

How to Get a *Man*

By Liz Barrett

How many men have walked into your spa today? Chances are it could have been a lot more.

When it comes to selling beer, electronic gadgets or the newest sport utility vehicle, it isn't too difficult to attract a man's attention. The media have had a lot of practice in training their target audiences to respond subconsciously to the messages they're receiving, and that seems especially true when the target is men. However, when you want those same beer-drinking, gadget-buying, Jeep-driving men to come into your spa to sample a massage or the latest facial cleanser, things can get a little tricky. The notion of men visiting spas is a fairly new concept in the grand scheme of things, and marketing to them is still going through a trial-and-error period. New tactics are being tested every day in an attempt to find the ones that are the most fruitful.

With the International Spa Association (ISPA) reporting that 31% of today's spa-goers are male—up from just 24% four years ago—it's obvious that men are showing more interest in taking care of themselves. What has happened in the past decade to make some men go from “no way!” to “OK!” when it comes to spas? Could it be the widespread acceptance of metrosexuality and well-kempt but masculine role models like Brad Pitt and George Clooney? Maybe it's reality TV shows like *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *Extreme Makeover* and *What Not to Wear* telling guys that it's now acceptable to spend more time on themselves.



However, let's not lump all men into one category—it doesn't work for them any more than it works for women. Individual men's needs and desires vary. Just like women, men might visit spas to alleviate their acne issues, receive waxing services, relieve stress or try to look younger. There's a plethora of theories on *why* men turn to spas, but we'll try to nail down *how* to get them into yours.

I Am Man

All marketing strategies start with identifying your targets. Who are these men visiting spas? Contrary to what some people still think, they aren't vain, effeminate, eccentric or wealthy. The man who "spas" may care more about his image than the average guy and he probably doesn't work a minimum-wage job, but spa treatment rooms are filling up with men from all walks of life, from lawyers and accountants to carpenters and police officers. With societal stress on the rise, everybody needs to find creative ways to unwind, and men are starting to ask, "Why should the girls have all the fun?"

Despite men's divergent acceptance of the spa world, spa marketers tend to focus on the battle to

capture the interest of the "average Joe." This stereotypical character is the one who pays \$10 for a haircut and insists that spa-going is strictly for girls. Here's his point of view expressed by self-professed "average Joe" Mike Rivas from North Hollywood, California: "I don't agree with the cost versus the perceived benefit offered by most spas. Girls seem to be OK with paying a lot of money for something that makes them feel good but doesn't show any real results. I'm not." In an online survey by KSL Resorts, 35% of male respondents said they didn't understand the benefits of the spa experience, and the men who hadn't been to a spa cited deterrents such as cost and time constraints (see "What a Guy Wants," page 130).

A word of advice here: Don't spend too much time or money trying to attract the "average Joe." He tends to be very stubborn. If anything, go through his wife or girlfriend with couples packages, gift certificates or Father's Day specials, and expect nothing more.

Even the majority of men who do venture into the spa on their own tend to treat the experience in the same way they would a visit to the mall or

Promotion Notions

A well-timed and clever promotion can sometimes tempt the male spa novice. Note these successful ideas:

- "We run promotions, such as the Metrosexual Male Makeover Treatment, that are picked up by magazines that are read by both men and women, like *TimeOut*." —Cleo Londono, owner, Metamorphosis Spa, New York City
- "We have a \$10-off coupon online that most men show up with, and we also offer a free two-week hair touchup; while they're there, we can schedule their next full hair appointment at the same visit." —Robert Patrizi, owner, Halo [for Men], Chicago
- "Once a month we have an afternoon and night for men only when we offer facials with a complimentary brow shaping. Also, during the week of Father's Day we give five men makeovers. We educate these men on skin care, nail care, brow shaping, mustache care and hair design (a local hair salon has teamed up with us). I'm also working with a couple of men's clothing stores to help with outfits. This is a great way to get the buzz started and get free local media attention." —Connie Hilderbrand, owner, Bella Dia Spa, Austell, GA
- "We get involved in a lot of silent auctions and give away couples treatment packages. We also do promotions for Father's Day and have brochures available at semi-professional sporting events that we sponsor for the local university." —Jennifer Arntzen, owner, Agua Azul, Chico, CA
- "We cross-promote with brands associated with men such as Hugo Boss and the Toronto Blue Jays, and give out complimentary 30-minute massage coupons at promotional/charity events. We do a lot of sports-related advertising and also tie into film festivals. We had one promotion called Star Treatment in which clients received a custom-made shirt so they could feel like celebrities. During March we ran a March Madness promotion." —Alan Stransman, owner, Men's PowerSpa, Toronto
- "One of our more recent events that brought men into the spa was our Halloween 'Man-o-Lantern' contest during which volunteers got their backs or chests waxed with Halloween images; the winner won a spa package. Father's Day packages also work great." —Scoey Wilson, co-owner, Skin Beauty Lounge, Washington, D.C.
- "We had a Valentine's Day fashion show where men from the community were invited to come in and try out various complimentary services while shopping for Valentine's Day gifts for their significant others." —Marketing Department, GadAbout Man, Tucson, AZ

Men are starting to ask,
**"Why should the girls
have all the fun?"**



supermarket. They want to get in, get what they came for and get out. “Our male clients like ‘no fuss no muss, get ‘er done’ treatments and home care,” says Gayle Praechtl, manager of Radiance Med Spa (radiancemedspa.com) in Charlotte, North Carolina. “Our more sophisticated male clients want reassurance that products and treatments are proven, but they still don’t want to hear fluff about how it feels. With them, we just stick to the facts.”

I’m Listening

It’s a stereotype as old as time: Men don’t listen. And like many stereotypes, it’s an unfair generalization that has some roots in truth. Many men do demonstrate selective hearing. How do you go about getting their attention if they happen to be distracted with something else?

“We run ads on local sports radio stations and post advertisements in restaurant restrooms directing men to our online coupon,” says Robert Patrizi, owner of Halo [for Men] in Chicago (halochicago.com). “We also hit the streets handing out logo merchandise like beer koozies, fans and condoms,” reports Patrizi, who spends 30% of his revenue on advertising.

Jennifer Arntzen, owner of Agua Azul (aguaazulspa.com) in Chico, California, takes a less direct approach to gain attention. “Surprisingly, I’ve found that men use word of mouth even more than women do,” Arntzen says. “They tell their friends, co-workers and others on the golf course about the treatments they get at the spa.” To make sure she stays in the male line of sight, Arntzen buys spots on the radio during semipro games and

advertises her spa on the sports pages of the local paper. “Networking with the local ‘old boys club’ has also helped me gain some new male spa clients,” she says.

But not all potential male clients follow sports; some prefer more cerebral pursuits. “Most of our clients tell us they found us online,” says Alan Stransman, owner of The Men’s PowerSpa (themenspowerspa.com) in Toronto. “Standard advertising is hard to measure, so we stick to the Internet, radio campaigns and placing coupons in gift baskets at charity events.”

Then there’s the leisure set. “We advertise in local lifestyle, health and resort magazines,” says Dr. Marguerite Barnett, owner of Mandala MediSpa (mandalamedispa.com) in Sarasota, Florida. “This helps us reach professionals, vacationers and men interested in health and wellness.”

Treat Me Like a Man

Once they’re in the spa, what treatments are men receiving? Spa owners are discovering that one of the fastest growing services for younger men is hair removal.

“Of all my waxing and laser hair removal clients, 90% are men and they’re always easier to sell products to than women,” says Cleo Londono, owner of Metamorphosis Spa (metspa.com) in New York City. Praechtl has had a similar experience. “The two services that seem to transcend all age, gender and socioeconomic borders at our spa are permanent hair removal and tattoo removal,” she says.

Skincare services and retail are promising areas as well. “Men of all ages visit our spa, but the younger men tend to come in for facials, microdermabrasion

What a Guy Wants

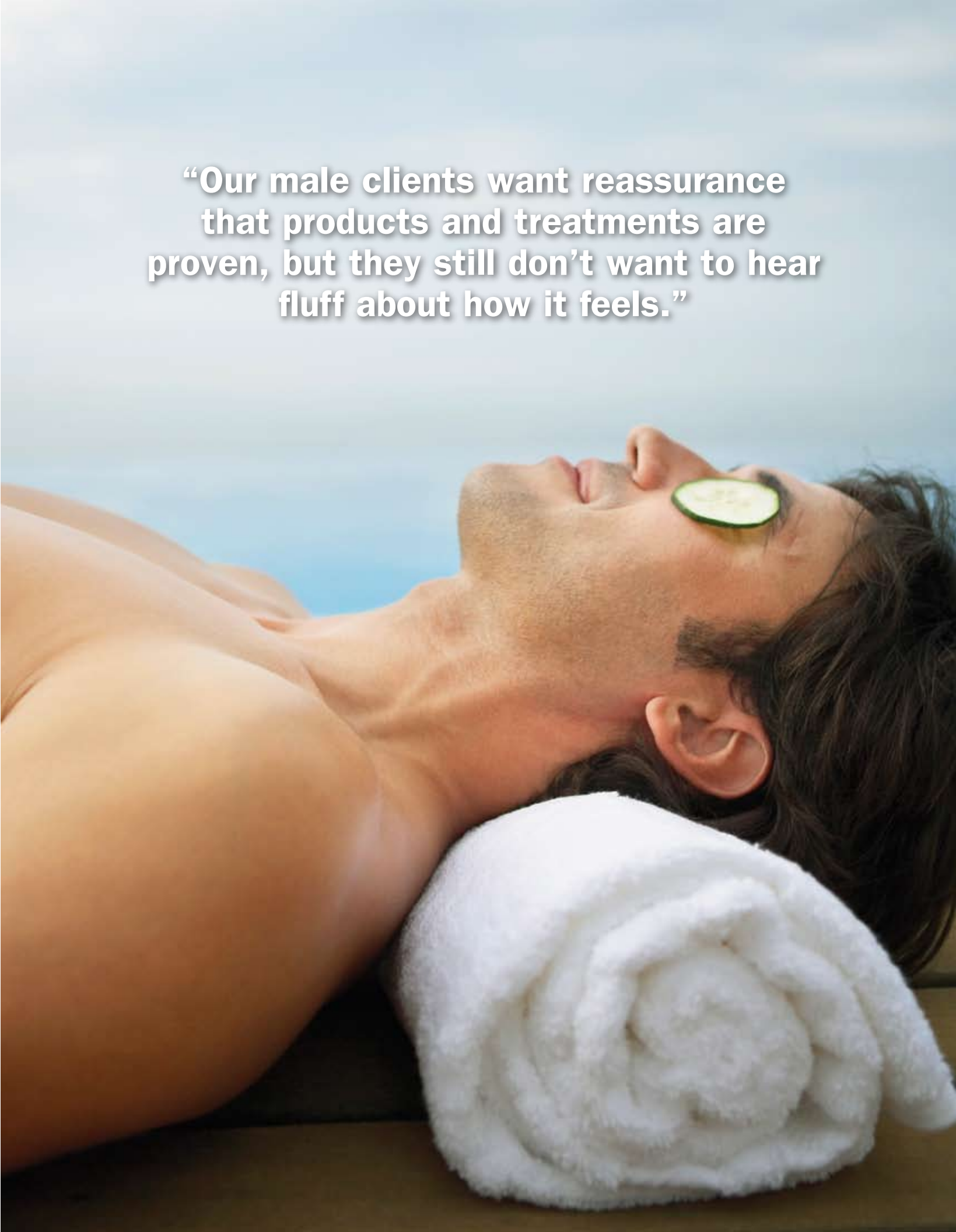
A recent online survey by KSL Resorts polled 500 men ages 21-65 with an annual household income of \$50,000 or more about their spa habits. Of those surveyed, 73% had never been to a spa and 20% had visited for the first time in the past year. Of those with spa experience:

- 71.5% had been to a resort spa
- 36.1% had been to a day spa
- 18.8% had been to a gym spa
- 16% had been to a destination spa

Of all of the respondents, 65% said they would be interested in treatments that took less time

than those they saw on spa menus, with the majority (50.6%) saying they would choose 25-minute treatments versus the traditional 50 to 90 minutes. Massage remained the clear winner in treatment choices, with 82.6% of respondents having experienced at least one. Falling far behind in second and third place with 26.4% and 25.7%, respectively, were manicures/pedicures and facials.

The survey also revealed that the majority of men, whether they’ve visited a spa or not, prefer a female massage therapist to a male one.



“Our male clients want reassurance that products and treatments are proven, but they still don’t want to hear fluff about how it feels.”

and laser hair removal,” says Arntzen. “Most people would be surprised at how vain men are about their looks. When you get them alone in a room they start talking about their crow’s feet and how they want to look younger and healthier. We always get them to sample take-home products and they’ll usually come back to purchase them.” Londono reports that she has both younger and older men visiting for regular skincare support.

“Men are beginning to see that a little bit of effort can produce great results, especially when it comes to solving the skincare problems that arise from shaving,” says Scoey Wilson, co-owner of Skin Beauty Lounge (skinbeautylounge.com) in Washington, D.C. “Men are purchasing products for their face because they want fresh faces, clear of blemishes.” In addition, Wilson says that runners are coming in for sports pedicures and businessmen are stopping in to take care of their hands.

Perhaps because men are already accustomed to purchasing products for their shaving needs,

and Thai) and laser hair removal. Men of all ages frequent the classes in our Yoga Sanctuary, including a recently popular golf yoga class.”

My Way or the Highway

No consumer wants to feel he or she is being lumped into a category with millions of other consumers. Respecting the individuality of your male clients is important, even as you understand that like anyone, men want to feel comfortable at your spa. For the majority of them that means a gender-neutral or masculine environment, privacy, results-oriented services and products, and any other evidence that you aren’t going to treat them like women.

Above all, don’t try too hard to change the way they think. Patrizi has seen this firsthand when men come into his spa and ask for just a haircut even though the spa’s most popular service, The Man, includes a hot towel wrap, paraffin hand wax, mini facial and hand massage. “Although these

“Men from Gen-Xers to baby boomers want to look younger and find a healthful balance.”

retailing skincare products isn’t such a behavioral jump. “As far as products go, moisturizers and cleansers are our top sellers for men, but we also sell a lot of sunscreens and shave products,” says Stransman. Remarks Arntzen, “Sometimes I wish all of my clients were men, because nearly every male facial client walks away with products once I tell him about the benefits.”

Perhaps the one area that spans age, economics, personality and lifestyle is body therapies. “Our male clients tend to think about spas for relaxation or pain relief, which could explain why our biggest demand is massage therapy,” says Connie Hilderbrand, owner of Bella Dia Spa (belladiaspa.com) in Austell, Georgia. “They also tend to purchase a lot of pain relief items from us (bath salts, heat wraps, ice packs, etc.). We retail a lot of small travel packs for men because we’re in a tourist town.”

“Men from Gen-Xers to baby boomers want to look younger and find a healthful balance,” concludes Barnett. “Most popular among our male clients are the gentleman’s facial, massage (hot stone

things are part of the service, and I tell them that even if they don’t partake in the full treatment I can’t lower the price, they insist they don’t want the ‘girly’ extras,” says Patrizi. Some guys even tend to have a problem with the whole idea of appointments. “They’re used to just walking into a barber-shop and getting their hair cut,” says Patrizi. “The notion of having to wait two days or a week to see a stylist annoys them. On an average Saturday we end up turning away 25 guys who try to get walk-in appointments.”

Clearly, the spa world isn’t about to be taken over by men any time soon, but more of them are seeing and appreciating its benefits every day. For spa owners, that means being both patient and tactical. It will take some work and probably another decade or so before a spa visit for “average Joe” becomes just as commonplace as an outing to Best Buy. ●

Liz Barrett is an Oxford, MS-based freelance writer and editor. She can be reached at mslizbarrett@yahoo.com.

An Untapped Market?

A study released by The NPD Group in Port Washington, New York, shows sales of men’s prestige* skincare products for the first half of 2006 reaching \$32 million, up 3% from 2005. Men’s moisturizers and treatment shave products accounted for \$16.3 million in sales; facial exfoliators brought in \$3.7 million; and facial cleanser sales totaled \$3.4 million. Karen Grant, a senior beauty analyst for The NPD Group, notes that the products that sell best are simple and multipurpose.

The study also found that men pay, on average, 46% less for their skincare products than their female counterparts, and their products still make up only

3% of the total market according to NPD’s statistics. Grant says that men’s skin care has the potential to be a billion-dollar industry if the user base can be broadened. One clue: The most fruitful marketing tactics used in the highly successful fragrance sector haven’t been about looking better and feeling younger—they’ve been geared toward making men feel relevant and impressing the ladies!

**The prestige beauty products spoken of here are sold mainly in U.S. department stores. It should also be noted that an earlier 2004 study by NPD showed that 20% of all beauty products were purchased in department stores, while only 3% were purchased in spas.*

