Synchrony Financial (SYF)

Updated April 25th, 2020 by Jonathan Weber

Key Metrics

Current Price:	$17	**5 Year CAGR Estimate:**	19.2%	**Market Cap:**	$9.9B
Fair Value Price:	$28	**5 Year Growth Estimate:**	5.0%	**Ex-Dividend Date:**	05/01/20
% Fair Value:	61%	**5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:**	10.5%	**Dividend Payment Date:**	05/14/20
Dividend Yield:	5.2%	**5 Year Price Target**	$36	**Years Of Dividend Growth:**	4
Dividend Risk Score:	C	**Retirement Suitability Score:**	C	**Last Dividend Increase:**	4.8%

Overview & Current Events

Synchrony Financial is a consumer financial services company. It operates through the following business units: Payment Solutions, Retail Credit, and CareCredit. Synchrony Financial offers private label credit cards, small-size business credit products, promotional financing for higher-priced consumer goods, promotional financing for healthcare procedures such as dental and vision, as well as a range of other services to its customers. The company is headquartered in Stamford, CT, and was founded in 2003.

Synchrony Financial reported its first quarter earnings results on April 21. The company managed to generate revenues of $4.0 billion during the quarter, which represents a decline of 8% versus the prior year's quarter. Its top line decline was mainly caused by the sale of its Walmart credit portfolio, adjusted for that, purchase volumes and average loans would not have been down significantly. Synchrony Financial also was able to grow its core loan receivables by 2% year over year, while its interest and fees were down slightly.

Synchrony Financial generated earnings-per-share of $0.58 during the first quarter, which was down a lot from the previous year's quarter. This was the result of the sale of the Walmart portfolio, which hurt its profits to some degree, but a big increase in provisions for loan losses (due to the unknown impact that the coronavirus crisis will have) was an even bigger factor. Net charge-offs still remained at a quite normal level of 5.4% during the quarter, thus so far, Synchrony Financial has not lost meaningful amounts due to the coronavirus impact.

Growth on a Per-Share Basis

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2025
EPS	---	---	---	---	$2.78	$2.65	$2.71	$2.61	$3.74	$4.29	***$1.50***	***$4.47***
DPS	---	---	---	---	---	---	$0.26	$0.56	$0.72	$0.86	***$0.88***	***$1.18***
Shares[1]	---	---	---	---	757	834	834	771	719	662	***630***	***550***

Synchrony Financial was founded in 2003, but the company's initial public offering was in 2014, which is why there is no long-term data available for the company. Between 2014 and 2019 Synchrony Financial grew its earnings-per-share by 9% a year, although almost all of that growth took place in 2018 and 2019. Before that, profits remained relatively stagnant. In 2019, Synchrony Financial managed to grow its earnings-per-share at a strong pace.

Synchrony Financial has broadened its cooperation with key vendors in the recent past, which includes companies such as Amazon, Walgreens, and QVC. The relationships with these retailers should positively impact Synchrony Financial's growth during the coming years, as this will allow for a rise in the company's active accounts. On top of that, purchase volumes and loan balances should grow, which is the basis for rising transaction fees and further growth for Synchrony Financial's net interest income. The coronavirus crisis will likely lead to significant loan losses during 2020, which will hurt this year's bottom line to a large extent. We don't believe that this will hurt the company in future years as well. In the above table, we see our estimate for this year's actual earnings-per-share, but we believe that the underlying earnings power (in normal times) is much higher; our estimate is $3.50. To better reflect the total returns that shareholders could see, we use the earnings power estimate for our fair value calculation.

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[1] In Millions

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Valuation Analysis

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	Now	2025
Avg. P/E	---	---	---	---	9.5	12.0	10.7	12.4	8.7	8.4	***4.9***	***8.0***
Avg. Yld.	---	---	---	---	---	---	0.9%	1.7%	2.2%	2.4%	***5.2%***	***3.3%***

Synchrony Financial has been valued at a price to earnings ratio of roughly 10 throughout the majority of the years since its IPO. More recently, shares have become cheaper, but due to the low expected earnings for this year, its price to earnings multiple has expanded to around 11. Based on earnings power, the multiple is just 4.9. The valuation should increase as profits get back to a more normal level once the coronavirus crisis has ended.

Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2025
Payout	---	---	---	---	---	---	9.6%	21.5%	19.3%	20.0%	***25.1%***	***26.4%***

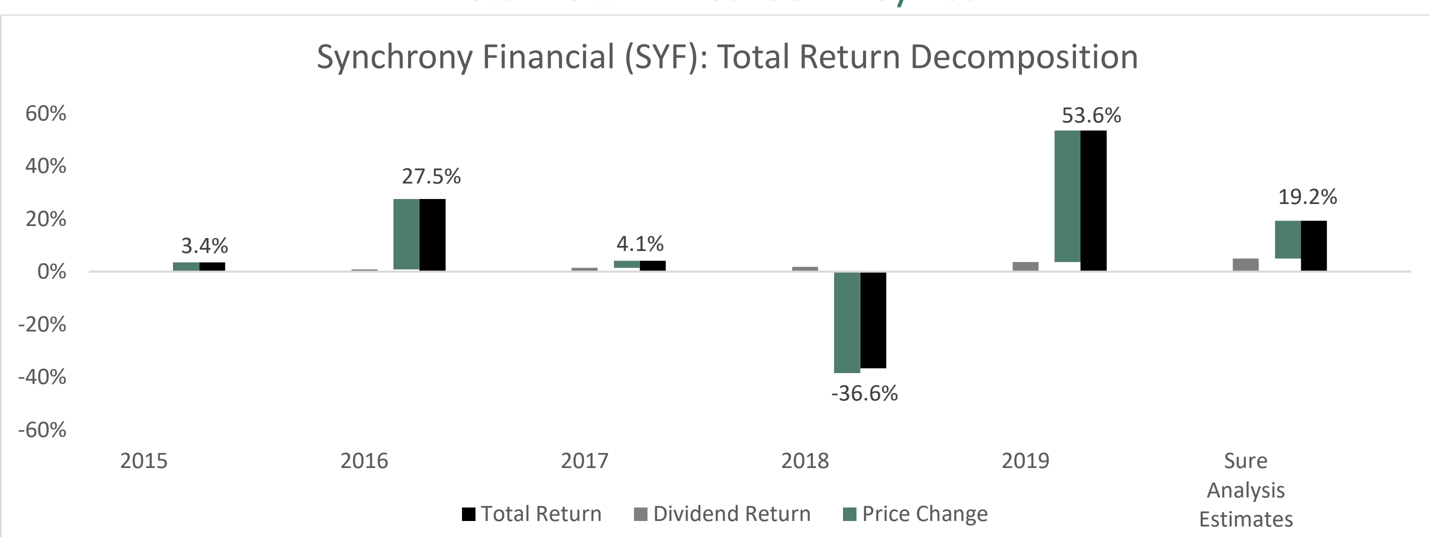
Synchrony Financial started to make dividend payments just a few years ago. Since then, the company has raised its dividend regularly and at a meaningful pace. Yet, Synchrony Financial's dividend payout ratio is still relatively low. We do not know whether Synchrony Financial would maintain its dividend during a recession, as the company's track record does not date back to the last financial crisis. Due to the low payout ratio, the dividend looks relatively safe.

Synchrony Financial is not the largest credit card company in the world; it has significantly larger peers such as American Express. The market is large enough for several companies to be highly profitable, though, which is why Synchrony Financial's relatively small size is not necessarily a disadvantage. During the upcoming recession that will be caused by the coronavirus crisis, Synchrony Financial should see a larger-than-normal amount of credit losses, but the company will remain profitable in 2020, we believe. Once this crisis has passed, profitability should recover.

Final Thoughts & Recommendation

Synchrony Financial is one of the smaller credit card players. In recent months its share price has declined a lot, caused by worries about the impact that the coronavirus will have on its loans. The long-term growth outlook is not bad, and we believe that Synchrony Financial should get back to pre-crisis profits eventually. Based on this expectations, shares could generate large total returns over the next couple of years, but this is not a low-risk investment.

Total Return Breakdown by Year



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Disclosure: This analyst has no position in the security discussed in this research report, and no plans to initiate one in the next 72 hours.

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Income Statement Metrics

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Revenue		8706	10048	11071	11805	12485	13874	15304	16383	17170
SG&A Exp.		974	993	1160	1538	1772	1959	2175	2381	2489
D&A Exp.		96	83	104	131	174	219	254	302	367
Net Profit		1890	2119	1979	2109	2214	2251	1935	2790	3747
Net Margin		21.7%	21.1%	17.9%	17.9%	17.7%	16.2%	12.6%	17.0%	21.8%
Free Cash Flow		5516	5637	5679	5340	6184	6511	8575	9342	8990
Income Tax		1120	1257	1163	1277	1317	1319	1389	854	1140

Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total Assets			53462	59085	75707	83990	90207	95808	106792	104826
Cash & Equivalents			1334	2319	11828	12325	9321	11602	9396	12147
Goodwill & Int. Ass.			1191	1249	1468	1650	1661	1740	2161	2343
Total Liabilities			48880	53125	65229	71386	76011	81574	92114	89738
Long-Term Debt			27815	24321	27460	24279	20147	20799	23996	19866
Shareholder's Equity			4582	5960	10478	12604	14196	14234	14678	14354
D/E Ratio			6.07	4.08	2.62	1.93	1.42	1.46	1.63	1.32

Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Return on Assets				3.5%	3.1%	2.8%	2.6%	2.1%	2.8%	3.5%
Return on Equity				37.5%	25.7%	19.2%	16.8%	13.6%	19.3%	25.8%
ROIC				6.3%	6.2%	5.9%	6.3%	5.6%	7.6%	10.2%
Shares Out.					757	834	834	771	719	662
Revenue/Share		10.48	12.09	13.32	15.58	14.94	16.69	19.14	21.93	25.49
FCF/Share		6.64	6.78	6.83	7.05	7.40	7.83	10.72	12.51	13.35

Note: All figures in millions of U.S. Dollars unless per share or indicated otherwise.