

Selfie Smarts

The designated selfie station is a growing trend that helps spas easily harness social media—by letting clients do the marketing for them.



There's no doubt about it: We're living in the age of the selfie. People are simply obsessed with taking pictures of themselves. Just head over to Instagram: The hashtag #selfie has over 340 million photos, while #me clocks in at a staggering 350 million-plus—numbers that jump by the tens of thousands daily.

Some savvy spas have caught wind of the immense marketing potential behind the phenomenon and have tapped into that power by creating “selfie stations” or “selfie walls.” These designated areas encourage guests to take pictures of themselves, then post those snaps to their favorite social media sites—ideally tagging the spa and using its unique hashtag, thus spreading the word about the business as organically as possible. “If people feel good at your place, they’ll want to take a selfie and share that

experience with their friends online,” says Mitra Silva, CEO of LA Healthcare Design, a Los Angeles-based firm that designs waiting rooms and selfie walls in healthcare and wellness facilities.

So far, spas that have employed selfie areas are enthusiastic about the results. “During our grand opening, tons of great pictures of our guests popped up all over social media,” enthuses Abbey Martini, marketing and salon manager for The Spa at River Ridge in Dublin, Ohio, which opened its doors in 2015 with its selfie wall prominently displayed. “Since then, we’ve seen popular local bloggers snap a shot to commemorate their day, tons of super cute kid pictures, and a really special photo of two dads who brought their daughters in for manicures and blowouts before a daddy-daughter dance.” Ready to capitalize on this simple social media marketing trend? Here are six keys to selfie station success.

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Set an Intention

Before all else, establish your goals. “Are you looking to improve brand awareness or to show off your work, or both?” asks Alexis Ufland, principal of spa consultancy firm Lexi Design in New York City. She notes that understanding your intentions will affect the wall’s design—an integral factor to its success. “If you’re simply seeking brand awareness, create an area the clients will want to post in front of,” she advises. For example, Truth + Beauty Medspa in Roslyn Heights, New York, has a large, brightly lit logo that’s become the perfect spot for a photo-op. On the other hand, if you intend to showcase the spa’s services, the designated area should enhance how your guests look with the best possible lighting and setting.

Understanding your goals is also essential for incorporating the photo area into your marketing strategy. For example, to bring attention to the spa’s glowing-skin treatments, you could designate a “Healthy Skin Month,” create a corresponding hashtag like #[SpaName]HealthyGlow, and encourage clients feeling good about their post-treatment complexion to take a selfie in front of the wall. “You can easily get a temporary sign with the hashtag of the month and hang it there,” notes Silva. “That allows you to change it at will.”

Show Your Passion

Like everything in your spa, your selfie station should reflect your brand—and that can mean more than featuring your logo or color palette on the backdrop. “Make sure your passion comes through in your design,” says Silva. “Think about the core story you want to communicate.” For instance, a spa with an emphasis on organic skin care could work elements of nature into the wall’s background. “Fresh flowers are a huge sign of passion in a wellness space,” opines Silva. Another option, Ufland suggests, is designing a wall with an inspirational or humorous quote tailored to the spa’s central message as part of the backdrop.

Have Fun

A selfie space should be something that snags guests’ attention, even if no one points it out to them. “It’s important to create a visual experience that naturally invites clients to take a selfie,” says Mark Hennings, CEO of Simple Booth, a photo booth and selfie station platform in Austin, Texas. “Great visual experiences can be as simple as a colorful backdrop or unique mural, or as elaborate as a 3D set in which patrons can immerse themselves.” He notes that spa clients will likely enjoy taking photos in front of a water feature or a stone wall with a share-worthy, relaxing



BOTTOM LEFT: © GETTY IMAGES

message engraved on it. "Every detail adds to the experience," notes Hennings.

To draw guests in, Silva recommends naming the selfie wall. "You can call it something like the 'Love Me' wall or 'Hashtag Me!' Just get creative," she advises. "Then order a customized decal with the wall's name and make a frame with it." Christy Huggans, co-owner of The Strand Salon and Spa in Columbia, Missouri, opted for a more playful approach with her selfie station, which has been part of the spa since 2015. "We made it fun by adding silly props: goofy glasses, mustaches, chalkboard signs and holiday-specific items," she says.

Pinterest provides a variety of ideas for creating a chalkboard selfie wall. All it takes is some blackboard paint or a large mounted blackboard, and an artistic staff member or local art student to draw selfie frame designs ranging from seasonal themes to angel wings. You can even provide chalk and allow guests to create their own messages and images.



Hit the Spot

The location of your selfie station is key to ensuring that it gets noticed and used. "Waiting rooms and hallways are the best locations," says Silva. She points out that selfie walls in waiting areas allow guests to get familiar with their surroundings and engage in spa messaging, while a selfie station in a hallway can

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arouse curiosity and add an element of surprise. Just be careful that it doesn't block the flow of traffic, disrupt quiet areas, or annoy other clients who don't want to be in the background.

The Spa at River Ridge had a space that wasn't ideal for spa services, so that's where it set up its selfie wall. This turned out to be the perfect spot because clients walk past it on their

way to the salon. "We created an interesting step-and-repeat background with our logo that our guests enjoy and use—and that also spreads our brand," reports Martini.

Get the Light Right

Nobody's going to post a photo to social media unless they like the way they look. For this, proper lighting is essential. "Soft, diffused light is best for selfies," says Hennings. "Natural light is ideal, but try to avoid direct sunlight as it tends to be too harsh. You can get great soft lighting using a ring light or by setting up in an open area with lots of windows."

Give Them a Push

Even if you've created the perfect wall, some guests may need a little extra encouragement to take the picture *and* post it on social media. So sweeten the deal with a special gift. "Give clients a free sample or a small discount on their next purchase for posting, tagging or using the hashtag," advises Ufland. The Strand ran just such a promotion, offering a 10 percent discount on any retail product if clients shared a selfie. "The younger crowd was all about it!" says Huggans. "For those over about 40, it took a bit of coaxing." If you find that some guests are resistant to spa selfies, too, simply make that promo as irresistible as you dare! 🍷

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