided essay template as a guide and for submitting your work.



## Your opinion

Make sure we hear your opinion on the topic, within your research findings.



## Relate

You can relate these questions to any part of the retail industry.

# Evolving Retail Opportunities – Emerging Offshore Markets

The global economy is undergoing changes and moving into uncharted waters. As these changes take place, it will be necessary for government and industry to rethink the norm and consider new ways to improve GNP, Trade Balance, ROI and EBIT. For many the first call will be to search emerging markets for opportunity.

## A

### Export Markets

## Retail Opportunities – Emerging Export Markets

Critical battlefields for global consumer products companies have been macerated by global political upheaval and the imposition of in-country laws and regulations. To avoid some or all these created barriers, Australian producers and retailers are looking closely at new export options. Some are known and readily accessible, others are emerging and unknown quantities.

Who are these emerging markets and what sectors of the Australian market will benefit most from opening up trade? Do emerging markets open opportunity for all sectors or will they be market specific? What is the long-term benefit of moving to emerging export markets and what effect will it have on local retail space and consumer thinking?

## B

### Import Markets

## Retailer Opportunities – Emerging Import Markets

The most obvious way to avoid any supply imbalance caused by global economic changes is to reconsider import supply chains, either on a cost reduction basis or to ensure consistent quality and supply. Finding new import supply lines can be beneficial for the importing country and beneficial to the source country.

Who are the emerging markets that will be the focus for new supply chains into our market? Specifically, why are these emerging markets being recognized and are they comparable to existing supply markets? What is the long-term benefit of moving to emerging import markets and what effect will it have on the retail space and consumer thinking?

# Category Growth – Where does the responsibility lie.

While this can be a question based on each individual category, the consensus is that taking the responsibility for category growth is lagging. Collaboration, initiative, promotion, NPD and innovation are all impact actions but the industry must change and reset to find real category increments. Someone has to be responsible!

A

Retailer

## Category Growth – The Retailers' Focus

Category growth is, in many sectors, in decline. A plethora of changes in trends and decision-making are influencing the way categories are treated. While designed to lift sales, these factors can be doing the opposite. Retailers are making dramatic reductions in ranging counts while looking at new and emerging channels and technologies to keep their business vibrant but can be abdicating responsibility at the same time.

Why are many categories in decline and where does responsibility for this situation lie? What changes should retailers be making to maintain category growth while they are seeking the new opportunities? How can the widening of collaboration with suppliers be harnessed into agreeable and long-term supplier-retailer category responsibility?

B

Manufacturers

## Category Growth – The Manufacturers' Focus

The decisions for maintaining category and brand growth can be effected in all parts of the supply chain. Category growth is impacted by many elements from consumer trends to material supply and promotional decision-making. Most of all, categories require innovation and that usually comes through the manufacturing process. Somewhere in the mix the responsibility for growth has to reset if brands are to survive.

How should brand owners be resetting their strategies so that growth can be maintained? Is the responsibility for growth in the hands of a single department or person or is it a company-wide responsibility? What should manufacturers be doing to counter retailer category decisions to avoid the often-felt decline and is greater collaboration always a positive move?

# GLP-1

## A Shift or a Transformation

GLP-1 medication like Ozempic and Wegovy have grown rapidly over the past two years. US reports suggest close to 10% of the population is using weight-loss drugs and the take-up of these drugs looks to be rapidly growing in Australia. The debate about weight-loss drugs is wide ranging with positive arguments centred on lower calorie intake, as well as reduced heart disease and other chronic illnesses. The negative arguments include muscle loss, weight fluctuation and the high cost of weight-loss medications.

A

Consumer

### Consumer Goods – Transformation Risks

Global manufacturers have cited that the rising use of weight-loss medications in confectionary, bakery and other snacks is a headwind to sales growth. Other product categories have also seen impacts, such as liquor and fast foods. Some commentary, however, questions the health factors. The transformation to GLP-1 style products and changes in range/mix may have a long-term impact across the industry.

Assess the short-term and long-term risks to the Australian retail industry associated with the growth of GLP-1 style drugs. Considering the potential for growth in usage of GLP-1, is it a fad or is it here to stay? How should manufacturers, adversely impacted by GLP-1 usage, react to market changes?

B

Retailer

### Retail Opportunities from GLP-1

In recent times there has been strong growth in products either directly associated with healthier lifestyle or claiming to be “free-from” certain ingredients. While not purely related to GLP-1 usage, these trends have shifted focus towards greater intake of protein. Subsequently, links have been made to the loss of muscle-mass when using weight-loss medications, raising questions on their longevity and true health value.

With moves toward these healthier lifestyles, will incumbent brands now face greater risks from competitors? Are smaller, newer brands better placed in establishing healthy credentials? Where is the value found for manufacturers to go down this path and how should retailers and suppliers respond across layouts, ranges and innovation? \*\*Include case studies of successful brand repositioning.\*\*



# Channel Expansion – Differentiation

Both suppliers and retailers have benefitted in channel and category expansion in the last few years. Retailers traditional lens may be holding back growth or allowing growth to be achieved by other retail environments. Differentiation across channels is set to be a major disrupter of traditions and will commit retailers to a significant rethink of tradition. Possible to the detriment of suppliers as well as themselves.

A

Channel Asset

## Channel Expansion – Differentiation as a Channel Asset

Suppliers have benefited with expansion away from major grocery stores into hardware, pharmacy and consumer electronics channels over the last few years. Using unique pack formats and ranges they have been able to gain significant new range listings. This tactic has also altered consumer movements and provides benefits and disadvantages in differing ways.

Are the existing channels sufficient to achieve growth plans? How should suppliers work with retailers to support new ranges in expanding the traditional offer and attracting new consumers into stores? Do the expansion of channels assets eventually outweigh the traditional supplier/retailer relationship? If so, what channels could be next?

B

Ranging Tool

## Channel Expansion – Differentiation as a Ranging Tool

Over the last few years the traditional retailers' ranging lens and space constraints have been challenged by the likes of Aldi Specials and Bunnings Cleaning/Pet food ranges. These moves are by no means the end of such tactics and the industry will see more channel challenges. Retailers can exploit this trend, by working closely with suppliers that normally trade in differentiated channels but may choose otherwise.

How can barriers that are preventing new ranges and new channels from being explored in store be overcome? What are the restrictions, self-imposed or industry-imposed, that are curtailing retailers from making innovative channel changes? Is there a case for retailers reversing trends by also moving into differentiated channels?

# Supply Chain Vulnerability

During COVID-19 a range of supply chain vulnerabilities were exposed both domestically and globally. Shortages of raw materials, interruptions in key transport links and low fulfillment rates all plagued the retail industry. Suppliers and retailers preferred “just in case” over “just in time” inventory. However, supply chains have settled. The mindset may shift back to “just in case” as cost efficiency becomes the focus.

## A

### Lower Cost & Availability

## Retailer automation – Lower Cost and Better Availability

Retailers in Australia and around the world are investing in complete automation of their distribution centres. The investment is substantial and requires a strong partnership with the automation providers and a long-term timeframe for a return on investment. Retailers that have been through automation cite much lower costs of handling cases and improved on-shelf availability.

The Australian retail industry tends to have larger retailers with niche competitors. Does automation provide a competitive advantage for a large retailer and what are the medium-term advantages for automating the supply chain? Are there any risks associated with moving to full automation of distribution centres? Can smaller retailers leverage automation?

## B

### Inventory & Manufacturing

## Balancing Act on Inventory and Manufacturing

While supply chain pressures and raw material shortages are still a challenge for some retail products, the heightened challenges seem to have dissipated. Value-focused retailers are winning share and the ability to pass-through price rises has become more challenging.

Despite the recent volatility in retail supply chains, should a company strive to lower its inventory holdings and consolidate its manufacturing processes to lower the costs and prices for shoppers? Consider the trade-off in terms of providing retailers and shoppers better inventory availability vs. lower-cost products. In your response, you may take the perspective of a supplier or a retailer.

## “Free-Choice” You choose the question!

There are other issues in the retail industry that you think need to be aired. Decide on a topic of passion for you and write your own Topic-Questions.

**A****Retail Industry****Free-Choice: What can I bring, to the Retail Industry?**

Create a question about the industry that is of great interest to you and not covered by the preset topics. Highlight the section of the industry that it will affect the most, then present your findings and conclusions. Keep your question simple so that you can write with a focus on the value of the question and the value of the opinions that you raise in your essay. Make sure that you can bring your chosen question to an impactful conclusion.

**NOTE:**

Your essay will not be accepted as 'Freechoice' if covered in pre-set Topics 1-5.

The graphic features a large white '40' on a purple background. The '0' is a thick, stylized circle. Inside the '0', the letters 'th' are written in a small, white, sans-serif font. Below 'th', the words 'YEAR' and 'ANNIVERSARY' are stacked in a smaller, white, sans-serif font. To the right of the '40', the words 'JOE BERRY' and 'AWARD' are stacked in a large, bold, white, sans-serif font. The background is a solid purple color with several large, semi-transparent purple circles of varying sizes scattered across it.

# 40<sup>th</sup> YEAR ANNIVERSARY JOE BERRY AWARD

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ESSAY TOPICS & QUESTIONS

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