



Breaking NEW GROUND

With cannabidiol's soaring popularity, many spas are now incorporating the ingredient into their business as a 360-degree wellness offering. From drinks to themed rooms, **Amanda Pauley** explores how you can add CBD touch points to every part of the customer journey

Cannabidiol (CBD oil) has come a long way since it first made its appearance in the beauty industry. Originally thought to be a wellness buzzword – a fad many believed would fade out – CBD has gone from strength to strength, earning the reputation as a calming and soothing ingredient that is bursting with anti-inflammatory and anti-ageing properties.

As such, more consumers are now turning to the naturally occurring constituent in the cannabis plant for help with a variety of skin issues, as well as stress and anxiety – not to be confused with tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), which is the psychoactive component in the plant that causes the sensation of getting high.

The market’s soaring numbers don’t lie either. The UK has become the world’s second-largest consumer cannabinoids market after the US, spending more on cannabis extracts domestically than vitamins B and C combined, according to ACI (The Association for the Cannabinoid Industry).

Meanwhile, research from Alphagreen, a marketplace for certified CBD products, has revealed that more than eight million Brits are now buying CBD products, spending £690 million in 2021 – more than double 2019 levels.

Creating a new kind of space

“CBD oil has seen huge growth and now many spas are offering it as a mainstream treatment option. With the future of social prescribing high on the agenda and the credibility of CBD’s benefits rising, I see it becoming more widely used... as consumer consciousness shifts to using more alternative therapies,” says Sarah Johnson, head of spa at Ridding Park, which won Professional Beauty’s Team of the Year 2021 award.

And it continues to make a splash. The Spa at Mandarin Oriental and The Langham hotel, both in London, have recently partnered with luxury CBD brand OTO to deliver CBD massage experiences, while CBD wellness and skincare brand La Rue Verte is the first line with significant levels of CBD to be Cibtac-accredited.

The most interesting part though is how spas are now using the ingredient to elevate their client experience, with a new wave incorporating it into their business as a 360-degree wellness offering – not just via a retail line. By putting CBD touchpoints at every point of the customer journey, this is helping many businesses to attract previously untapped demographics.

From CBD baths and drinks to themed hotel rooms, many UK beauty businesses are coming up with creative concepts to elevate cannabidiol’s impression with clients beyond simple product application and are seeing amazing results from it.

“Introducing CBD was an opportunity to enhance our **EXISTING MENU** and bring something new and exciting for our guests **TO EXPERIENCE**”

Finlay Anderson, InterContinental Hotel Group’s area spa and leisure director for UK and Professional Beauty’s Spa Leader of the Year 2021, is a great example of this innovative thinking. At Kimpton Blythswood Square in Glasgow, he is offering a range of CBD experiences in the spa using La Rue Verte that complement CBD services in the hotel’s bedrooms, such as CBD baths.

“CBD treatments have allowed us to create wellness packages in the spa and move away from just spa days to wellness days, which have brought an additional



Kimpton Blythswood Square’s La Chambre Verte bedroom

£5 to £7 yield on the package rates. I believe this gives guests a purpose to rebook for reasons other than pampering or indulgence,” explains Anderson.

As Anderson continued to research the benefits of CBD, he saw how it could be added to even more touch points in the spa and hotel journey. “Offering CBD treatments gave us a platform to be creative with wellness offerings – such as biophilia (the concept defined as the innate human instinct to connect with nature and other living beings), as well as CBD bedrooms, bath experiences, and health drinks,” he says.

“All this helped us drive increased revenue via treatment upgrades but, more than that, it allowed the team to help our guests in new ways that go above and beyond manual treatments. It gave us a unique offering to shout about.”

One of the most outstanding parts of

the concept is the hotel's La Chambre Verte bedroom – an immersive room experience that creates a multi-sensory experience combining the theory of biophilia with CBD rituals, meditation, and sound therapy.

Echoing the practice of forest bathing, the room is full of plants such as monstera and palm fronds to create a "green space" (known as biophilic design), while CBD therapies are available – from a cannabidiol bath ritual to CBD-infused cocktails to ingest.

The idea is that clients undertake a CBD treatment in spa and carry on the experience in the comfort of their room, aiding sleep quality while also cross-promoting both parts of the business. "(Not only has) this increased retail sales to bedrooms, but also the opportunity to drive in-room experiences when the spa is full as we would have historically turned away business," he adds.

Using CBD to ramp up existing services

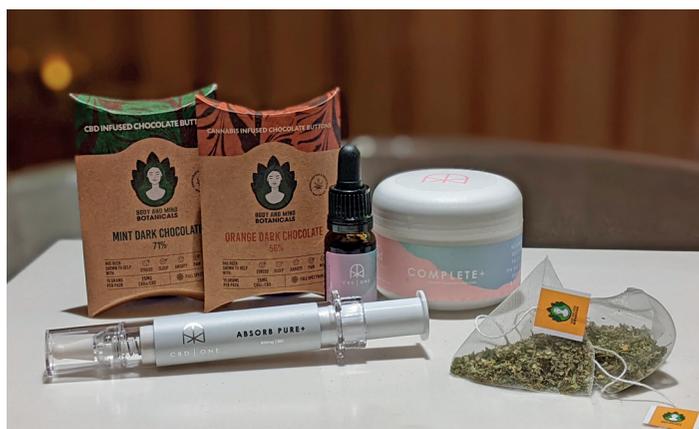
If you're a small operator who wants to offer CBD without having to put up a huge initial outlay, then take inspiration from PB Award-winning Rudding Park in Harrogate. The spa was one of the first in the UK to introduce CBD, enhancing its menu with a CBD Experience bolt-on that can be added to any of its existing treatments for just £20.

"We didn't want to have a full skincare range and treatment menu dedicated to CBD but rather to offer choice to our guests through our existing menu and our partnership with Elemis, so that's why we created the 'supplement'," explains Johnson.

"Elemis was happy for us to do this bolt-on to its protocols, and it meant we didn't need to hold or invest in large amounts of extra stock or take our therapists out of the business for lengthy periods of hands-on training to introduce something innovative."

The CBD Experience includes hot towels and a foot cleanse using a CBD-infused oil; a drop of tincture under the tongue pre-treatment, and hemp tea and CBD chocolates in mint or orange flavours at the end. The spa has collaborated with product supplier CBD One.

"We also offer a wellness bath ritual in our copper bath and have previously added a CBD experience to some of our more relaxed corporate meeting and event bookings. Introducing CBD was an opportunity to enhance our existing menu and bring something new for our guests to experience," she adds.



CBD at Rudding Park

The next-generation retreat

Meanwhile, others are investing in much grander experiences. Nàdarra Spa situated on the Coniston Hotel Country Estate in the Yorkshire Dales, which won Professional Beauty's Boutique Spa of the Year 2021 award, has partnered with CBD brand OTO to offer products and treatments, from CBD oil used in holistic services – think bamboo massage techniques and crystal healing, to CBD cocktails and mocktails.



CBD treatment at Nàdarra Spa

"CBD in relation to wellness has received lots of positive coverage recently, which has definitely impacted us, with our client base keen to find out more and a number of guests purposefully visiting our spa because of our CBD treatments," says spa general manager Daniel Core. "As awareness continues to grow around CBD, we believe the interest and intrigue around CBD spa experiences will too."

However, the spa operation is evolving its offering even further by launching a bespoke OTO Facial this spring and a brand-new two-day CBD wellness break in March. The OTO Retreat: The Power of CBD will incorporate sunrise yoga, sound meditation and sound baths, as well as an introduction to CBD talk, CBD massage experience, OTO goodies and more. The aim is to strengthen the brand partnership as well as help clients find balance.

Core adds: "OTO products have also extended into our food and beverage offering, with OTO Seltzers, Boosters and Bitters on our menu. These enable guests to have an immersive experience, and allow us to get creative, crafting CBD cocktails and mocktails for those wanting to treat their taste buds, as well as their body and mind."

FINDING YOUR PERFECT PARTNER

When looking to offer CBD beauty services, finding a reputable brand partner is key. We reveal how to choose the right product house and the key considerations to undertake



1 *Do thorough research*

"I spent my time choosing the right partner. I wanted someone with a CBD background who understood the mechanisms of CBD and ensured their product was independently tested for strength and efficacy. Checking that the company manufactured their own CBD and had the lab facilities to do this was really key," says Anderson.

"Further to this, independent studies on the products and quality controls needed to be in place so I could fully trust the brand partner. For example, strength for oral tincture really has to start at 5% (500mg in a 10ml bottle) as anything below that will not carry enough CBD to have any real benefit."

3 *Try before you buy*

"Sampling the products first-hand was an absolute given. However, when trialling the ranges, I ensured that it wasn't just our spa team that got to test out the products. It was important that the wider hotel team enjoyed the experiences and believed in the brand, so I had representatives from all over our estate feed back their thoughts," says Core. "We also made sure we researched brands fully – credentials, strength and sustainability – and even called on our industry friends to share their thoughts about brands."

5 *Adjust your retail strategy*

"Work with a partner who has a good range of retail lines, including some at the lower end of the price scale as many people will still be 'taking a chance' on CBD. I advise having smaller-sized CBD lines, samples, or bath bombs that they can try without making a huge commitment. Clients will love it and return for the full-sized products later," adds Anderson.

2 *Run the idea by your team*

"Further consideration should be given to how comfortable your spa team will be working closely with CBD. While it is used topically in problem areas of tension, absorption differs to ingestion or if it is taken sublingually. Your therapists already work with many other essential oils, so adding another dimension can be daunting," explains Johnson. "There needs to be an education piece for your therapists around the safety of CBD's use. Some of my team were not comfortable working with it, and that's OK."

4 *Think about your current offering*

"Evaluate what you're trying to achieve and ensure your guest type, team and any existing product houses you work with will be open to you using CBD products," says Johnson. "Educating guests and your therapists in the uses and benefits of CBD is crucial, and always remember it's a supplement not a medical treatment – we should never prescribe. Each guest's tolerance differs and if they are new to CBD then they should start with a low dose and increase slowly."