



Custom lenses and other quality, developed products accelerate growth in the optometry field

Retail sales in the field of optometry soared in the first quarter of the year. The growth in custom lenses and the decrease in 2-for-1 discounts raised the average price of products, which was evident in the favourable results during the entire quarter. The longstanding growth in the field was accelerated by sales in quality sunglasses, which is still going strong.

The total turnover for retail sales in the field of optometry was EUR 87.7 million in the first quarter of the year. The turnover grew 4.8 per cent. Managing Director **Panu Tast** of the Finnish Association of Vision and Eyecare (NÄE ry) states, "With Easter situated in April this year, the number of active business days increased in the first quarter, which is one reason for the growth". Therefore, the actual growth in sales is somewhat smaller, which will be evident in the review for the first half of the year.

Most of the accrued revenue comes from sales in spectacles. A total of 303,000 pairs, amounting to EUR 71 million, were sold between January and March.

Tast explains, "Consumers have found different custom lenses, for example those that support close-up viewing or other lenses suitable for a certain type of work. Their proportion has doubled compared to the previous year."

He adds, "More and more, custom lenses are prescribed to treat problems associated with myopia, which can be effectively treated with optical devices. Myopia increases the risk to contract eye diseases. Becoming more common, the problem is caused by, among others, increased screen time for work and during leisure, which is increasingly affecting the younger population groups".

The average price for spectacles increased 5 per cent to 272 euro. The price of single focal spectacles increased nearly six per cent to 180 euro. The average price of multifocal spectacles remained the same at nearly 400 euro.

Interpreting the situation, Tast says, "A steep rise in the average price of spectacle frames, especially, is evident. It relates to the decrease in 2-for-1 discounts as compared to last year."

Sales in sunglasses continue to flourish for the second year in a row now. During the first quarter of the year, the turnover for sunglasses grew nearly 12 per cent to EUR 3.6 million compared to the corresponding time last year. The average price also grew more than 10 per cent. Likewise, sales in contact lenses also grew more than 10 per cent when measured by volume. Sales of contact lenses amounted to nearly EUR 7 million.

Managing Director **Vesa Mars** of Synsam Group Finland states, "You really have to be satisfied with double-digit increases".

He continues, "The reason behind such growth is, first and foremost, consumers' desire to invest in fashionable, high-quality sunglasses more and more. Likewise, those who use multifocal spectacles increasingly choose sunglasses with a strength suitable for their eyes.

The use of contact lenses has traditionally been scanty compared to the other Nordic countries, and it's gratifying to witness significant growth in the contact lens market as well. It is a product group that has the potential to increase business and offer solutions that make consumers' lives easier, states Mars.