

ALANTRA DIGITAL FAST 50

# Fast 50 Voices: One to watch

FAST  
50DIGITAL  
ONE TO WATCH 2023

Sons®

## Growth in more ways than one at Sons

“We’re a healthcare brand but we don’t look or sound like one, instead we act like a modern lifestyle brand,” says Adrian Gilbane, co-founder of Sons, which sells a range of male hair loss treatments. “We’re about helping guys to feel healthier, happier and hairier.”



**ADRIAN GILBANE**  
**WILL KENNEDY**  
CO-FOUNDERS

### SONS IN NUMBERS

LAUNCHED IN

2020

WEB TRAFFIC GROWTH %\*

60%

\*SEP 23 VS SEP 22

CATEGORY

Digital-first,  
multi-channel

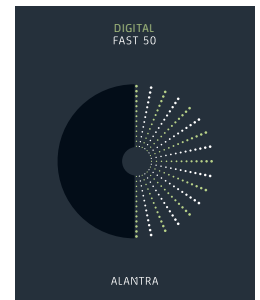
Gilbane and co-founder Will Kennedy launched the business in 2020 having shared their own frustrations with the hair loss industry. “We’d both been to a hair loss clinic and baulked at the very high cost of treatment,” Kennedy recalls. “We knew we could bring a licensed product to market in a very different way, with a brand that really speaks to men.”

Market research suggests fewer than a third of men struggling with hair loss seek any kind of treatment, Gilbane and Kennedy explain. They’re sceptical about products promising overnight results and embarrassed by the stigma that surrounds hair loss. “That leaves a gap for a lifestyle brand with clinically-proven products properly backed by science,” says Gilbane.

Sons has worked hard to fill that gap. Its subscription plans start at £17.50 a month, addressing the issues of affordability that the founders had noted; the product is licensed in the UK, Ireland and Germany, and is based on two tried and tested drugs, Minoxidil and Finasteride. “We try to be simple and scientific,” Gilbane adds. “The brand feels honest and approachable.”

The company has worked hard to get its story out, including experiments with targeted television advertising that have worked very well. “We were surprised by how affordable TV advertising is, particularly if you start at a moderate level and build up,” says Kennedy. “The key is find a good agency.” In addition, social media and paid search have proved effective, and Sons has also used influencers to get its message across. The goal has been to get men feeling comfortable with the idea of seeking treatment.

Sons started out with a direct-to-consumer subscription model, to which the product is particularly well-suited given the need to take it for six to nine months to see the full benefits. More recently, it has added retail to its channel mix, with deals to sell in-store at Boots, Superdrug and Lloyds Pharmacy; Sons holds unique licenses to sell these products through retail channels, a right that other D2C brands do not have – the founders believe this adds another layer of protection to their model. Those physical sales will account for around 30%



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of revenues this year, but Sons expects that to reach 50% in the years ahead. “Our success in direct-to-consumer gave us the confidence to explore retail, but it’s definitely a step-change,” says Gilbane.

It is part of an evolution that has seen revenues double every year since launch at the company, with Sons breaking through the eight figure barrier this year.

Sons’ founders see product expansion and international growth as the key priorities for the short term. On the former, they are building out the product range, with plans

for launches in hair loss prevention as well as treatment. As for overseas markets, the business has already established itself in Germany and sees the Netherlands and Scandinavia as obvious next steps.

Gilbane and Kennedy are encouraged by the rapid growth of subscription services in the adjacent category of styling, where brands such as Harry’s have had an enormous impact. “The market for science-based hair loss products can grow just as quickly. What’s exciting is the consumer hasn’t really had this offer in retail to date and that’s what Sons will bring,” says Kennedy.



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**ADRIAN GILBANE**



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