

Merrell buoyant after three years of growth



Footwear brand Merrell is targeting another year of double-digit growth in 2011 after recording strong business throughout the recession.

Speaking at ISPO 2011, Merrell UK marketing manager Jonathan Pennington said the company had recorded a "phenomenal 2010", with sales up 15 per cent.

This followed a 15 per cent growth in 2009 also, with 16 per cent being targeted for 2011.

Pennington said: "We had a phenomenal year last year, and it has been a great start to 2011 so far.

"30 per cent growth in two year is excellent in these conditions, and if we increase our sales as planned this year it'll mean we've grown the business by 46 per cent in three years."

Merrell's stand at ISPO included a large selection of its barefoot running shoes, which Pennington said are designed to promote the adventure aspects of running outside, rather than simply running as a form of exercise.

He added that Merrell is also working to promote the lifestyle appeal of running shoes, which allows them to be worn with a pair of jeans as much as part of a running wardrobe.

"We've been supplying Schuh for a long time and they buy into what we're trying to do. It's about education in the UK and getting people to look at this type of footwear from a lifestyle perspective."

Jack Wolfskin goes on the attack

German outdoor clothing and equipment supplier Jack Wolfskin saw sales grow 21 per cent to €304.2m in 2010, with strong growth in the UK cited as one reason for this performance.

This is the seventh consecutive year it has recorded double-digit growth, the company said, with 2011 predicted to follow the same trajectory.

As well as the UK, where Jack Wolfskin has recently opened three stores in the London area, Italy, China and the Benelux countries were highlighted as strong areas of business for the company.

The UK is now one of the company's core focus areas for future growth, UK and Ireland country manager Alan Perrins said, where it intends to grow brand recognition and its position as a leading outdoor brand. As a sign of its intent, Jack Wolfskin has opened three own brand stores in London, and signed three-year advertising board deals at Anfield and Craven Cottage, the homes of Premier League football clubs Liverpool and Fulham.

Perrins said: "Jack Wolfskin has been described as a sleeping giant and we are now knocking on the door. We're making a huge commitment to the UK, and people are welcoming another brand in the marketplace.

"We have 300 franchise stores around the world, but our own stores allow us to make a statement and showcase our products to consumers as we look to grow the brand's recognition in the UK market."

Company chief executive officer and co-owner Manfred Hall said: "Jack Wolfskin's structural sales growth in other countries is now even higher than that in our own domestic market. This is a testament to the success of our internationalisation strategy. We also anticipate double-digit growth rates in 2011 that are



roughly on the same level as the previous year's figures."

Hall added: "Functional clothing remains the driving force for growth at Jack Wolfskin. Nevertheless, the equipment and footwear product ranges also developed in a pleasing manner. With growth of 47 per cent, the footwear range positively impacted the overall result.

"In 2011, we will continue to exploit our enormous potential on the German market, further enhancing our market position in the core markets in Europe, and press ahead with our Asian business.

"To enable us to do this, we have not only built strong organisational units in these locations, but we have also planned the necessary investments."

Kozi Kidz to grow EMEA business

Children's outdoor clothing brand Kozi Kidz has appointed John Wilkins to its sales team, adding 35 years of sales experience with notable knowledge of developing EMEA markets.

Most recently, Wilkins was based in London as managing director of the European operation of Pacific Market International, a US company that designs and manufactures the Stanley and Aladdin vacuum bottles, food flasks and travel mugs. He was the principal category supplier to over 16,500 Starbucks coffee houses worldwide. This position also included overseeing European sales and maintaining contact with clients in the Middle East and Africa as well as responsibility for all UK national accounts.

Wilkins has also set up his own export sales consultancy helping British companies expand

their business into designated areas of Europe, Middle East and Africa.

Kozi Kidz said it is the "fastest growing children's clothing brand in Europe".

Tomas Torstensson, director of Kozi Kidz, said: "Things are developing very quickly for us and we are delighted to welcome John to the Kozi Kidz team and he is joining us at a very exciting time in the company's expansion.

"John's experience will be invaluable to Kozi Kidz, not only in the Middle East and Africa but also for our overall business development in fitting with our future plans."

