

As I
See It

by Wendy Lewis

Cosmeceuticals, which were sold through doctors' offices in the late 1980s, once conjured up images of irritating glycolic acid solutions that caused a generation of red faces. These were merely the precursors to the explosion of gentler, sexier, over-the-counter variations that can be found in virtually every beauty and cosmetics retailer today from department stores to drug stores and home shopping channels. The category of active cosmetics has expanded to include conditioners that repair damaged hair, moisturizers that double as sun protection, foundations that include anti-oxidants and blemish solutions that deliver acne-stopping results. Perhaps the most exciting segment is home care versions of the clinical experience such as microdermabrasion and peel kits (RoC® Resurfacing Facial Peel Kit), handheld acne units (Zeno®), cleansing tools (Clarisonic Skincare Brush), photo-rejuvenation devices (Tanda® Regenerate) and laser hair removal devices (Tria®).

Although most consumers are not quite ready to inject their own Botox® yet, do-it-yourself home care treatments are a growing force to be reckoned with. Taking a cue from the healthcare market, the personal care market for home devices is surging thanks to an ever-expanding selection of light- and heat-based technologies.

These key trends create new challenges and stiffer competition for traditional retailers, but there are innovative ways to survive and thrive in light of the diversity and shifts in the marketplace. Consumers are choosing to shop across many channels including doctors' offices and online, and their loyalty to particular retailers and channels is no longer guaranteed. One way in which some enlightened retailers are keeping up the pace is by adding clinical treatments to their offerings. For example, House of Fraser in the UK recently incorporated an advanced skin clinic model in some of its key stores; ULTA® Beauty stores maintain hair salons in all of its locations; Bluemercury® recently opened a new location on Manhattan's Upper West Side offering spa services. This is an ideal way to create a one-stop-shopping beauty and anti-aging experience for customers. Diagnostic tools in the form of skin scanners and computerized scopes such as the Visia® system also add a new dimension to educate consumers on how their skin functions and to what it may respond best. Mass retailer Walgreens added a well designed Product Selector tool to accompany their European Beauty Collection.

Although consumers are well informed by the media and visits to their cosmetic doctors about new ingredients and hot technologies, there is also increased confusion throughout bulletin boards and forums. At the end of the day the key question on all consumers' minds is "What will work for me?"

Finding ways to help consumers sort through the myriad of options and steer them to your brand or store requires an innovative approach. More than ever, beauty buyers need guidance and personalized advice to help them shop for success. Unique and compelling positioning can get you noticed. Basic retailing values including customer loyalty programs, a good value proposition, special events and offers and generous sampling will also serve to keep your customers satisfied.

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Copies may be ordered at www.plasticmakesperfectbook.com (Courtesy discount for *Beauty Fashion* readers)

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