

WHSmith issues buoyant travel trading update



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WHSmith, the news and books retailer, has reported strong airport trading for the 20-week period to January 19, 2019.

The company's travel division posted a 16% upswing in total sales (up 8% excluding its October 2018 acquisition of electronics travel retailer InMotion). Like-for-like sales were up 3%.

"We continued to roll out our new concept airport stores in [London] Heathrow during the period and feedback from both landlord and customers has been positive," WHSmith said in a statement.

The acquisition of InMotion, the pure play US travel retailer of digital accessories, was completed on November 30, 2018, and integration into the WHSmith Group is progressing well, it added.

"InMotion continues to show the strong sales momentum that we saw prior to its acquisition and, in addition to providing the WHSmith brand with access into the US market, we see good growth prospects both in the US and internationally for the InMotion format," the company said.

Overall, the group's International business continues to grow and it now has over 420 units open, including 116 InMotion stores, across 28 countries and over 90 airports outside of the UK.

Commenting on the results announcement, Stephen Clarke, Group Chief Executive, said: "Our travel business continued to grow across all channels. This was driven by our ongoing investment in the business, including the roll-out of our new concept stores at Heathrow, and growth in air passenger numbers. InMotion delivered an impressive sales performance over the Christmas period and

integration into the group is progressing well.

“Looking ahead, whilst there is existing uncertainty in the broader economic environment, the group is well positioned for the year ahead and beyond.”