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The Men's Niche

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The New Target Markets

IN RECENT YEARS, SOCIO-ECONOMIC FORCES HAVE CONVERGED TO CREATE NEW NICHE MARKETS FOR PROFESSIONAL BEAUTY SERVICES AND PRODUCTS. SMART SALON OWNERS ARE LEARNING TO FOCUS ON THESE NEW NICHE TO GROW THEIR BUSINESSES IN TOUGH TIMES.



WHENEVER SALON TODAY explored niche markets in the past, we looked at different categories of clients, such as teens and tweens looking for edgy cuts, boomers searching for rejuvenating products and services, or expectant moms on the lookout for prenatal spa services. Our editors would discuss demographics, make a list of different client groups, then research the salons who catered to them.

As we started to discuss niche markets for this issue, we realized that a host of sociological and economical forces were converging to create brand new categories of clients who couldn't be defined by their demographics alone. Global forces—such as the accessibility of information through the internet, the struggling economy, and the continuing mix of cultures—were reshaping these niche markets and creating new ones. And these new niches, while they may resemble the old ones on the surface, are seeking and consuming professional beauty services and products in very different ways.

For this article, we decided to focus on four of these new niches, explore the forces that are driving them, and showcase the salon and stylists who've strengthened their businesses by delivering exactly what these niches want. We hope our exploration will help you think about your clients in a different way, even encourage you to line up a new niche in your sights.

The Modern Man

By Kelly Cison

WITH SALES OF MEN'S GROOMING SERVICES AND PRODUCTS OUTPACING THE OVERALL BEAUTY MARKET, MANUFACTURERS, SALONS AND STYLISTS ARE TURNING THEIR ATTENTION TOWARD THE GUYS.

EVEN IN A SLOW ECONOMY, men are still showing up for their regular hair cuts, are less likely to appointment-stretch, and some salons report they are even trying new services. Industry data supports men care more about their hair and skin than ever before. According to **Eufora**, the men's grooming market is outpacing the overall beauty market, and **John Paul Mitchell Systems** cites statistics that male consumers are spending a staggering \$61.3 billion on grooming annually. Why?

A few reasons, according to Eufora: Men are working longer than ever before and need to look youthful and well-groomed to stay job competitive. They are delaying marriage and children, freeing up disposable income for prestige products and services; and finally, they have evolved their thinking to recognize the value of high-quality cuts and grooming.

As a result, many professional brands are rushing to meet the niche long catered to by **American Crew**. In the past few years, **Aveda** launched its Aveda Men Pure-formance line, Eufora unveiled Hero, **Joe Grooming** continued to grow its market share, and **JPMS** is debuting Mitch.

Today's man no longer fits the molds of "metrosexual" or macho—rather, he is original, confident, stylish and aspirational, say experts. And the salon industry is uniquely positioned to benefit from this modern male market, but only if they approach it the right way. Here's how educated owners are capturing these clients.

Camouflage the gray. Men aren't looking for dramatic color, but they do want to blend their gray. Demipermanent color done at the shampoo bowl takes 10 minutes and starts around \$30. "Paul Mitchell's Flashback service is 70 percent of our male color business," says **Bill O'Brien**, co-owner of **Floyd's 99 Barbershops**, which has 53 locations. "You just let it sit and rinse. Once a guy does it, he's hooked." O'Brien attributes the natural-looking results to helping a client land a job.

Keep private services private. Men don't want to sit at a nail station or get waxed in the chair, say owners. At **Emerson Joseph**, a men's grooming lounge with two locations in North Carolina, all manicures, pedicures, glycolic peels, body services and back and eyebrow waxing take place in private rooms. "These services would definitely not be as popular if they were out in the open," says **Kathy Lotierzo**, operations manager. But no matter how satisfied men are with their nails or skin, don't expect them to refer their friends. "They are not interested in doing that," she laughs.

Find out what men really want. At the **Men's Grooming Lounge** in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, owner **Jay Fata** utilizes Eufora guest consultation forms with every appointment. It's a useful part of a consultation,



Hair: Charlie Price with Lisa Vann
Photography: Roberto Ligresti

as male clients can jot down what they're looking for and explain their needs without having to verbally detail their request for an upper back wax.

Offer a signature service. Lots of men love a hot towel shave, agree owners. But try adding luxury into a hair cut, as men enjoy pampering just as much as women. Emerson Joseph, which uses American Crew hair and shave care products, has a signature service that includes a shampoo, cut, shoe shine, mini mani, hand massage and hot towel service. With that one-stop service, "very few come in for just a cut," says Lotierzo.

Skip the hard sell. Introduce services or products informally, like you would to a friend, recommends Fata, whose lounge carries Eufora's Hero for Men line of hair, scalp and skin products. Don't be afraid to ask questions about their needs and to spell

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—Jay Fata



The New Target Markets

out how to use a product, he adds. "Guys are loyal and if you show you're willing to help them, they'll keep coming back."

Don't offer too many choices. That means creating a concise men's service menu and streamlining your retail displays so men can find what they need quickly. Make sure you limit the number of men's lines, too, says Fata, who reports that aligning with only one brand increases sales 20 percent.

Get them comfortable. Decor doesn't need to be overly masculine, but it shouldn't feel like their mom's salon either, says O'Brien, who favored hardwood and concrete floors and stainless steel counters for Floyd's. A customized radio station, which is contracted out, ensures Floyd's always has a great mix of music. Other ideas from owners that men love: a TV tuned to news or sports, a Playstation, a pool table, video golf, men's selection of magazines, and complimentary beer, wine or soda.

Don't keep them waiting. Floyd's offers same-day service: "Men call when they realize they need a cut, not six weeks prior," says O'Brien. And the Men's Grooming Lounge offers walk-in-only appointments two days a week. But even with scheduled appointments, there is nothing more important than punctuality, declares Lotierzo, who says Emerson Joseph prides itself on running on time. And when male clients do arrive, greet them right away and escort them to their stylist's chair.

Make them a member. Both salons and clients benefit from memberships. Guys simply pay a monthly fee for a certain amount of services as well as a few bonuses, like free neck clean-ups or the privilege of renting out a lounge for private use. Businesses ensure a consistent clientele, while men enjoy the added value and the no-hassle checkout—you just simply run their member number, and they're on their way, says Lotierzo.

Don't exclude women. Sounds counter-

intuitive, but O'Brien says men welcome seeing a woman client in the chair—it lends credibility to the Floyd's brand. Plus, women average a higher service and retail ticket, and stylists will be more willing to join your team if they can bring their own clientele, which undoubtedly includes women. Finally, you get the opportunity to incentivize female clients to refer their male friends and family to your salon. **R**

Niche Drivers

- **The Economy:** Pressure to put off retirement is driving the desire to look younger. Competition for jobs drives men to look professional.
- **Lifestyle:** As men delay marriage and children, they have more disposable income.
- **Perception:** As the old "taboos" about men's grooming are dissipating, more men are embracing coloring services, skin care and spa services.



A client enjoys an express facial at the open facial bar at Rebellations Hair and Beauty Studio in Hoboken, New Jersey.

Time Crunchers

By Kelly Cison

EXPRESS SERVICES NOT ONLY TEMPT CLIENTS TO TRY NEW SERVICES, THEY HELP OUT THOSE LOYAL CLIENTS WHO ARE FEELING THE PINCH OF TIME AND MONEY, KEEPING THEM TRUE TO YOUR ESTABLISHMENT.

WHEN THE ECONOMY TURNED a few years ago, Aveda stepped up by developing its Beauty on Demand program, a menu of express services its salons could implement that gave clients a taste of a wellness service at a reduced price. With the launch of its Total Results line, Matrix developed its \$5/5 minute conditioning service that introduce clients to the line right at the shampoo bowl. And, while color accelerators have been around for years, for the first time color manufacturers are beginning to