

# Bunch of Hosiers

**How have women managed to maintain a monopoly on pantyhose all these years?**

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By Nichole L. Torres

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NOTE: At the time of this writing, ActivSkin was being sold under the brand name Comfilon.

Some things are as easy to market as ice water in hell. But pantyhose for men? It doesn't get any tougher. Just ask Steven Katz and Constance Barsky, owners of G. Lieberman & Sons and designers of the ComfiLon line of pantyhose made specifically for men.

As their hosiery business experienced decreasing sales from women, Katz, 53, and Barsky, 57, noticed the emergence of a surprising market: men buying pantyhose. And we're not just talking guys with a fetish—many were simply seeking a comfortable alternative to socks. Men who stood all day liked the circulation benefits; cold-climate dwellers liked having a sleeker option to bulky thermals. Finding no man-specific pantyhose designs on the market, this husband and wife team stepped in to offer a better fit and attracted an online customer base who've bought tens of thousands of pairs.

Moving beyond this core consumer to a broader market is the new challenge. "We knew upfront this would be a difficult product to sell," says Katz.

Ralph A. Oliva, executive director for the Institute of the Study of Business Markets at Penn State University, notes some common marketing tactics for tough markets. "Segmentation, targeting, positioning—the more you're coming up with a new idea, the more ferocious you have to be," he says.

Rather than selling to men in general, Oliva suggests targeting baby boomers interested in the improved circulation aspect, and changing the packaging or renaming the product to focus on its medical benefit. Targeting men in cold climates would also be effective. A sample tagline, according to Oliva: "Tired of the bulk of conventional thermal underwear? Keep warm and keep your edge with this product." It might be a stretch, but a smart marketer could definitely run with it.

## Contact Sources

### **ComfiLon Men's Legware**

(877) 587-2860, <http://www.comfilon.com>

### **Institute for the Study of Business Markets**

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