



What Plastic Surgeons Can Learn from Retailers and Brands That Are Rockin' It

By Wendy Lewis

When I need inspiration to get my creative juices flowing, I tend to look to start-ups and brands that are deemed to be great disrupters in their respective categories.

Branding and marketing an aesthetic practice is not exactly the same, but many of the same rules apply. Aesthetic patients want to be wowed, too. They also want to have their needs met in a timely and efficient way. Convenience counts. Service ranks high. They want to be responded to in the way they reached out, be that on Facebook, Twitter or by text. And like most consumers, they tend to vote with their feet and share their experience online with anyone who will listen.

Beauty brands are facing intensive competition from multiple directions. To stay at the top of their game, they need to constantly discover new ways to innovate. Consumer loyalty is at an all-time low due to selection, availability, discounting, and competing claims. Sound familiar? It should.

The retail space is in serious panic mode. Just take a walk on Madison Avenue or Main Street USA to see how many storefronts have 'For Rent' signs in the windows and for how long. In my zip code in Manhattan, every city block has at least one or two empty stores that stick out like sore thumbs, and stay empty for months to years due to skyrocketing rent hikes.

Let's talk about malls. According to Credit Suisse, 20–25% of malls in U.S. will most likely close by 2022, according to Credit Suisse, due mainly to the rise of e-commerce, mass store closings, and the growing popularity of off-price chains outside of malls to divert traffic.¹ Amazon Prime and eBay claims some responsibility for this downward trajectory, but they are not the only ones. Clever concepts in 100% online brands from beauty, fashion, and home goods are changing the retail landscape by digitizing the supply chain to make the shopping experience practically seamless.

Think about how Nike offers customization of your favorite running shoe in the color, fabrics, arch, etc. that you want, all online. Untuckit.com is another example. Want a custom shirt that is wallet-friendly and can be



STITCH FIX

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worn untucked in the fabric of your choice? Use the app. This model is being applied to everything from window blinds to cars now.

So, here are my top 5 brilliant brand picks that we can take some cues from:

Skin Laundry Laser & Light Facial Clinic —skinlaundry.com

Skin Laundry is like DryBar® for skin. If you don't know what DryBar is, it's the award-winning blow dry bar concept that has blossomed into a hugely successful and recognizable brand. The flagship SL store opened in 2013 and there are now locations in California, New York, Arizona, London and Hong Kong, and more are underway. In a nut shell, these cool, modern clinics offer a quick 15-minute treatment that can be done in a lunch hour and addresses exactly what their target audience (skin-obsessed millennials) wants and needs; "15-minute laser & light facial. No downtime. Just results." The menu is brilliant in its simplicity and has grown up to feature a robust branded product line that includes package pricing for bundles and gift cards that can be purchased online, like the Flywheel® model. There is also a well-designed loyalty club offering package for repeat customers that includes preferred pricing on treatments and products.

Keywords: Results-oriented targeted offer, affordable luxury, loyalty program

Ulta Beauty—ulta.com

Once the bastion of suburban soccer moms only, ULTA has emerged as the beauty retailer powerhouse to watch. Now the largest beauty retailer in the US and the premier destination for cosmetics, fragrance, skin, hair care products and salon services, they feature over 20,000 products from 500 beauty brands, including their own private label products. In 2018, they will open their first location in New York City, one short block away from a huge Sephora. What sets ULTA apart is a mix of products from mass to class plus salon services, all co-existing under one well stocked roof with a big online shopping experience push, and rewards program. ULTA represents how we shop for beauty today; consumers are far less brand loyal, they appreciate the convenience of a one-stop-shop, and a mix of price points to choose from. It is the only beauty retailer that combines \$5 on trend nail polishes, beauty tools and supplies, with professional hair care, high end foundations and makeup artist brands.

Keywords: Product selection, value proposition, loyalty program

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Wunderbrow—wunderbrow.com

We can credit bushy-browed celebs for inspiring Wunderbrow®'s meteoric success in the beauty world. This disruptive brow gel brand was launched in 2015, and is well on its way to becoming a best-selling cult brand of the likes of GLAMGLOW®, the British mud mask brand that was picked up by Estee Lauder. Founder of KF Beauty, Michael Malinsky, is all about analytics and has based his model on a mathematical approach to digital advertising. He boasts spending up to \$50,000 on Facebook ads daily. Believing that women, especially millennials, relate to other women demonstrating how products work, so he hired a slew of vloggers to do short video clips and bloggers to write product reviews to blow the brand up. By using sponsored content and traditional advertising, and amplifying his earned media hits as 'best brow gel,' the brand has grown at a furious rate. Watch this space for copycats like Wander Beauty (cosmetics) and Wonderskin (body makeup) that are gaining traction with social media and digital marketing strategies.

Keywords: Analytics, influencer outreach, trending category

Stitch Fix—stitchfix.com

Stitch Fix is a virtual personal styling service that claims to "blend(s) the art of expert personal styling with the science of algorithms to deliver apparel and accessories tailored to your taste, budget and lifestyle." It's an e-tailer with a twist; they have 3,300 stylists and 80 data scientists on board to guide customers through a formula that matches their measurements and personal style with professional picks from a growing list of brands. Male and female customers fill out a style questionnaire to get a curated collection of five pieces shipped to them. They can try and buy or send it all back with no charge for shipping. It's a technology play that uses proprietary algorithms to match customers with their best style. Founded in 2011 by CEO Katrina Lake, Stitch Fix is based in San Francisco and sells clothing and accessories ranging from \$20–\$600 per item including more big brands, boutique labels and exclusive ranges. Like Skin Laundry, Stitch Fix took a previously exclusive service

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and brought it down to a level that is affordable to the average person.

Keywords: Analytics, personalization, affordable luxury

Framebridge—framebridge.com

One of our plastic surgeon clients has an unwieldy binder of media clips on his coffee table. I finally decided to tackle the 800-pound elephant in the waiting room, and gently suggested that he retire the faded cordovan leather volume and modernize. He looked puzzled at first—surgeons are not always open to change—but then realized that perhaps it didn't mesh with his image and gave in. 'Okay, so how are you going to do this?,' he asked. My answer was Framebridge®, the online custom framing platform that makes it easy to frame anything from a wedding photo to an art poster. Launched in 2014 by Susan Tynan, this startup is changing the way America gets framed. You take a photo of your item, upload it, choose from a tasteful selection of frames and mat options, check out, and you're almost done. They will send you a prepaid box to ship back with your art, and in about a week, your perfectly framed item will arrive. There is no charge for shipping both ways, and designers are available to answer questions and give advice via email or the chatbot on the site. Prices go up to \$189 for the largest size offered, which is a fraction of what framing costs in most markets. I also love the little burlap branded sack that comes with your framed artwork that includes a thank you for your business

card with two 15% off coupons to give to friends, hooks for hanging, and a note asking you to share your frame on social media.

Keywords: Customization, expert advice, value proposition

I bet you're now thinking, 'so, what does this have to do with me?' EVERYTHING.

The trends highlighted above effect the way consumers think, select, purchase and pay. Technology has enabled brands to get smarter, more customer-driven, personalized, and responsive. This, in turn, has generated an improved customer experience, which signals that plastic surgery practices must also keep up with these trends. Digitization is simply the automation of things you use to do manually; as in going from a paper appointment book to a Google calendar, and text messaging for appointment reminders instead of messages left on answering machines. For example, if patients want to use Apple® Pay for their breast augmentation and get a receipt sent to their mobile devices, you have to step up your game. If they want free Wi-Fi in your practice, to have their retinol cream delivered when they run out with free shipping, and to get points for every syringe, peel or fat blasting session they have, consider how to incorporate these services.

Practices must continuously think of new ways to stand out in a crowded market that is overserved, and to stay top of mind with current patients. Loyalty programs rank high because the companies they deal with every day have them trained to respond to this concept. Despite an emphasis on high tech problem-solution models, personal touches, samples and perks still count a lot to keep patients coming back.

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1. Business Insider, "Wall Street bank says a quarter of shopping malls will close in 5 years" <http://read.bi/2gLOua4>