

Behind the scenes of MZ Skin

BY MARYAM ZAMANI

Facial Aesthetics and Oculoplastic Surgeon **Maryam Zamani** takes us on her journey from the vision of creating a scientifically backed skincare range for women to the reality of her brand, MZ Skin, being launched onto the shelves of Harrods.



We live in a society where everyone wants to be beautiful. I have spent my time in private practice helping others achieve the best version of themselves, non-surgically and surgically. The need to appear youthful, attractive and desirable at all ages, is innate in our DNA and is the underlying reason patients come in to see me. Our skin reflects physical and emotional health and is greatly influenced by lifestyle choices such as diet, exercise, stress management and sleep. The desire is to look well, feel well, and live well. While there are a plethora of treatments that can be done, it all starts with the skin. Without a good foundation, that quest for restoration and balance cannot be properly attained or achieved.

In the journey into prevention, skin is the first line of attack against dermatological issues such as acne, rosacea,

hyperpigmentation, and other imperfections. Having a simple, manageable skincare regimen that works, is essential for producing excellent results. This is why I embarked on creating a scientifically backed, and clinically tested skincare line made by a woman for women. The idea was simple, to provide high-grade cosmeceutical skincare in synergistic combinations with a luxury feminine angle. A simple goal, with a not so simple path. The creation of MZ Skin has been an enjoyable, frustrating, nerve-racking, beautiful journey and a true labour of love. Here is a glimpse into my journey.

It all began in my bathroom and with a pharmacist that would help create my simple formulas. I loved the sensory experience of brands like Sheseido and Natura Bisse and combined them with prescription treatments. I tried doctor endorsed brands and found they were too

clinical in experience and would not keep me engaged for extended periods of time. So, I reverted back to the Sheseido and Natura Bisse brands of the world, combining them with my own prescription strength ingredients I created with the pharmacist. I gave these additions to family and friends who responded with great positivity. My husband then suggested that I create a small range exactly as I would like. That was my lightbulb moment – March 2014. But then I had no idea how to embark on such a journey. I knew what I wanted. I wanted to create a high performance skincare range rooted in medical science and coupled with women's desires and a beautiful sensory experience. I wanted it to be easy to use and practical. No need for excess steps. No need for travel sizes. No fuss. These were my goals.

I was fortunate and privileged to have wonderful mentors in various industries

who have supported me in this journey. I educated myself about the process. I needed an excellent formulator, one that could help create what I envisioned, to help with clinical trials, and to help with manufacturing. I met with dozens of formulators before I met the right one for my vision. I knew I wanted to manufacture in the UK because I wanted to be involved in the process, which would be easier to do if it were in the same country. Finding an excellent and reputable manufacturer that would produce small quantities was limited in the UK. I researched components and packaging. I went to trade shows to see what was out there. I endlessly went into department stores to see what successful brands had used. Simple decisions about whether to use glass or plastic, pump or jar, were suddenly not so simple. I endlessly quizzed friends and patients on what they liked about their range, the components they used, what they thought the pros and cons of various creams and components were. I had a vision of what I wanted to create, but I needed to find someone to help bring that identity to life. Typeface, colours, brand ethos all merged together. I always knew I wanted the packaging to be pink, feminine. Finding the person that could align with my vision was painstakingly difficult but hugely important in creating brand identity. I only found that person two years into this process. I began working on an e-commerce site. Again, there were challenges in determining what platform to use, search engine optimisation, google analytics and simple user friendliness. I searched for a PR company to help promote the range when the time was right, and I began looking for potential retail vendors. Little by little, things started to come together. I listened to anyone who had any advice to share with me, whether good or bad. I was fortunate to have the help of some strong and instrumental women who advised me and helped MZ Skin evolve into the strong skincare range I envisioned.

And then there were my share of setbacks. I did not realise when I embarked on this journey that creating the actual creams would be the easy part. The business plan and implementation was difficult as every step I mentioned above was new territory that I needed to teach myself. As this has been a self-funded project, I had to choose wisely and minimise expensive mistakes. For every aspect of development, I met and spoke to numerous people before I found 'the one' to incorporate into the MZ



Skin team. I knew I would be launching exclusively with Harrods and the date was set for September 2016. We were waiting for the visual mock up in mid February before giving the go on production, which had to be initiated by 15 March to make our Harrods deadline. But when I received the mock up, I was devastated. It was terrible and did not translate visually into what I had wanted or expected. I was under a strict time restraint in order to be able to deliver to my retailer on time. I could not let them down, but I could not give them a product I was not proud of in every way. Never afraid to work hard I, along with my dedicated brand guru, worked tirelessly every afternoon into the late evening after my clinic to re-brand. With a busy clinical practice and two small children, this was challenging but we persevered and the end result made it all worthwhile. Without a day to spare, we were successful in creating the visual to match the content. Production was initiated.

In the lead up to our exclusive Harrods launch, we worked to create a training

manual, imagery for the brand, engaged in social media and introduced the range to press. Our press launch was in June 2016 and the products were received brilliantly. Our launch was imminent. Then on 22 September 2016, I walked into Harrods with my stock in hand and stocked our newly minted MZ Skin stand in the apothecary room. As luck would have it, we sold out and the next day we already had a new order.

It has been an exciting expansion since then into other retailers and each day is different, with new obstacles that need to be addressed. As exciting as that is, it is with a bit of trepidation. Every new expansion means a new system and set up. That also means more funding. Juggling a vision while maintaining a financially viable entity can be challenging at times. Fortunately, I am a glass half full person, and I believe that persistence, hard work, and a little bit of luck can go a long way. Often people ask me why I would embark on such a journey as there are so many different skincare ranges out there, that surely the world does not need another. My reply is simple, there is always room for one more if you believe in your product. I am hugely appreciative of all the individuals that have helped me along the way, and could not have done it without them. I have learned to ask for help and have been surprised by the good will of others who have embarked in their own pursuits. I hope that I too can play a part in the journey of others. Tenacity, perseverance, dedication, hope and a little bit of luck can go a long way in the pursuit of our visions and dreams.

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