Cosmetics for men a booming market

By NAOKO FUJIMURA

Mitsuru Yonekawa, named one of Tokyo's most handsome men by a lifestyle magazine, has added a step to his morning grooming ritual to combat flaky skin.

"I try to look neat so I won't give a bad impression," said Yonekawa, one of 82 men featured in Hanako magazine last year. "My skin is losing moisture. I didn't need anything when I was in my 20s."

Japanese men are buying more cosmetics made specifically for them even as salaries fall, unemployment rises and the population shrinks. The largest market for beauty products. Sales of men's skin-care products jumped 17 percent to $196 million in 2008, compared with a 0.3 percent drop industriewide, according to the most recent trade ministry data.

Japan accounted for about 10 percent of the $333.7 billion global market for cosmetics and toiletries in 2008, London-based researcher Euromonitor said.

"There is a desire among men to look more beautiful," she said. Euromonitor forecasts that global sales of men's grooming products, including shaving lotions and hair care, will grow 12 percent to $29.3 billion between 2008 and 2013, with higher demand in emerging markets China and Brazil.

"More and more men are becoming feminized," said Koichi Ogawa, chief economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute. "More and more men from their teens to their 30s are making a fashion statement." Otsuka, known for its Pocari Sweat sports drink and Cronamolin C energy drink, entered the men's skin-care market in September 2008 with UL-OS, pronounced "uruosu," Japanese for "moisturize."

The closely held company hired Keisuke Kuwata, 53, for the best-selling Southern All Stars band, to promote its products to his generation. "We aim to lure the middle-aged men who aren't used to skin-care products," spokesman Tadashi Kirai said. "There is more potential for the men's skin-care market because more than two-thirds of men have never done any care."

Rohto Pharmaceutical Co. introduced Cream-in-Lotion Vital Tank under the Oxy brand last year, saying research showed that men's skin is more oily and acne-prone than women's. Kao Corp. added Body Milk lotion to its Nivea for Men brand.

"A skin lotion is a must item for me to keep my skin moist," Kobayashi said. "My wife buys it for me when she buys hers."

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