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HOW DO YOU COURT A CONSUMER BASE NOT QUITE CONVINCED THEY WANT OR NEED WHAT YOU'RE SELLING? THAT'S THE BILLION-DOLLAR QUESTION FOR BEAUTY AND GROOMING BRANDS WOOING THE MEN'S MARKET



BY JEREMY FREED

INSIDE A THROGGED SEPHORA one recent afternoon, there are exactly three men (not including the journalist trailing them, like some sort of creepy, mall-snooping Margaret Mead). One, a middle-aged guy, clutches shopping bags by the exit, evidently eager to escape as soon as his wife finishes buying. Another, a younger dude, sticks close to his girlfriend as they skim the shelves. The third, a silver-haired gentleman, relaxes in a chair as an aesthetician tends to his brows with tweezers.

Although the mid-aughts notion that only metrosexuals like David Beckham gave a damn about grooming is now an outdated cliché, men—like my entirely unscientific sample at Sephora—still vary widely in their interest in beauty products. Many remain standoffish and apparently uneasy; others curious (or at least, open to advice from a significant other); and some have no qualms dropping cash, even for products or services traditionally aimed at women.

The ongoing challenge for beauty/grooming brands and retailers seeing flashing dollar signs in the under-tapped

men's market: how to convince the huge segment of still-indifferent and/or skeptical guys to buy in? To succeed, companies must not only hone in on the distinct dermatological needs of men, but their psychology, too.

"The men's [skin]care market has been chugging along, [but] it hasn't been explosive," says Karen Grant, a leading industry analyst at The NPD Group who forecasts global prestige beauty trends. "Most men will put a lot of energy into their hair, be it their cuts, their gel, their mousse, but not necessarily what's below the hairline." Indeed, a 2015 survey by The NPD Group revealed that while 80 percent of men use grooming products regularly, less than 25 percent use any sort of facial skincare. "Women can go through a laundry list of skincare needs, and most men are like, 'My skin's pretty good!'" Grant says, explaining the difference in demand. According to stats from market intelligence firm Euromonitor, men's skincare racked up USD \$263 million in retail sales in Canada in 2014, whereas shaving/toiletries reached USD \$652.3 million.

Nevertheless, Grant considers men's skincare to be a "sleeping giant," a "potential billion-dollar opportunity"

for beauty brands—all they need to do is figure out how to wake it up. Between 2007 and 2012, market intelligence agency Mintel reports, the number of global launches in the men's beauty and personal-care category surged 70 percent as companies increasingly concentrated their efforts on courting male consumers. A few other markets, particularly in Asia, have found some success. For instance, in South Korea—where twentysomething men routinely use tinted BB creams—more than 10 percent of beauty-product sales now come from men's merch, reports *The Washington Post*.

Here in North America, guys are still coming around. "When we first launched our brand 15 years ago, we knew we had to overcome the false perception among some men that it was somehow not manly to take care of your skin," says Brittany Burianek, manager of international business development at Jack Black. The American brand launched with a small array of shaving and personal-care products for men, and has since grown into the number one men's prestige skincare brand in the U.S., based on retail sales figures tracked by The NPD Group.

"From the packaging to the product names to the formulas, everything is tailored for a man's lifestyle," says Burianek. That means a bold blue aesthetic and an emphasis on easy-to-use, multi-duty products (like the All-Over Wash for face, hair *and* body). While beard and shaving products remain Jack Black's bread and butter, Burianek is confident that men, particularly millennials, are taking unprecedented interest in skincare. "We find that younger guys actively seek out new products with cutting-edge technologies and ingredients."

This new generation of men is creating product opportunities that would have been hard to imagine even 10 years ago. On a 2013 episode of *Kourtney & Kim Take Miami*, Kourtney Kardashian busted then-boyfriend Scott Disick for covertly dipping into her Laura Mercier tinted moisturizer. "Every single guy that I've dated has worn makeup," Kardashian noted, simultaneously poking fun at Disick for hiding his cosmetics habit while assuring him that it's nothing to be ashamed of. With his immaculate swoosh of hair, just-so scraggy beard and tidy brows, Disick, 32, is exactly the type of new-gen guy that brands are after, a man for whom good grooming is as much a part of his masculine identity as a swaggy watch or designer sneakers.

An early innovator and the king of sophisticated masculinity, Tom Ford entered the fray in 2013, launching a men's line that includes a purifying mud mask, a concealer and a bronzing gel. He created the latter for his own needs, explaining to *The New York Times*, "I use a bronzer every

NEW IN STORES

Meet the latest brands courting the men's market in Canada

KING'S CROWN Launched in 2014, this Toronto-based indie shaving and skincare brand just landed at Hudson's Bay Beauty Underground (*page 16*) with products like Enriched Vitamin C Moisturizer, \$49. It also recently opened a stand-alone grooming studio at Bayview Village.

CW BEGGS AND SONS Groupe Marcelle's new line for him includes Tinted Moisturizer in two shades, \$28, and prestige-priced anti-aging formulas like the Platinum Elixir, \$84, available on cwbeegs.com and birchbox.com.

REBELS REFINERY Started by a trio of millennial guys—best friends from Dundas, Ont.—the Toronto-based company makes everything from skull-shaped lip balms to premium natural skincare. Products like Wealth of Man Organic Oil Bar Soap, \$12 each, and Anti-Wrinkle Moisturizer, \$17, are sold internationally.



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single day, and I had been searching for something that was high quality and masculine at the same time.”

Meanwhile, M.A.C launched an online campaign this fall with Peter and Harry Brant, the bon-vivant sons of supermodel Stephanie Seymour, who are promoting a trio of existing products they love: a brow wax, a pearlescent cream base and a concealer/corrector palette. “I know so many guys who on the DL use a little bit of makeup,” explained Peter, 21, in the campaign. Added Harry, 19: “When I was thinking about this collection, I asked a lot of the guys I went to school with, ‘So what do you do if you have something on your face and you need to cover

it up?’ I even asked my father, and he said, ‘My mother used to have things that I would borrow from her.’ Most of the time their girlfriend had given it to them, or they had taken it from their mother, but it was always easily accessible. And...no one cares.”

CW Beggs and Sons, a new men’s line that Montreal-based Groupe Marcelle launched this fall, is also trying to persuade men to dabble in cosmetics. (The branding gives zero hint that the parent company is best known for manufacturing women’s makeup.) Products include cleansers, lotions and yes, a tinted moisturizer. “Our formulas were developed and tested by men, so they correspond to solutions they want to achieve,” says François Lafortune, Groupe Marcelle’s vice-president of marketing. “We used self-adapting pigments, so it’s a mistake-proof application and nobody will notice you are wearing a tinted product. This is the kind of innovation men are looking for.”

Of course, you can build it, but will they come? While women continue to shop for the men in their lives, figuring out a retail strategy that appeals to guys is key to turning them into product loyalists. “The environment that women find comfortable and interesting is not necessarily one that a man is comfortable in,” says Octavio Valdes, VP general manager of men’s skincare at Clinique. Given that many male consumers are about as interested in wandering through the women’s beauty department as perusing shelves of Tampax, retailers have become increasingly savvy. Since 2003, Shoppers Drug Mart has had a dedicated section called Men’s Zone, whereas last year the Hudson’s Bay Queen Street flagship in Toronto moved its men’s skincare and fragrances out of the female-dominated cosmetics counters and onto the men’s floor.

Other stores are trying experiential, holistic approaches. “I’m seeing concepts that are more multifaceted,” Valdes says. “For example, you could go to a place to get your hair cut and have a drink and there’s a little bit of retail on the side. That kind of environment tends to be more successful than trying to replicate the women’s concept for men.” Holt Renfrew’s Men’s Lounge, opened inside Yorkdale Shopping Centre in Toronto in 2014, comes complete with a barbershop for cuts and straight-razor shaves, alongside a selection of prestige skincare. Full-service grooming spaces like John Allan’s (located across North America, including one in Hudson’s Bay Queen Street) offer everything from hair colouring to mani-pedis. Ottawa-born retailer Men-Essentials, which was founded in 2000 as the Internet’s first “beauty” site for guys, opened a Toronto man-cave in 2013 and sells more than 1,200 products.

If most men don’t feel comfortable shopping in a women’s environment, the thinking goes, why not create something just for them? It’s a strategy that’s attracting ever more attention. “Today men don’t have to enter a female-dominated environment if they choose not to,” says Marcelle’s Lafortune. At least one of the guys in Sephora would be glad to hear that. *

COUNTER MEASURES

We asked experts on our Beauty Advisory Panel: what’s your best customer service technique when working with male clients? Here are the tips you shared:

“My male clients want a product that does everything—for example, a two-in-one cleanser that also tones, or a cream they can apply on their face and also around the eyes. The key is finding something simple and not strong in scent. But I find these days, men are willing to invest more money on their skincare regimen. They want to keep wrinkles off their face, especially in the eye area.”

—**POLLY LEUNG**, *Designated Beauty Advisor*,
HOLT RENFREW, TORONTO, ON

“You can’t use words geared toward women, like ‘radiant,’ ‘soft’ or ‘dewy.’ They want to hear that a product is not sticky and won’t make them break out. If they want to feel the texture, place a small amount on their fingertips, not the back of their hand. Most likely they will immediately apply it to their face. Ask about his lifestyle. If he’s an outdoorsman, suggest skin care with sunscreen. If you involve him [in product selection], he’ll feel like he’s in the driver’s seat. Don’t overwhelm him with new ingredients or findings. He will not understand and you will make him feel uncomfortable. He wants to hear direct information that addresses his concern. He wants to hear about results.”

—**SHANNON FOUGERE**, *Beauty Boutique Manager*,
SHOPPERS DRUG MART, DIEPPE, NB

“I don’t think it’s very hard to make men skincare loyalists. Usually, they are a little easier to sell to than women, as I find them more willing to take my advice. When dealing with any customer, if you find out one detail (their name, hobby, job) and remember it the next time they come to shop, this makes for a more personal experience.”

—**HEATHER KOUTOULAS**, *Cosmetic Manager*,
SHOPPERS DRUG MART, MISSISSAUGA, ON

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