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# Spa Canada

SPA MANAGEMENT - Canada

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# Men's Issues

## The Man Cave:

Redefining the Male Spa Environment, Exploring Male Grooming Trends

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**A cave typically denotes a cold, dark, enclosed space.**

Does it not? A 'man cave,' on the other hand, describes a place where guys can get away from it all, a symbol of manliness, if you will. Also referred to as a 'mantuary' or 'man space,' this male haven usually finds its refuge in a den, basement, retro-fitted garage, or spare bedroom. Today, it can also find a welcoming place in the

male spa and grooming industry.

Over the past few months, my firm has had the pleasure of developing a unique vintage barbershop concept for a client. In examining the world of vintage barber shops (circa 1920s) it seemed as though the spaces were almost social gatherings and felt like private clubs. They were a place where men could bond, discuss topics of interest, and relax away



from the stresses of daily life and the opposite sex. While many people might believe that any gathering of modern men must involve high-tech gadgets and endless stimulation, we discovered this is not the case. Just as men aren't interested in ultra-feminine settings, they don't want to always be in testosterone-fueled ones either.

Our lives are chaotic enough as is. Bluetooth and GPS, smartphones and digital media are everywhere we turn. While the spa industry has grasped the concept that women want to 'get away from it all' and pamper themselves, it is taking longer to realize this concept appeals to men too. Let's remove the big video screens; not everything has to be black and futuristic.

In the search for professional and retail product brands that would best represent our vision and concept we came across Baxter of California and its line of high-end, exclusive male grooming products. I spoke with Michael Donovan, Director of Sales at Baxter, about the 'less is more' approach to design and operations. Donovan referenced the company's Baxter Finley Barber & Shop, a vintage inspired barbershop in Los Angeles, as we discussed the trend of male grooming and retail spaces going 'back to basics' with a refined twist.

"For the Baxter Finley Barber & Shop," says Donovan, "we wanted to provide the essentials: quality experiences, products, and service. This meant creating a shop with no distractions or gimmicks to get guys through the door. Guys do not become loyal to a particular shop because of one free beer or for being able to watch SportsCenter on ESPN. They become dedicated customers because they receive consistently top-shelf haircuts and shaves in a traditional environment that speaks to them as a man."

In general, male fashion trends are moving

towards more sophisticated looks of luxury, so it's only logical that grooming spaces follow suit. This is where redefining the male spa environment really begins. Men are looking for more refined and calm places to escape the outside world and re-connect with friends while receiving their spa and grooming services. Beyond a clean shave, they are looking for results-oriented facial and body treatments that support their new focus on appearance. When it comes down to it, men look for a spa experience much similar to what women desire.

As the spa world slowly becomes more inclusive of men, product lines are developing gender-neutral packaging instead of hyper-feminine or ultra-masculine designs and colors. Let's burst the bubble: men's skin is not all that different from women's. A few years back, when the trend for 'male' products and spaces emerged onto the spa scene, the focus was hyper-differentiation. Now that's changing and companies are scaling back

their 'macho' approach and creating clean, modern spaces that appeal to a discerning and unisex clientele.

According to the International Spa Association, male guests comprised 31% of 2008's spa-goers, and, throughout the industry, spas that cater to men are gaining momentum. Men's spas are increasing in number as more and more men learn to appreciate the benefits. According to Euromonitor International, a leading market research firm, the global men's grooming industry has witnessed growth of around 6% on average over the past five years and represents a large, untapped market.

With that in mind, it's time to take a serious look at how we define, design, develop, and market male spa environments. Keep it simple. Think James Bond, not Hulk Hogan! Shaken, not stirred please, garçon! ■



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