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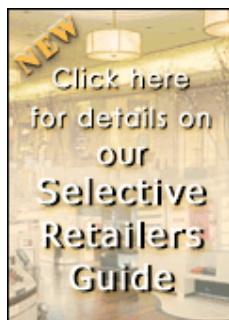
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Michael Edwards features fragrances by Coty Prestige



07/04/2005 - 653 words

Interview with Wilfrid Moulin (Metropolitan Cosmetics) Founder and managing director



Wilfrid Moulin has distributed the Make Up For Ever brand in South Africa since 1997. Last June, he branched out to niche retail by opening, together with wife and company ceo Melissa Brown, **Metropolitan Cosmetics**, an 88m2 store in the Hyde Park Corner mall in Johannesburg. BBN talks to Moulin about the reasons behind the success of this experiment and his plans to open new outlets with more exclusive brands.

You are preparing to open a second point-of-sale.

What can you tell us about it?

It will be located in the very upscale Sandton City shopping center in Johannesburg and will open on September 15 with a retail space of 115m2 [replacing the current Make Up For Ever store]. We are going to reduce the size of the fragrance section [which now occupies 60%] in order to divide the space in proportion to sales: 45% fragrances, 35% skincare and 20% makeup. We have learned many lessons [from the first experiment] and we now have a more precise fragrance strategy. We have discontinued brands like Thierry Mugler, Patou, Joop, Jil Sander, Stella McCartney, Nina Ricci, etc.

Why did you decide to cut those brands?

People come to us to find something different. We have stopped virtually all collaborations with local distributors in order to concentrate on brands for which we have exclusivity and that forge the identity of Metropolitan Cosmetics. We are focusing on brands with limited distribution and on cosmeceuticals.

The market here is still very static. For example, in skincare you mainly find Lancôme, Clinique, Lauder and Clarins. The biggest discoveries for me, coming from the world of makeup, have been Bergman Beauty Care and Talika.

Our very short-term goal is to carry only brands for which we have exclusivity in South Africa so that later we can open shop-in-shops in department stores, offering a unique portfolio of brands [see box].

Other than your portfolio, how do you make your store stand out?

We constantly put the accent on service, the Metropolitan Cosmetics experience with a 'Metro' atmosphere and a thorough knowledge of the products, with intelligent, consistent sampling. As far as we know, we are the only company operating in this way in South Africa and our return on sampling in skincare is over 60%! We also use our file of around 9,000 customer names to announce promotions by sms and we have a loyalty card called the Metro Passport [with about 1,400 cardholders].

What are your plans for future development?

It will all depend on the performance of the Sandton store. While our first outlet had nearly no competition at all, the Sandton shopping center has four department stores with MAC and Bobbi Brown [spaces], two Red Square perfumeries [one in a department store and one in the mall], two pharmacies, etc. Our third door will open in February 2006 at the V&A Waterfront shopping center [in Cape Town]. It will be a Metropolitan [with a well-being concept] with makeup and skincare, and only Serge Lutens for fragrance. Then we should be able to open a fourth space in Pretoria.

Isn't there a risk that you will be bought out before then?

It is possible. If the concept works out, in five years we will need more capital to move forward.

What was your turnover in 2004 and what are your expectations for the future?

The turnover from June 2004 to June 2005 was about €513,000. With two stores, we are projecting about €1.8m for October 2005 to October 2006. For the following years, we are targeting 20%-25% growth, based on two stores.

Brands to be added to the Metropolitan Cosmetics range



► **Fragrances:** Barbara Bui, Inès De La Fressange, Comme des Garçons, Parfums Serge Lutens, Le Petit Prince, Les Triples, Matthew Williamson

► **Skincare:** Dr Murad, Dr Brandt, Skin Ethics, Kenzoki (exclusive to Metropolitan), StriVectin, Hakansson, Durance en Provence, E-Shave, Aromapothecary, Hylexin

► **Makeup:** Era Classified Cosmetics

Source: Metropolitan Cosmetics

Fabienne Colin
Beauty Business News # 229

► **Interviews/Retailers/2005**



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