Vitamin drink brand plots ambitious growth through dual-channel approach

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VitHit's decision to create separate online stores for Ireland and the UK is part of a digital strategy that's helping the brand compete against established giants while building loyal customer relationships.

When Gary Lavin founded VitHit in 2008, the former professional rugby player had one clear mission - to create a healthier alternative to the sugar-laden drinks dominating the market. Seventeen years later, his brother Troy Lavin has taken the helm as CEO, steering the Dublin-based company towards an ambitious €50 million revenue target within the next three years.

While retail remains the backbone of the brand's success, VitHit's e-commerce strategy is central to persuading health-conscious consumers to discover and stay loyal to the brand.

It's a formula that propelled sales to one million cases (12 million bottles) in the UK last year, where VitHit is stocked in around 9,000 stores. For Olivia Nash, the company's digital marketing and e-commerce manager, e-commerce is about enhancing the retail channel.

Insights Engine

"While VitHit's strength lies in retail, e-commerce plays a key strategic role in our growth," she explains. "The digital channel is an insights engine that keeps us close to our audience. It allows us to connect directly with consumers, test new flavours and formats, and reach areas outside traditional retail channels."

VitHit's e-commerce foundation rests on Shopify, chosen for its scalability and user experience focus. As sales volume has expanded, the company has integrated tools like Klaviyo for email marketing and Recharge for subscriptions, with the aim of building stronger customer relationships and driving retention. Olivia says the tech stack is "intentionally lean", focused on conversion, customer insight, and delivering a consistent brand experience.

One of VitHit's most significant strategic decisions has been creating separate e-commerce platforms for Ireland and the UK rather than attempting a unified approach.

"Having dedicated sites allows us to offer localised pricing and shipping options without confusion around duties or delivery times," Olivia explains. "We can tailor promotions, content, and messaging to each market's preferences, and manage inventory and fulfilment more effectively across regions."

Touchpoint Clarity

This localisation strategy extends to currency management, with prices displayed in euros or sterling without relying on real-time converters, and localised shipping rates, tax rules, and checkout flows that reduce friction for customers. "This approach gives us more control over the customer experience and ensures clarity and consistency at every touchpoint," Olivia adds.

Shipping beverages directly to consumers comes with challenges, especially around weight, breakage risk, and delivery efficiency. VitHit has addressed this by partnering with fulfilment providers experienced in handling heavy, fragile goods, while optimising pack sizes to balance value with manageable weight.

"Instead of bulk shipments to centralised retail depots, e-commerce requires us to manage high volumes of small, individual orders, each with precise handling and delivery needs," Olivia explains. "Online demands a seamless end-to-end experience, from clicking 'buy' to the moment the box lands at the door."

VitHit's approach to online customer acquisition focuses heavily on health-conscious audiences through digital campaigns across social media, paid search, and influencer partnerships. The strategy combines what Olivia calls "convenience with curiosity". Key tactics include introductory offers and multi-pack bundles that encourage trial, leveraging user-generated content and reviews for credibility, and using the services of wellness influencers.

Repeat Purchase

Subscription and repeat purchase programmes play a key role in VitHit's e-commerce strategy. "It's particularly valuable for our most loyal and health-conscious consumers who integrate VitHit into their daily routines," says Olivia. "Beyond convenience, it also gives us insight into purchase habits and product preferences, which helps shape broader strategy across e-commerce and retail."

The customer data flowing from VitHit's direct-to-consumer channel serves as what Olivia describes as "a valuable feedback loop" that helps guide both product development and marketing strategy. The company tracks top-selling flavours, bundle combinations, subscription behaviour, repeat purchase trends, and customer feedback to identify opportunities and validate decisions.

Looking ahead, Olivia Nash is enthused about several emerging trends in beverage e-commerce. Personalisation at scale - using data to tailor product recommendations, content, and bundles to individual preferences - tops her list, alongside "the rise of subscription flexibility, giving customers more control over frequency and flavour variety".

Complementary Role

As VitHit continues its growth trajectory, Olivia notes that retail will always be at the core of VitHit's business. "But we see e-commerce playing an important complementary role in how consumers discover, trial, and stay loyal to the brand," she adds.

"We see retail driving mass reach, and e-commerce deepening relationships, enabling innovation, and expanding into new markets. Both channels serve different needs, and together they strengthen the brand as a whole."

*The full VitHit drinks range and subscription offers can be viewed at **www.vithit.com***

8.3 ☆

Explain what is meant by a business model and appreciate its role within the business plan. Pg 130

What is the main business model Vit Hit use? What other revenue streams do they also use?

How do they capture and deliver value to their target market (what is their value proposition?)

8.6 ☆

Outline how digital technology is a driver of change in business. Pg 135

Using examples, show how technology has enabled VitHit to adapt or change how it operates.

9.5 ☆

Demonstrate an understanding of the disruptive impact* and influence of digital technology on market research and marketing.

Pg 167

Identify three examples of how technology is helping Vit Hit's market research

9.8 ☆

Conduct a STEEPLE analysis to develop greater understanding of the external environment and identify issues of concern for a business.

Pg 171

Conduct a STEEPLE analysis on Vit Hit's external environment and identify any issue of concern for them.

Social	
Technological	
Economic	
Environmental	
Political	
Legal	
Ethical	

Issue of concern

11.3 ☆

Outline the strategies employed by a business to adapt or expand.

Pg 205

How have Vit Hit adapted to the UK market that they expanded in to?

11.4 ☆

Appreciate the potential of technology to support adaption and expansion.

Pg 209

How is technology helping Vit Hit's expansion in to the UK market and their subscription model.

8.3 Business Models

Main Business Model:

Manufacturer model selling to retailers: The core of the business. Selling to wholesalers and retailers (e.g., Tesco, Spar etc…) who then sell to consumers.

DTC or D2C (Direct-to-Consumer): Selling directly to customers via the website. This is a complementary model to drive loyalty and data rather than just volume.

Other Revenue Streams:

Subscriptions: Recurring revenue through the website (using tools like Recharge), allowing customers to get automatic deliveries.

Value Proposition (What value do they deliver?):

Healthier Alternative: A low-calorie, low-sugar alternative to "sugar-laden" drinks.

Functional Benefits: Drinks containing vitamins, tea, and juice.

8.6 & 9.5 Technology as a Driver of Change & Market Research

Driver of Change (How they operate):

"Insights Engine": They use the digital channel not just for sales, but to learn about customers.

Tech Stack: They use an "intentionally lean" stack including **Shopify** (scalable platform), **Klaviyo** (email marketing), and **Recharge** (subscriptions) to automate relationships.

Impact on Market Research (Examples):

Testing Ground: Using the online store to test new flavors and formats before pitching them to big retailers.

Feedback Loop: Tracking top-selling bundle combinations and subscription habits to see what "loyal" customers actually want.

Direct Connection: Bypassing retailers to get direct customer feedback on pricing and preferences.

9.8 STEEPLE Analysis (External Environment)

Social: Growing consumer demand for health/wellness products. Shift away from high-sugar soft drinks.

Technological: Rise of e-commerce platforms (Shopify) allowing brands to sell globally from Dublin. Use of data analytics to track customer behaviour.

Economic: Managing currency fluctuations (Euro vs. Sterling) when selling in the UK. Cost of logistics (shipping heavy liquid products individually vs. bulk).

Environmental: Optimizing pack sizes to balance value with delivery weight (reducing carbon footprint of shipping air/excess packaging).

Political: Brexit Implications: The need for separate websites to handle different territories.

Legal: Compliance with "duties" and "tax rules" which required them to set up a dedicated UK store rather than using one global site.

Challenge: Plastic packaging / carbon footprint that is less aligned to the healthy/better option.

11.3 & 11.4 Business Expansion

Adaptation to UK Market:

Localisation Strategy: Instead of one site for all, they created a specific UK site.

Frictionless Experience: Showing prices in Sterling (not Euro) and handling duties/taxes in the background so the customer doesn't face surprise fees.

Logistics Partners: Partnering with UK fulfillment providers experienced in handling "heavy, fragile goods" to avoid breakage.

Role of Technology in Expansion:

Scalability: Shopify allows them to clone their store for new regions/currencies (Ireland vs UK) easily.

Retention: Using subscription technology to lock in customers in the new market, turning one-time buyers into repeat habit buyers.