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01.

NEW BALANCE CREATES RUN HOUSE FOR THE LONDON MARATHON

TCS London Marathon official apparel and footwear partner New Balance opened a community-led space over the marathon weekend.

The sportswear giant launched London Run House over the period, with the space designed to celebrate “the people who shape the city’s running culture” and reflect “the brand’s belief that if you run, you belong”.

Based inside Somerset House, along the marathon route, London Run House was set to “transform” the building’s Embankment Galleries into “a state

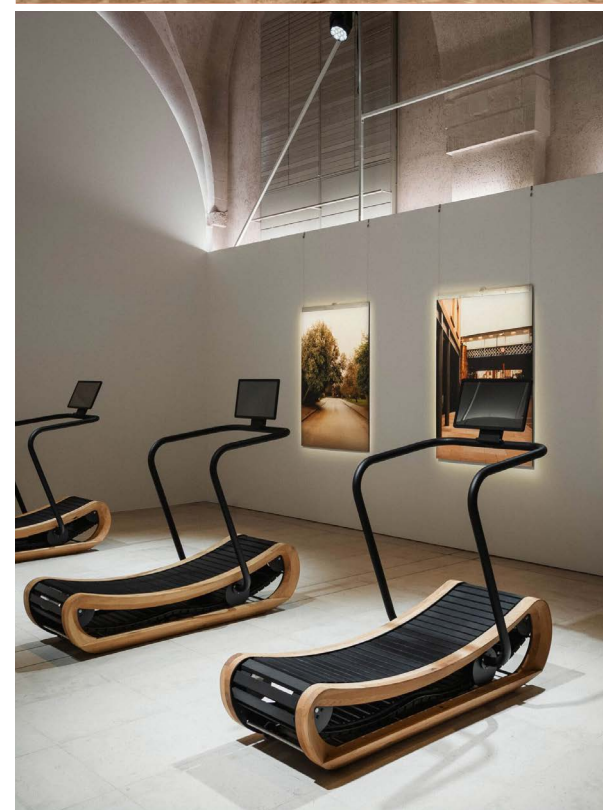
of-the-art destination celebrating community, craft and performance”.

The space explored “how the sport extends beyond clocking miles, through surfaces, typography, fabrication and shared experience”.

Features of the event included immersive workshops, panel discussions, installations and screenings.

The Run House featured a documentary and portrait series as well, created with London’s running communities, that captures how the city prepares for marathon day across its boroughs.

The space invited “all who run to connect in a distinctly London way,” according to New Balance.





02.

LEVI'S DTC FOCUS DELIVERS GROWTH

US denim giant Levi Strauss & Co. has reported net revenues up 14% year-on-year to \$1.7 billion (£1.26 billion) for the first quarter ended 1 March 2026, "surpassing guidance for sales, margins and EPS".

The company has subsequently raised its full-year 2026 outlook, attributing its "strategic pivot to a DTC-first denim lifestyle brand" as the main driver for robust performance across channels, regions and categories.

Michelle Gass, President and CEO of Levi Strauss, said: "We delivered very strong financial performance in the first quarter driven by broad based growth across channels, regions and categories.

"Our evolution into a DTC-first denim lifestyle brand is allowing us to capture a much larger addressable market and deliver faster and more consistent growth. Today we are operating from a stronger foundation, executing with focus and intention, with more ways to win than ever before."

Direct-to-consumer (DTC) net revenues increased 16%, comprising 52% of total net revenues, while e-commerce grew 21%.

03.

INDITEX WILL LAUNCH LEFTIES IN NEWCASTLE

Metrocentre has secured Inditex-owned fashion brand Lefties for its North East debut. The retailer will open at the scheme in winter 2026, with the new store set to occupy a central unit at the interchange between Red and Green Mall on Town Square.

The opening will mark Lefties' third UK location and one of its first three stores in the market.

It also represents Metrocentre's second deal with Inditex in the first quarter of 2026.

Founded in 1999, Lefties has expanded its proposition significantly over the past decade, developing its own collections and building out its design and commercial teams from its headquarters outside Barcelona. The brand is focused on offering trend-led fashion at accessible prices.



The new store will act as a key anchor within Metrocentre's fashion hub and stock Lefties' collections across womenswear, menswear, teen girls, kids, baby, newborn, home, accessories and footwear.

04.



BLACKS LAUNCHES REBRAND WITH NEW STORES AND WEBSITE

Blacks has revealed a major brand refresh, repositioning itself as a destination where outdoor heritage meets everyday style.

The outdoor retailer said the relaunch includes revamped stores, a redesigned website and a sharper focus on consumers blending city living with outdoor lifestyles.

Five Blacks Pinnacle stores in Glasgow, Harrogate, Aintree, Meadowhall and Brighton have been refurbished as part of the rollout.

The business said the updated sites feature cleaner layouts, improved navigation and curated product edits spanning clothing, footwear and equipment.

Brands stocked across the refreshed stores include Rab, Columbia, The North Face, Berghaus, Merrell, Salomon, Fjällräven and Yeti.

The relaunch also includes a redesigned ecommerce platform, which the retailer said offers a more modern and editorial-led customer experience.

Blacks said the new direction is aimed at the “urban adventurer”, shoppers looking for products that work both outdoors and in everyday wardrobes.

05.

RESEARCH SHOWS SHOPPERS ARE MAKING FEWER, MORE DELIBERATE SHOPS

UK consumers are continuing to spend, but are shopping less often and making more deliberate purchases, according to new data from Cardlytics.

The company's latest State of Spend report, which analysed March to August spending across 2023, 2024 and 2025, found that retail spend rose eight per cent year on year in 2024 before slowing to four per cent in 2025.

Across discretionary categories including fashion, DIY and sporting goods, transactions fell between three per cent and seven per cent in 2025 as consumers reduced the number of times they shopped.

At the same time, average basket values increased by between two per cent and six per cent, suggesting shoppers are consolidating spending into fewer, more planned purchases.

The slowdown is being driven less by a collapse in demand and more by a drop in shopping frequency.



06.

FATFACE OFFERS IN-STORE STYLING SERVICE AND WHATSAPP

FatFace has launched a new 'Face to Face' in-store personal styling service, as well as a WhatsApp customer service channel, as it "enhances the customer experience across both physical and digital touchpoints".

The British lifestyle brand, which was acquired by NEXT in 2023, is initially trialling the styling service in six stores – Norwich, Chester, Derby, Horsham,

Wimborne, and Belfast – with the aim of rolling it out to further stores over the coming year.

Keely Stocker, Marketing and Ecommerce Director at FatFace, said: "We're thrilled to launch Face to Face, an exciting first for FatFace with the ambition to ensure every customer feels confident, inspired and excited about the pieces they wear day in, day out.

"Whether through personalised styling in-store or fast, convenient support through channels like WhatsApp, our focus is always on creating the best possible experience for our customers."

KEELY STOCKER, MARKETING AND ECOMMERCE DIRECTOR AT FATFACE



07.

FORMER DEBENHAMS STORE HAS LAB USE APPROVAL

A £125m project to use a former Debenhams store as lab space in Oxford city centre has been approved. The Crown Estate is a partner in the plan to renovate the store, at the junction of Magdalen Street and George Street, which closed in 2021.

Oxford Science Enterprises (OSE) and Pioneer Group are also partners in the scheme, which will include a STEM outreach programme, working alongside Oxford City Council.

Kristy Lansdown, The Crown Estate's managing director for development, said: "1-12 Magdalen Street will deliver world class science facilities in the heart of the city – a place with not only a rich cultural history, but one that is entrenched in the history of science and progress.

"Alongside our outstanding partners at Pioneer Group and OSE, we are committed to creating a best-in-class lab space for innovative start-ups and scale-ups that will strengthen Oxford's appeal to the wider sector and contribute meaningfully to economic growth."



Planning permission for the project was granted in March. Building work is set to start on it in the first half of 2027, with completion planned for 2029.



08.

ALDI TESTS STANDARDISED GLOBAL STORE FORMAT IN THE US

A sweeping redesign effort inside Aldi South Group is quietly taking shape in the US, where the German discount grocer is using its American business as the testing ground for a new global store format.

The initiative, developed in partnership with Australian-based Landini Associates marks the culmination of a 14-year collaboration aimed at modernizing Aldi's physical retail

presence while preserving the operational simplicity that underpins its low-price strategy.

While Aldi has long been known for its standardized layouts — optimized for speed, efficiency and minimal staffing — the new model aims to create a more flexible environment that can respond to local real estate constraints and shifting shopping patterns without sacrificing cost discipline.

The redesign introduces a modular approach that can be adapted across store sizes and formats, from traditional suburban supermarkets to smaller urban footprints.

TESCO REPLACES BARCODES WITH QR CODES FOR OWN LABEL PRODUCTS

Tesco is replacing traditional barcodes with QR codes on a selection of its own-brand meat products, in what it says is a UK supermarket first.

It said the move will give shoppers easier access to more detailed product information, while also helping retailers improve traceability, tighten stock control and reduce unnecessary food waste.

The new QR codes are being introduced across a range of Tesco own-label sausages, including Tesco Pork

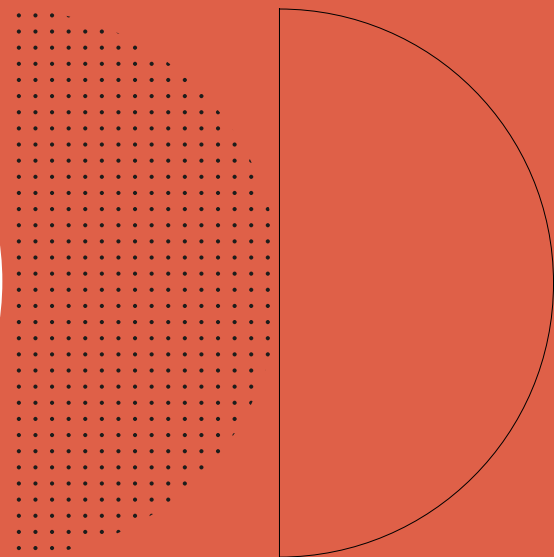
Sausages, Tesco Pork Chipolatas, Tesco British Pork Sausage Meat, Tesco British Cumberland Sausages and Tesco British Lincolnshire Sausages.

Customers will be able to scan the codes using their smartphones to access information such as nutritional content and product traceability.

Tesco said the technology could also be used in future to unlock recipe ideas, competitions and other digital content linked to specific products.

The rollout forms part of a wider industry shift led by global barcode standards body GS1, which is pushing for a broader adoption of QR codes across retail by 2027.





Get in touch to
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