



LUCRATIVE LOCKS

There's still a lot more money to be made in the ever-growing and highly profitable hair goods category.

by Victoria Wurdinger

At last year's American Music Awards you could count the female presenters who didn't wear their natural hair. Britney Spears, Nelly Furtado, Paris Hilton, Eva Longoria and the Pussycat Dolls were just a few who opted for extensions, assuring that thousands of teens and twenty-somethings would be clamoring for them the day after the show.

But the hair goods move from the medical realm to the fashion world wasn't spurred by the young and famous alone. Baby boomers view hair goods as problem solvers, not only to add volume but also to accommodate busy lives and speedy style changes. Feeling younger than ever, today's fifty-somethings are adding extensions for super length and, in a modern twist, are wearing their own hair longer and using faux locks for a one-off, sassy, new short style.

IMAGES COURTESY OF REBE OF PARIS

New and Best Selling Hair Goods



AMEKOR INDUSTRIES

The Total Weaving Kit by Beverly Johnson is a new concept in hair products that allows any woman to achieve any style desired with one, complete, single package. With a bonus skin closure for a natural looking part and a bonus bang, the fashion-forward kit also acts as a wig alternative. There's no waste and no excess hair, making it an ideal value. Each kit includes easy how-to instructions and detailed diagrams anyone can follow. Call 800/331-7282 or visit amekor.com.



FASHION INTERNATIONAL IMEX

Are you offering the latest looks? Be sure with the newest Tony of Beverly wig styles, which focus on individuality and haircolor trends toward subtle lowlights—think iced champagne and crème brûlée. ATHENA, VENUS and JESSE reflect the need for layers and side-swept bangs with longer looks. Nouveau bobs are layered, curled or spiked—GWEN, AUBREY and QUINN offer these options. For styles with curl, the newest look is shorter and layered à la Sarah Jessica Parker, which is why the company added ODESSA, FRENCHY and ALEXA to its new lineup. Call 800/292-WIGS (9447) or visit tonyofbeverly.com.



HAIR U WEAR

HairDo, a complete line of clip-in hair extensions, was inspired by style icon Jessica Simpson and created by her renowned hairstylist Ken Paves. Clip-in wavy extensions come in 15- and 23-inch lengths, while the straight extensions come in 10- and 22-inch lengths. Both are available in 16 blended shades and use Vibralite, a patented fiber that mimics the look and feel of natural hair. For the ultimate luxury, HairDo 100% human-hair, clip-in extensions come as a 21-inch set, available in 15 shades. To put Jessica in your store's window, call 888/655-8900 or visit hairuwear.com.



JON RENAU

Millions of women who have fine or thinning hair can now have instant volume, thickness and body with the easiVolume 100% human-hair, clip-in extension. Applied in minutes at home, the extension is secured with four snap-clips that won't damage natural hair. The honeycomb base allows users to pull their own hair through the holes for additional security and an incredibly natural look. The easiVolume extension comes in 10- and 14-inch lengths and 20 colors. Call 800/462-9447 in the United States (877/750-9447 in Canada) or visit easihair.com.

MANE INFLUENCES

Extensions are growing the hair goods category fastest as an affordable, must-have accessory, and they've made women more aware of every other form of wearable hair.

"In 2000, hair extensions were a \$500 million industry, and in 2005, they were a \$5 billion industry," says Michael Kleinman, executive vice president of Hair U Wear in Kansas City, Missouri. "In 2006, our business was up more than 25%, and in 2007, because of the Jessica Simpson HairDo line, we forecast our business will be up 40%."

For the most part, extensions are expanding—not cannibalizing the market—as some have suggested. They aren't intended for medical buyers and their price points have made fashionable faux hair accessible to the average consumer. Additionally, young women introduced to the category via extensions are now buying multiple hair goods, choosing an add-on ponytail for days they don't want to bother with a full-head effort. In some instances, women who were paying thousands of dollars for extensions that took hours to attach are transitioning to clip-on extensions. Convenience is as big a driver as cost.



the thinner ends in particular. If they look and feel the same as they did before washing, it's higher quality."

The hottest, newest market is among baby boomers with thinning hair. One-hundred percent human-hair easiVolume, a single piece that adds 2 ounces of thickness, was especially created for this market with the trends in mind, says Reynolds. It's undetectable, safe and secure.

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Anytime a commodity becomes a high fashion item, mid-range quality improves, prices decrease and broad availability creates convenience. From hair color to artificial nails, this trio of factors has created a perfect storm for volume sales. In turn, the path to the masses opens up niches—from quick and easy to high end, exclusive.

HAIR'S WHAT'S NEW

While synthetic-fiber goods dominate unit sales, the human-hair category is gaining momentum, according to Paul Reynolds, vice president at Jon Renau in Vista, California, the supplier of easihair. Getting quality human hair can be a challenge, he states, but if the item is easy to attach and a woman can find a great color match, she'll buy it. Consumers are also becoming savvy about words like "Remy," the name for natural hair with all the cuticles moving in the same direction.

"To determine if you have quality Remy hair or not, wash it," advises Reynolds. "Some manufacturers coat their hair with silicone, which makes hair feel soft. But the silicone washes off. Once you wash the hair, check

Consumers who aren't ready for the cost and care commitment of human hair are opting for synthetic pieces in all their varieties. In the past few years, synthetic-fiber goods have improved considerably with heat-resistant styling flexibility, a more natural feel and life-like, blended colors.

"Today's heat-resistant fiber can be curled, flat ironed and blown dry, so it was only natural that we integrated it into our own styles and add our own creativity," states Chris Prior, president of TressAllure, based in Miami Lakes, Florida.

The result is an addition to the company's ready-to-wear Alter Ego collection: a set of 10 16-inch synthetic extensions in a range of widths, which will meet the needs of any wearer. "We've also added a collection of heat-resistant synthetic wigs to our successful Alan Eaton designer line," says Prior.

"Busy lifestyles are making convenience paramount. It permeates every industry," adds Prior. "Women want to look great, while managing their time and changing from one look to another. Hair is fashion. It's a woman's crowning jewel."

New and Best Selling Hair Goods



LORD & CLIFF

Exuberant extensions are marketed as the only human-hair extensions with a keratin bond that's guaranteed to last. Exuberant's Remy hair is harvested from 15- to 30-year-olds (when the hair is at its peak health) and is processed slowly and gently to avoid damaging the cuticle and the hair's inner cortex. The keratin tips are made exclusively for the brand so when the specially designed fusion iron is used, the bonds can be attached quicker and fuse with the hair more completely. Call 877/753-4247 or visit lordandcliff.com.



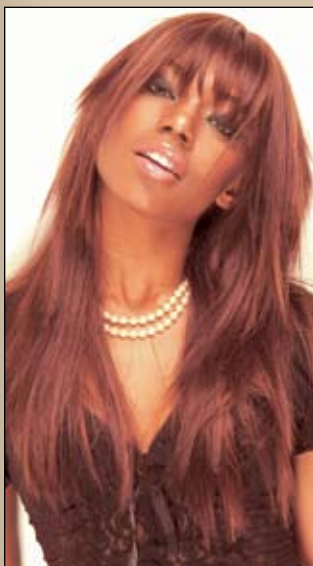
RENÉ OF PARIS

Having a current color selection is a must for selling hair goods, which is why René of Paris developed a unique, three-dimensional color system specifically for its High-Fashion Collection of synthetic wigs. The newest Fusion Shades include Coffee Latte, Creamy Toffee, Maple Sugar, Mochaccino and Vanilla Bean. Four new styles and two three-quarter add-on hairpieces have also been added to the collection. Known for professional, personalized service and first-rate products, René of Paris also offers training seminars in major cities. Call 800/353-7363 or visit reneofparis.com.



TRESSALLURE

The Alter Ego collection makes quick change without commitment a reality. Available in a wide selection of natural and dimensional shades, the 17-style collection includes clip-on hair wraps, stix, frames, claws and now long, luxurious extensions. Ten 16-inch clip-in extensions in a range of widths are included in each package, and the heat-resistant, synthetic extensions can be styled for a variety of personalized looks. At a suggested retail price of \$59.99, they're a luxury any woman can afford. Call 800/777-9447 or visit tressallure.com.



TROIKA INTERNATIONAL

The fashion-forward multicultural woman can make bad hair days a thing of the past with FLAUNT, a new line of soft, sexy wigs and three-quarter wigs. The synthetic wigs come in 10 styles with a selection of 30 to 40 dimensional colors available for each one. With names like Beauty Addiction, Polished Babe and Pretty in Curls, the line strongly appeals to the discerning consumer who demands the very latest looks at affordable prices. Call 800/787-6452 or visit troika-inc.com.

THE LONG AND THE SHORT OF IT

It's that importance of hair that leads to a woman's desire for different looks but a reluctance to make permanent changes and risk dissatisfaction with her new look. This is the reason for the phenomenal growth of temporary hair extensions. One future beneficiary could be the short wig. Noting that many famous names are beginning to wear short hair—a scary proposition when you're in the salon chair—Prior says short wigs could give women the temporary shorter look without a permanent commitment, which is why his company is adding ultra-fashionable short styles to its Revlon wig line.

The desire for change without commitment has also led to simplified attachment methods. The smaller, faster, safer, more comfortable and less visible the attachment system is, the better. And the idea of ease isn't for extensions only.

"Color and convenience are big factors in the ethnic wig market, but comfort, fit and naturalness are also key," explains Steve Perchick, chairman of Amekor Industries in Conshohocken, Pennsylvania, the supplier of Beverly Johnson wigs. "We put a lot of research into comfort and fit and now offer the Pure Stretch Cap, a product for which we've applied for a patent."

The cap's innovation is in elasticity through the entire perimeter, according to Perchick. This makes it a more accurate and comfortable fit for most wearers, while also allowing a great fit for those who have larger-than-normal heads. With so many manufacturers offering quality, versatile hair goods, what can make your beauty store's offerings stand out? A wide selection of styles, cherry-picked for your specific market.

At Troika International in Duarte, California, Theresa Chu, who heads up marketing and merchandising, says trends in ethnic wigs currently lean toward medium to long hair with soft spirals or S-waves in colors from strawberry blond to chocolate. Curls and natural looking color blends are crossover trends, but African-Americans also demand their own cutting-edge options.

"In our new FLAUNT line, we offer styles in tri-toned colors and a Mohawk piece called Killer Beauty," says Chu. "Pretty Punk is another Mohawk honeycomb attachment that can be worn forward or backward. When you're selling hair goods, it's important to have the latest styles for your market, as well as updated visuals and interactive displays."



SALES SUCCESS

If there's anything that attracts customers to hair goods and secures sales, it's a broad choice of colors and styles. Chu stresses that today's consumers want to touch, try and feel, making a service-oriented approach to selling a must. In-store demonstrations are just one great way to grab consumer interest.

"The best way to sell hair goods is to have store employees wear them," says Jon Renau's Reynolds. "We're big on education, which is also key to selling."

Like many companies, Hair U Wear offers a complete display system with posters, tri-fold pamphlets and other high-tech marketing tools. However, Reynolds says that many stores have moved away from DVDs because after a few days of repetition employees tend to tire of listening to them and turn them off.

The newest high-tech sales driver is the Internet, which now has its own equivalent of brick-and-mortar stores' Black Friday. Hair U Wear's Kleinman notes that in 2006 his company's website (hairuwear.com) got more than 207,000 hits that day. During the month of November, it got more than 1 million hits—tens of thousands that went directly to the retailer locator.

Stores with their own websites will benefit most from manufacturers' retailer locators because they'll be able to provide instant directions, prices and more. They'll also be best poised for the future changes that will no doubt come about in this exciting and lucrative product category. ■

Victoria Wurdinger is a freelance writer based in New York City. Many of her specialized beauty industry reports can be viewed at victoriawurdinger.com.