

Beneath the SURFACE

Skin analysis machines can improve sales, customer satisfaction and loyalty—all while making your store a must-visit destination.

by Tracy Morin

Today's consumers are accustomed to the highest level of customization in their everyday lives, from personalized iPod playlists to build-your-own sandwich shops. They're also fully enveloped in the wonders of technology and unlimited information access. For the beauty retailer, this means specific recommendations for each customer's unique skin concerns can make all the difference when a customer is weighing whether to visit your store.

Enter the power of skin analysis machines. Though not a brand-new technology, these machines are finding their way into an increasing number of beauty stores, and no wonder—they can boost sales and make a marked difference in your customers' skincare regimens and results. We spoke to Jim Larkey, director of product management and marketing at Canfield Scientific—a provider of imaging systems and services, including skin analysis machines; specifically the VISIA, Reveal and DermScope machines—based in Fairfield, New Jersey, to learn about the machines' benefits and challenges, and how beauty retailers can use them in their own stores to transform their businesses.

BSB: How would a beauty retailer begin using skin analysis machines?

LARKEY: A retailer gets involved with a skin analysis or skin-diagnostic system usually in conjunction with a brand. A skincare brand is usually the driver for an analysis tool to supplement the skincare consultation process, to make consultation more effective and educational, and to bring more tools to the salesperson. Usually, it's not the brick-and-mortar retailer who's looking for tools that would be used across multiple brands. The product

What are some of the types of machines available?

There are a range of tools—such as the VISIA system, which has been on the market since 2003—with refreshed software year after year. There are also some smaller-footprint, even mobile, skincare [analysis] devices, ranging from an intermediate product called Reveal Imager—a smaller-footprint device, to DermScope, which is entirely mobile and marries up with the iPhone 4 for a skincare consultation. DermScope is \$900, Reveal is about \$6,000 and VISIA starts at \$14,000. So there are a range of prices as well as types of solutions for retailers.

What benefits accompany these types of machines?

Retailers and brands are finding that [these tools have] a positive effect on sales, with upwards of 30% to 40% improvement. Customers learn more about their skin and are better informed about where their opportunities for improvements are, and the photographs make their current skin situation more obvious and compelling. We're used to seeing our face on a daily basis, and we don't necessarily recognize all of the conditions we have. Seeing the photographs gives an objective view.

“Retailers and brands are [experiencing] a positive effect on sales, with upwards of 30% to 40% improvement.”

recommendations are connected to a particular brand so that the consultant doesn't need to know about each brand, and so that there's not a dizzying array of products that can help, but [just] two or three to address a particular skin problem. Some of our systems have a product-recommendation library where the relevant products can be displayed in front of the customer.

Recently, however, we've been working with stores that have purchased the systems to share across a number of brands—that's a newer trend. Lately, stores have been using these for cross-brand purchases.

Should stores charge customers for the use of these machines?

Typically, the store or skincare brand—whoever sponsors the technology—doesn't charge the customer for the analysis. The goal is to get as many people exposed to the technology as possible, so that the skin consultant or beauty adviser can provide as much information as possible to that customer and help guide the purchasing process. Charging [customers for use] might exclude people who don't see the value or aren't sure or don't know if it'll be worth the time and the cost.

What's the concept behind these machines?

They generally have the same concept: They're based on taking a photographic image of the skin, whether full-facial photographs or small-field photographs. From there, the [beauty adviser] can use the photographs in the consultation process. And depending on the device, the range of analysis tools becomes increasingly sophisticated.

software, optics and lighting; so it's very lightweight. Reveal is a small-footprint countertop device that's usually paired up with a laptop. VISIA is larger footprint and requires either a traditional or laptop computer. So, whereas DermScope uses the iPhone as the computer and monitor, Reveal and VISIA both require a separate computer—a laptop or desktop—that's usually stored under the counter.



The VISIA consultation screen provides 15-megapixel photos in two minutes.

VISIA does skin analysis for identifying and measuring spots, pores, wrinkles, skin texture; then UV photography measures UV spots. VISIA takes three pictures in total, including a polarized picture, from which we can evaluate hyperpigmentation and vascular damage—everything from acne to spider veins to rosacea; common concerns of customers. Reveal, a slightly less-sophisticated unit, evaluates hyperpigmentation and vascular issues and provides the opportunity for review of wrinkles and texture. DermScope is for looking at pigmented lesions as well as for vascular problems and skin texture.

What amount of space do these machines require within the store?

DermScope is carried in the hand. It's entirely mobile, using an iPhone 4 and has a cartridge that slips onto the iPhone that includes the batteries, electronics,

What is the process like for the customer?

Reveal and VISIA both take a photograph of the face. Facial photographs are very powerful communicators to customers. People need to know what they look like to better appreciate what improvements they want to make. DermScope is small-field and covers an inch in diameter of skin area, applied to the face or another part of the body. Reveal and VISIA take extremely high quality facial photographs—15-megapixel photos that have controlled lighting so that we get pictures for standard light and polarized light; and in VISIA's case, also ultraviolet light. It's a very quick process. For VISIA, the entire process takes only about two minutes. From there, the consultant has a set of topics to review, which range from skin analysis components in each category—spots, pores, wrinkles, texture, etc.—to other diagnostic tools, like an aging simulator that can show what the

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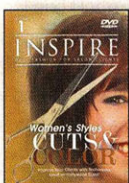
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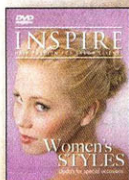


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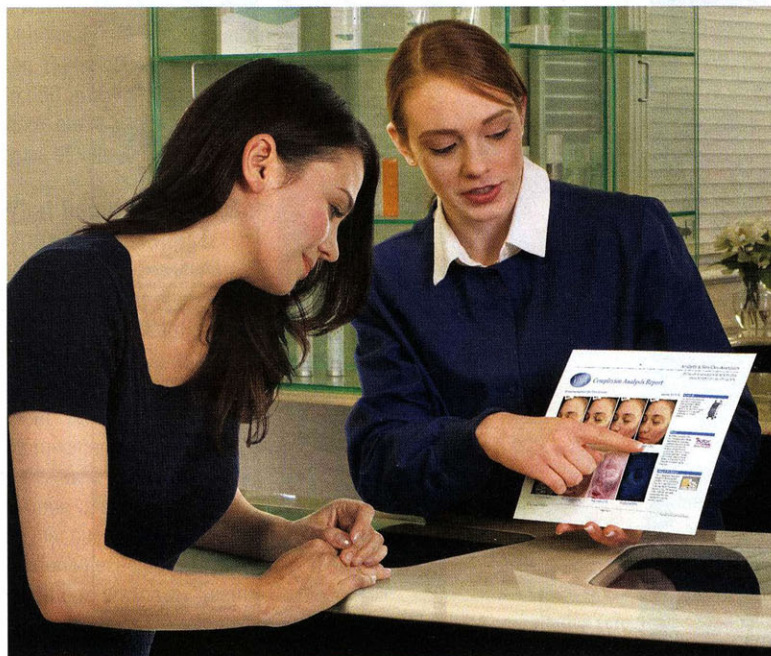
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skin could look like in five to seven years if the customer does nothing to change her current skincare regimen; which is very powerful. It also shows what she could look like with an enhanced skincare regimen in two or three years. Our retailers and partners find [this to be] a powerful communicator in helping people understand what their range of options might be.

Because the system is digital, all of the information is stored so that if customers adopt a skincare regimen, they can see the progress over time. They can take a frontal-facial picture or take the picture at a 45-degree angle—which is helpful because customers can see wrinkles, fine lines, crow's-feet, etc.—and take pictures of the cheek and nasal areas. The photograph is the most powerful part of the consultation.



The VISIA machine's analysis gives consultants a range of topics to discuss with customers.

What is the experience like for the beauty retailer?

While the photograph is on the screen, the software adjusts the information it presents. If you're looking at spots, for example, it'll identify the spots of hyperpigmentation, and measure and count them. Technology also informs the customer as to how severe the problems are so that she knows how she compares to peer groups. [So] if a woman is in her 30s, the system can tell her how many spots or how much hyperpigmentation she has, and how she compares to women of approximately the same age. This helps both the customer and salesperson to appreciate the severity of the problems. When you compare that across eight different dimensions of skin analysis, it provides a comprehensive set of information for that customer, and the store has the option to print out that report.

Can the machines be used on other parts of the body to detect aging or other concerns?

VISIA and Reveal are designed for the face, but many locations also use the systems to photograph the backs of hands or forearms—prominent aging or sunlight-affected areas. DermScope is mobile and can be used to take photos of any exposed part of the skin.

What sorts of tests have been done to measure the machines' efficacy?

This technology and approach to customer consultation was pioneered by Procter & Gamble in the late 1990s. And Procter & Gamble did a variety of tests and published data that showed this was not only an effective consultation device but had accurate measurement and methodology. We introduced this to a broader marketplace in 2003; so it's been on the market for upwards

of eight years. Medical and topical skincare products and medical device studies have been conducted with the system many times over. And many articles in peer-reviewed medical journals talk about the results of these tests. So we feel the use by the medical community has verified the validity of the use of these machines.

Do these require special knowledge on the part of the retailing professional?

The system provides a set of scores and helps position the scores in terms of their severity. It's up to the retailer or brand to identify and recommend the particular product that makes the most sense. So if the customer is concerned about visible spots or sun damage, the adviser would recommend something to reduce that. It does require some knowledge of the skincare lines to better match up the products to the concern.

You mentioned brand partnerships. What brands currently implement these systems and how common are these machines?

Some of the brands that use our systems are SK-II, Olay, Elemis and Murad. VISIA has been available for eight years; Reveal, two years; and DermScope for one year. Now, we have close to 5,000 of these systems installed worldwide.

Are there any other benefits of these machines you would like to mention?

With the systems and analysis, people get very excited about the opportunity to improve their skin and receive better insights to their problems—and they're more likely to talk about their experience at a particular store with their friends and peers; so a big benefit is word of mouth. Moreover, these systems provide an opportunity to do special events that can be promoted, advertised and used to create additional and incremental excitement for a brand or department that can be leveraged into more traffic on a periodic basis.

These machines also help improve loyalty to a brand or store, with improved analysis giving people more objective information. In today's marketplace, people are more sophisticated, savvy and comfortable with technology. They've come to expect [these things]—more upscale,

sophisticated tools. People are more open to the fact that skin analysis can be useful as opposed to being put off by it.

ment to offering skincare analysis. These aren't designed as self-service tools. They require someone who's well-informed. The

“These machines help improve loyalty to a brand/store, with improved analysis giving people more objective information.”

What types of products might be sold with these machines?

It's a great tool to sell a full range of skincare products, from sunscreens to moisturizers to products that protect or repair skin; and a great tool to help sell a variety of skincare accessories—allowing for cross-sell or upsell opportunities. The customer may come in looking for one type of product and after a consultation realize that she has more opportunities for improvement; and now the salesperson can do more cross-selling or upselling in other categories.

Is maintenance required for the machines?

If the store decides to print out results, it'll need to replace ink or paper, for example. But the imaging equipment itself requires very little maintenance with no inherent consumables or repairs that are needed. We encourage customers to upload the continual software improvements to improve the quality of the consultation and give more information; like the aging simulation already mentioned or a 3-D simulation tool that shows a small area of the face at a time and shows the 3-D contours of the skin.

What other features of these machines might be developed in the future?

We'll continue to add more types of analysis. Trends in the marketplace are important to customers, like products designed for eyelash growth, and we'll look toward more analysis in general. The beauty industry changes, and you must change with it.

Are there any challenges associated with these machines?

Having a well-informed, well-trained adviser or skincare staff is a very helpful comple-

ment to offering skincare analysis. These aren't designed as self-service tools. They require someone who's well-informed. The staff is always the challenge because of turnover, but having that staff available for consultations makes a very powerful combination. Some stores have self-service kiosks that can help identify skincare concerns through a Q-and-A format, and the systems come up with brands for these concerns, but less deep insight is being provided. We believe a well-trained beauty-care consultant is very important to the process. Consultants can ask about concerns and draw out the issues that may influence the products that should be recommended.

The system can be set up to direct certain product recommendations. But customers can have certain issues that can be very subtle or their own personal preferences—all of which a good consultant can take into consideration.

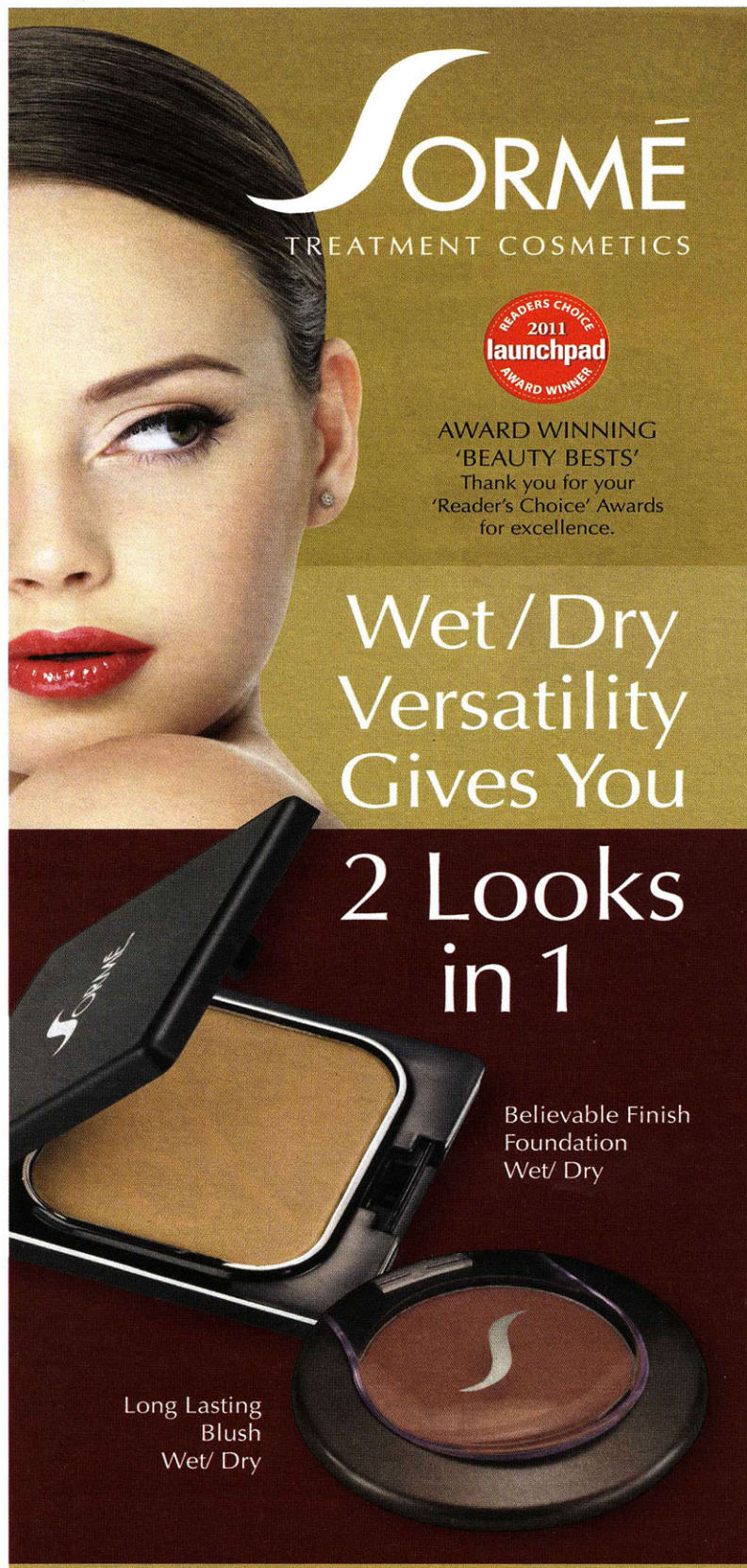
Is special training required to use these machines?

We've had a lot of experience with these systems and learned early on that simple is more powerful, and less is more. The user interface and control are easy to follow and require limited training; training can be completed in just a few hours. What's more important is how the brand or store incorporates the system into its consultation process. The store needs to understand how to incorporate the analysis into the explanation of the products to target the problems the customer has. ■

CANFIELD SCIENTIFIC

253 Passaic Ave., Fairfield, NJ 07004
Contact: Jim Larkey, director of product management & marketing
jim.larkey@canfieldsci.com
973.276.0036

Tracy Morin is a freelance writer and editor based in Oxford, MS.



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