

# Boots Smooth Skin by iPulse

## CASE STUDY

# Background

**Boots Smooth Skin by iPulse** is a revolutionary IPL beauty technology that permanently removes hair to provide silky smooth skin. The hair removal sector is one of the most crowded and competitive segments of the beauty market with brands offering solutions ranging from waxing, shaving, depilatory creams and epilating through to salon-based laser and Intense Pulsed Light (IPL).

IPL is one of the newest and most exciting beauty treatments, promising hair removal by using intense pulses of light to target the colour pigment (melanin) in the hair, to disable follicles and stop new growth. Boots Smooth Skin is the only clinically proven, safe and permanent IPL hair reduction system on the high street.

Consumers have always taken the recommendations from those they trust more seriously than the advertising and promotional messages of brands. But **Word of mouth** is no longer about opinions shared one-to-one. Social media – whether comments on forums and discussion groups, in Facebook posts or Tweets, or in ‘professional’ reviews by the media and beauty bloggers – is amplifying and accelerating the influence of consumers’ opinions. It has spawned the power of one-to-many and at the same time shifted the balance of power from the brand to the consumer.

But although social media has given consumers unprecedented capabilities to post and share their opinions about brands, this power of one-to-many also presents enormous opportunities for brands who can harness it effectively.

As a specialist in managing online conversations and helping brands build communities of online advocates, **InSocial** was tasked by Boots Smooth Skin to drive positive word of mouth and make it the most recommended brand in the category.

  
*Smooth Skin*  
intense pulsed light permanent hair reduction



# Social media strategy

We devised a strategy of direct engagement with third-party influencers and consumers around the issue of hair removal to educate and inform them about the benefits of IPL and Boots Smooth Skin. In tandem with this, we recommended, and created, a number of digital assets that Boots Smooth Skin could own, which would become the hub for conversations about the brand and beauty among the Boots Smooth Skin community.

To achieve a high level of advocacy among influencers and consumers, our strategy required understanding the real-time conversations taking place about the brand and the category, identifying and prioritising audiences and outreaching to them, 24/7. Our strategy was built on three main elements:

- Listening and Understanding
- Engagement
- Monitoring and Measuring (Impacts)



# Our approach

## **Tone of Voice**

The beauty market is littered with examples of brands that have over-promised about their effectiveness, and/or talked down to the audience. We decided that Boots Smooth Skin's communications needed to reinforce 'product truths' and speak directly to the audience in an engaging, confident tone of voice that would connect rationally and emotionally.

## **Audience Segmentation**

From tone of voice guidelines, we mapped real-time conversations taking place about the brand, competitors and the category to produce a detailed segmentation of the audience by its respect of influence. We carried this out in the UK, Spain, Australia and Hong Kong/China. From this audit, we identified two key advocate groups: leading beauty bloggers and media commentators; and active and vocal individuals interested in hair removal.

## **Listening**

Boots Smooth Skin now listens 24/7 to conversations in order to maintain an open and transparent dialogue with audiences, including tracking and responding to positive and negative sentiment. Listening takes places across all dominant social media platforms in the UK and Spain. It has a particular focus towards the perceptions of the top beauty bloggers, who have wide reach, influence and penetration in the digital space, and identifying consumers' issues and trends about the brand.



## Our approach

### Active Engagement

Outreach to the audience is carried out in targeted ways. Beauty bloggers are engaged by personal emails, tailored content for their blog, social media news releases, unique competitions for the readers and review units. We have generated thousands of comments and hundreds of specific reviews, which have been instrumental in influencing the audience about the product and ultimately, led to purchase decisions.

The UK's top bloggers have also had privileged access to new product development, helping to build long term relationships with the brand.

Facebook is the primary community hub for Boots Smooth Skin – the destination for advice and information, and for behind the scenes content.

Daily posts, competitions and unique content from the community manager keep conversations active on Facebook and provide an open and honest way for individuals to talk about the brand and share their experiences.

Twitter enables Boots Smooth Skin to generate instant buzz among a large and growing base of Followers. It's also a mechanic to stay in touch and share content created by influencers and the community.

YouTube is the third largest search engine. A dedicated YouTube channel provides a destination for professionally produced content and for the best content produced by the community.

### Monitoring and Measuring

We have used a range of consistent KPIs since day one to refine/adapt the programme, and to keep it moving forward by listening and responding to the opinions and interests of influencers and the community. We track all hard metrics around the programme, from the very basic such as Facebook fans and Twitter followers to brand equity data, including share of voice, levels of influence and engagement. Benchmark reporting also enables Boots Smooth Skin to track competitor activity as well as monitor conversations in real-time in blogs, on Twitter, across news websites and forums.



# Results

*“Within four weeks we saw the sales leap. We had record weeks, with sales through Boots.com on an all time high, including £40,000 of sales over a single weekend by carefully seeding the right messages in the right social media channels.*

*“Very rarely do campaigns dramatically exceed expectations, but InSocial delivered a sustained cost benefit ratio of 1 to 5 to the business, which is quite phenomenal.”*

Allisyn James, Director of Marketing & Innovation, CyDen (2009-2010).

- 56% of consumers decided to buy Boots Smooth Skin based on online recommendations
- Best Hair Removal Launch, Pure Beauty Awards
- The Brand with the most Positive Share of Voice versus all competitors
- Best Selling Product across the whole of Boots.com
- 1:5 return on social media investment



High performing brands depend on the opinions of informed and engaged individuals. We create and sustain online communities of advocates across social media, providing our clients with positive word-of-mouth, awareness and recommendation.

To harness the power of one-to-many, please contact Rafal at InSocial: [rafal@insocialmedia.co.uk](mailto:rafal@insocialmedia.co.uk)

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