

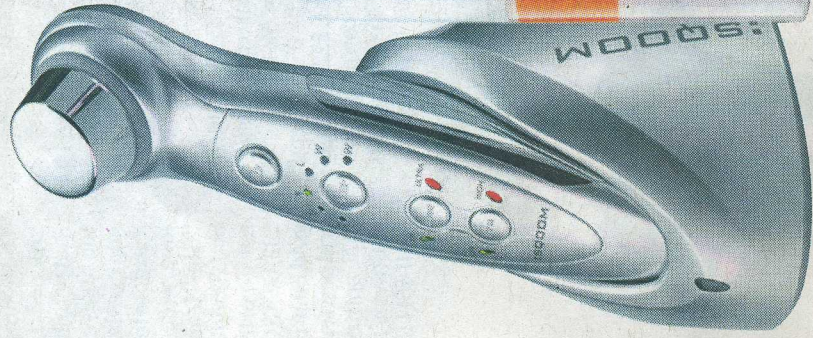
Perfector gadgets for your face



Rather like the sandwich toaster, home beauty devices have often been seen as gimmicky innovations: fun to use at first but all too quickly relegated to the back of the cupboard.

The past year, however, has seen a boom in at-home beauty technology led by electronic gadgets such as the Tua Tre'nd (favoured by Kate Moss), Slendertone's Female Face, and the Clarisonic cleanser. This last is the facial equivalent of the electric toothbrush, and the fastest-growing brand on QVC America, selling more than two million models.

This leap in technology has allowed women to enjoy the benefits of professional beauty machines at home for little more than the cost of the monthly salon facial. Sales for this market at Selfridges rose 27 per cent from 2009 to 2010 and double-digit growth was reported at Harrods. Jane Henderson, the president of Mintel's beauty division, valued the UK market at £110 million in 2009 and estimates that it will be worth around £125 million by 2012. Unsurprisingly, the recession has played its part. David Walker Smith, beauty director at Selfridges, has noticed that men and women have increasingly sought more cost-effective

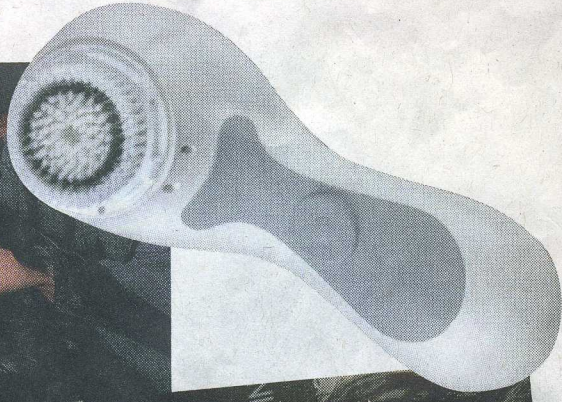
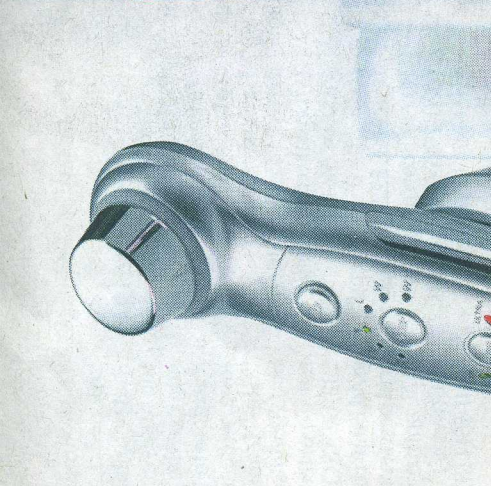


solutions. While these so-called "recessionista" gadgets vary in price — from £150 to £300 — they help families whose budgets are being squeezed. The backlash against Botox and invasive surgery to combat anti-ageing have also contributed to their popularity.

Celebrities who have opted for the convenience of the home "lift and tuck" or "deep cleanse" include Demi Moore, Cameron Diaz and Courtney Cox. Key to the success of these gadgets is that they work with a user's skincare regimen. It means customers don't need to ditch a favourite face cream, working instead to enhance the results. In the case of the Clarisonic, it has been clinically proved to remove six times more make-up than manual cleansing and subsequently applied skincare was 60 per cent more effective.

I was sceptical at first. Would I find the time to incorporate it into my increasingly low-maintenance skin routine. It was, however, surprisingly easy to work out and a definite plus was

The Squoom anti-ageing device costs £549; gadget fans Cameron Diaz, Demi Moore and Courtney Cox; and the Clarisonic cleanser, £155



that it could also be used in the shower. After a week I had to admit that my skin certainly looked brighter, felt cleaner and was very soft to the touch. Face creams and masks seemed to absorb better and my new radiance was often commented on.

But will the success of at-home beauty gadgetry spell the end of the salon facial? Mark Philips, a spokesman at Habia, the government-approved body that sets standards for the hair and beauty industry, says: "In terms of customers through the door, beauty salons have seen a decrease over the past two years. While people are still going for beauty treatments, the frequency has declined. People who may have visited monthly are now going every eight weeks; people who went eight times a year are going five or six times. With increased prices and pay freezes in 2011, it's likely that many customers will struggle to justify a visit to the beauty salon."

Others aren't so sure. Like many industry insiders, the cosmetic doctor

Patrick Bowler doesn't believe that the success of the products will inhibit the need to visit a spa. "The success of home technology only increases our awareness and desire for better skin. A lot of salon therapists might incorporate these gadgets into their treatments and a consumer is more likely to trust in their endorsement. You're taking skincare to another level and growing the industry as a whole."

The market looks set to grow with the launch this month at Harrods of the eagerly anticipated Squoom, an anti-ageing multi-tasker that cleanses, massages, lifts and brightens — although it is expensive at £549. While our Times2 guinea pig was impressed by skin that looked brighter, even feeling confident enough to go "foundation-free" after just three weeks, she couldn't reconcile herself to the 12-minute daily faff.

Sometimes, there's just no getting away from the pampering hands of an experienced facialist.

Carolyn Asme