



Ethnic Skin Care

Make the most of this great market opportunity

by Pamela Springer

As you continue to build your client base, now is a good time to learn more about the rapidly growing ethnic skin care market. After all, ethnic groups are not only growing in size, but have buying power of more than \$1 trillion, according to a study by the University of Georgia Center for Economic Growth. You can deliver great value to these clients.

To capture this niche market, skin care professionals should understand the values and perceived needs of ethnic consumers. There are cultural and lifestyle differences that need to be considered and marketing plans need to be focused and culturally appropriate.

Family and community are very important to these groups. As a result, they rely heavily on referrals when seeking to do business outside their communities. Advertising for products and services must include ethnic images to succeed, but that's not as simple as it may sound. For instance, all Asians are not alike. You wouldn't use a Korean model in a Japanese ad. Colors used in advertising may be appropriate for one Asian group, but are offensive to another. For example, red has very positive associations for the Chinese, Japanese, and Vietnamese, but it is associated with communism for South Koreans.

African-American Clients

This group makes up the single largest racial minority in the United States with distant origins in Africa, the Caribbean, Central America, and South America. Some research shows African-Americans spend five times more on beauty products

than the general population. Reports show 35 percent of African-American women continuously look for new products and services, compared with 14 percent of Caucasian women.¹

African-American skin tones range from creamy white to ebony. The most challenging skin condition is their propensity for hyperpigmentation. The number one skin problem for African-American males is razor bumps, with 49 percent reporting this problem.

While mass-marketed beauty products focus on fighting the signs of aging, this is not the primary concern of darker-skinned people. The darker-skinned client is more concerned with getting even-toned skin, eradicating discoloration, and brightening dull, lifeless skin.

Hispanic/Latino Clients

The numbers of Hispanics/Latinos in the United States are on the rise. By 2012, one in six Americans will be of Hispanic origin, with more than 60 percent originating from Mexico. Experts predict that by 2050, 25 percent of the U.S. population will be Hispanic. This is a richly diverse group, representing the Caribbean, Latin American countries, Mexico, and Puerto Rico. Demographically speaking, 70 percent of the Hispanic population is concentrated in just four states—California, Florida, New York, and Texas.

It is not uncommon in this population for three generations to live in one household. Women commonly shop with family members, girlfriends, and their children. Those who are immigrants prefer to shop where establishments cater to Spanish speakers.

Role behavior is clearly defined in this culture. Early on, Hispanic women are taught the importance of being feminine and the significance of taking care of their skin and bodies. Their purchases reflect this, with a strong emphasis on beauty products and fashion.

To reach the Hispanic consumer, estheticians must be aware of several groups within this population and market accordingly. Foreign-born Hispanics prefer their media in their principal language; Spanish-language advertisements have proven 45 percent more effective than advertising in English. Within this group, there is a huge, untapped population of Generation X consumers, those born between approximately the mid-1960s and the late 1970s. Peer conformity and product quality are the general motivators, rather than price. This generation is far more fluent in English. As a result, they have been much more deeply affected by American culture than their parents.

In the Hispanic population, there is a melting pot of skin tones, ranging from light to a rich, deep brown. There is often mixed ancestry, with combinations of Caucasian, Mexican descended from North American Indians, and African cultures and races. They have an increased risk for pigmentary anomalies, particularly melasma. One study shows at least half of Hispanic females will develop visible melasma during pregnancy. Approximately 10 percent of the male population has this disorder.

Asian-American Clients

The Asian market is the most affluent among American minorities. Their annual median household income is more than \$64,000. This group is expected to spend more than \$750 billion by 2013.

There is a variation of skin tones within Asian skin types. Chinese, Korean, and Japanese people have lighter skins, while southeast Asians (Cambodians and Vietnamese), as well as south Asians (Pakistanis and Sri Lankans), have darker brown skins.

As consumers, Asians have strong brand loyalty. They are willing to spend more for quality, but they appreciate good value. Their community tends to be close-knit, with word of mouth an effective way to influence their consumer decisions. If you satisfy this consumer, you may find

the whole neighborhood wanting your products and services. On the flip side, if you have one unhappy customer, word spreads quickly.

Asian skin is less prone to premature aging. When comparing this skin type with that of Caucasians, the skin is oilier with more melanin content. The challenge for this skin type is adverse reaction to products, longer healing times, deeper scarring, and pigmentation disorders with long-term effects. The skin is generally thick, extremely susceptible to sun damage, and more prone to acne.

Skin care is high on the purchasing list for this group, especially Chinese and Japanese women who are accustomed to a seven- or eight-step skin care ritual. Appearance is a concern, especially among Chinese women. Because their skin becomes darker with age, they often seek skin-lightening services.

Capture This Market

The surge in ethnic buying power offers a tremendous opportunity to create products and services for the specific needs of these populations. To capture this market, skin care professionals will have to understand the unique needs of each group, have effective marketing plans, and implement the protocols that will reveal the natural beauty of their clients' skin. Are you ready to tap into this revenue-driven market? §

NOTE

1. Veronica MacDonald, "Ethnic Skin Care: Facing the Future," *Household & Personal Products Industry*, October 2003.



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Diversity is on the Rise

Ethnic and racial diversity increased dramatically in the United States during the latter part of the 20th Century. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the fastest-growing minority group is the Hispanic/Latino population, followed by Asians. African-Americans have the lowest percentage of growth, with less than 5 percent, but they have become ethnic power players among the affluent and middle classes. Unfortunately, most skin care companies have neglected minorities, despite the fact that these groups are willing to spend money to look good.

Know Your Audience

To acquire the Hispanic or Asian client, it is crucial to be aware of several factors.

- Country of origin.
- Cultural traits or social patterns.
- Generation.
- Language.
- Level of affluence.