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Lloydspharmacy gears up for wearable tech

BY TIFFANY HOLLAND

Lloydspharmacy aims to become a specialist in wearable healthcare tech in an attempt to differentiate its offer from those of health and beauty rivals.

The pharmacist, which has just started selling wearable devices, plans to create apps that can be used with the technology so customers can monitor such things as blood pressure, weight and cholesterol on a daily basis.

Lloydspharmacy will also seek to link up with other parties such as GPs and gyms to bring customers' health information together in one place.

Lloydspharmacy UK and Ireland managing director Cormac Tobin said he believes technology will help the retailer bolster its role as an authority in health and wellbeing.

He said: "We need to be authoritative and trusted. People need a very strong, compelling reason to come into Lloyds and we want them to believe Lloyds is the best. If you can be the most trusted in the field and loyal to their changing needs in the world, you can win."



Lloydspharmacy has started selling devices that monitor the wearer's health

"Healthcare hasn't been as progressive [as other digital fields] but now with wearable tech it has become funky and people want to tell each other what they have done."

Lloydspharmacy's profits fell

almost 20% to £14.5m in the year to December 31, 2013 as the retailer restructured and aligned with its sister companies.

But sales returned to growth in the year, reaching £1.78bn compared with £1.72bn the previous

year, driven by new in-store services such as travel injections and consultations, and store refits.

Tobin said: "The pharmacy sector continued to be challenged by reductions in the drugs tariff," referring to the system which determines how much pharmacy contractors are paid for providing NHS services.

"However, we were largely able to offset tariff cuts through strong growth in our secondary care business and significant improvements in service sales within pharmacy, including double-digit growth in Christmas sales, which helped to achieve a year-on-year increase in turnover by 3.7%, compared to a 2.2% fall in 2012."

As of last month, more than 250 stores have been refitted to Lloyds' European Pharmacy Network format, which was introduced in 2012, to align the look and feel of the group's stores across Europe.

Since year-end, sales have risen between 8% and 10%. Lloydspharmacy has been driving its multi-channel offer. It launched click-and-collect last month and it opened the first physical store for its online and mail order independent living Betterlife business in August.

Holland & Barrett ramps up openings as profits rise

Holland & Barrett will open 70 stores across Europe after sales and profits jumped last year as it benefited from the 'health pound'.

The health specialist revealed EBITDA rose 8% to £130m in the year to the end of September 2014 and sales increased 7.5% to £513m.

Holland & Barrett has achieved a record 24 consecutive quarters of growth and 12% compound annual growth over the past six years.

The annual performance was driven by expansion across the UK, where it doubled store

openings. It has also ramped up its overseas presence and now operates in eight territories across the world.

Holland & Barrett plans more store openings in the current financial year – 40 in the UK and another 30 in Europe, where it operates Dutch fascia De Tuinan and the Belgian Essenza brand.

Holland & Barrett chief executive Peter Aldis said: "Although the UK high street has been challenging these past few years I believe the retail health sector benefits from the resilience of

the 'health pound' against other demands on consumers' wallets.

"Long-term campaigns about the risks of sugar, salt and meat are translating into increased consumer interest in the healthy product ranges we offer."

Aldis revealed Holland & Barrett is in negotiations for a 7,000 sq ft site in the UK to trial a superstore format.

The retailer opened its 1,000th shop at the Trafford Centre in Manchester on Tuesday.