

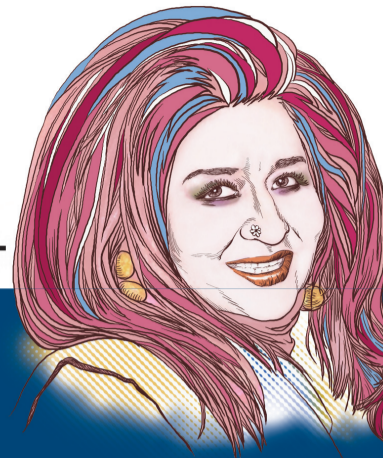
## PREMIER'S VISITS

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# From macho to metro

A NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG MEN ARE DEFYING CULTURAL STIGMA TO TURN THEIR EYES TO PERSONAL CARE

By **JENNIFER LO** in Hong Kong  
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**S**hum Pak-hin, 21, has long been interested in his mother's face cream, which conceals uneven skin tones and blemishes. He pampers his skin with three whitening essences and brightens his eyes with liquid eyeliners.

A marketing officer and a beauty blogger from Hong Kong, Shum recalls that a few days before his graduation party, he went alone to a cosmetic counter for some last-minute aid to cover up his spots.

"The saleswoman gave me an astonished look," he says. "I'm grateful she didn't turn away but taught me patiently how to do it."

Shum is among a new generation of white-collar young men who are defying cultural stigma and turning their eyes to grooming. The trend of men pampering themselves is fast emerging.

A glance at sales figures and the number of new cosmetic products and therapies hitting beauty parlors and counters across the region provides a wider picture.

By 2016, Asia Pacific is poised to be the second largest contributor to growth in the world's male grooming market — just after Latin America.

In China alone, the men's personal care market reached \$269 million in 2010, overtaking North America's \$227 million, according to market data firm Euromonitor. The global men's market is worth \$33 billion.

China's male grooming market has been growing by 29 percent since 2009, far outstripping the 6 percent growth in North America and 8 percent in Europe. A different survey shows the Chinese market is expected

to be worth \$1.63 billion by 2014.

This is a largely untapped area fueled by an extended concept of male grooming — far beyond the basics: Shampoos, deodorants and shaving products. More businesses are venturing into new frontiers of products for men, such as anti-aging formulae and whitening, makeup and cosmetic therapies.

South Korea is the region's unquestioned trendsetter in this regard. Its 19 million male population spent a record \$500 million on grooming products in 2011, accounting for one-fifth of global sales.

Korean celebrities are no strangers to gender-bending makeup. The popular boy band, Big Bang, are known to wear heavy smoky eye makeup. The band's leader G-Dragon daringly uses a red lipstick. Super Junior's Lee

Tuek is known for his manicured, flowery boy look with fair, flawless skin.

"For sure, we are seeing a different, feminine type of Asian male around: They wear jewelry, eyeliner or ponytails," says Katrien Jacobs, professor of cultural studies with the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

"This is the message they are spreading: They want to be a little bit different. They don't want to be the traditional male," she adds.

This image of men is not new. As far back as the Greek civilization and in 18th-century Europe, men wore perfumes and powdered their cheeks. Ancient Egyptian men applied eye color using crushed ants' eggs.

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#### Male pride and groom

Looking smart and looking the part is as important as being diligent at work, many men are discovering these days. Men are making a beeline to buy products that until recently were women's exclusive domain. A revolution of sorts is underway in the beauty industry.

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## CoverStory

# The cutting edge of allure

GROWING POPULARITY OF MALE COSMETIC SURGERIES GIVES NEW JAB OF LIFE TO THE ASIAN MARKET

By JENNIFER LO in Hong Kong  
Jennifer@chinadailyhk.com

Cosmetic surgeries aren't just for celebrities and women. Increasing numbers of Asian men are willing to go under the knife, needle and laser for better and younger looks.

Shum Pak-hin, 21, admits his face has been a "testing ground" for myriads of cosmetic treatments: From Botox for a slimmer face to injections that give him triple effects of moisturizing and whitening and anti-aging.

"If a facial cream can really give you that v-shaped slimming effect, all cosmetic clinics will simply shut down," says the beauty blogger, better known as "Ah Fung" to his audience.

Ah Fung especially enjoys the immediate impact on him — his face becoming much fuller and his wrinkles disappearing after one week. "It's a new love for guys."

This is just part of a wider norm emerging in Asia. The sweeping wave of Abs-fests and male beauty pageants across the region are showing to men how the controversial concept of "artificial beauty" is starting to gain acceptance.

Therapies for men are now spanning from traditional facelifts and nose jobs to all kind of therapies you can imagine — eye-bag reductions, eyelid surgery, hair transplant, muscle implants and fat transfers to the forehead to remove wrinkles.

In Asia, a whopping 4.3 million lifts, peels, implants and tucks were performed in 2011.

South Korea is best known for its lucrative cosmetic surgery business — with over 400 cosmetic surgery hospitals and 1,800 plastic surgeons.

Other parts of the region are fast catching up. Plastic surgery on the Chinese mainland was a 300 billion yuan (\$4.8 billion) industry in 2010.

The country ranks third in the world for its 1 million surgeries performed in 2011, followed by Japan, South Korea and India, according to the International Society of Aesthetic Plastic Surgery (ISAPS).

Over the last couple of years, Sloane Clinic — a chain provider of aesthetic services with six branches across Singapore and Malaysia — witnessed a boom in the male plastic surgery market.

"(The) male market will be the next frontier for most beauty related companies," says Dr Low Chai-ling, the clinic's medical director. "While the female market has almost reached saturation point, the male aesthetics market ... is one area of focus that will prove rewarding."

Compared to a decade ago when



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Popular aesthetic treatments for men provided by clinics include smoothing out acne scars, reducing abdominal fat and applying Botox to facial lines.

only 10-15 percent of its surgery patients were male, today at least a quarter are men. Single bachelors between 30 to 45 and PMEBS — professionals, managers, executives and businessmen — are most receptive to cosmetic therapies.

Few would forget former South Korean president Roh Moo-hyun's move to undergo double eyelid surgery in 2005 during his term in office. The presidential team explained how the procedure would improve Roh's eyesight by reducing the obstruction of his sagging eyelids.

The diminishing stigma associated with male grooming has given the industry a strong push.

"In the past, beauty services for men may have seemed taboo or even frivolous," says Dr Low.

### Acceptable norm

"Now male grooming is a very acceptable norm in our society, with male Korean celebrities driving the trend with their manicured, androgynous looks."

Dermatologists and plastic surgeons too observe a change in men's demand for cosmetic therapies. In the past, men sought treatments for basic issues, such as lasers for tattoo removal or creams for allergies or rashes.

Today, the most popular treatments for men at the various Sloane Clinic centers include a restoring laser to smoothen out acne scars, cool-sculpting for the reduction of



LILLY WANG / CHINA DAILY ASIA WEEKLY

Student Kenneth Ma (left), and freelance makeup artist Taki Lo both have reservations about the consequences associated with cosmetic surgery.

abdominal fat and Botox treatment of facial lines.

Bolder ones with deeper pockets opt for fundamental changes to their body figures through surgeries. For example, liposuction can help shrink beer bellies and transfer excessive fat to create an ideal rippled torso or six-pack abs overnight.

This coincides with the ISAPS survey showing liposuction as the leading invasive procedure in Asia. Rhinoplasties, or nose jobs, remain the top five procedures performed in China, Japan and South Korea.

Nevertheless, gentler therapies — those that leave less obvious traces than transforming surgeries — are still more sought-after by men.

Botox is almost a standard dish on the menu. It is regarded as "less invasive" alongside with filler, a kind of "boob jab" injection of filler gel for women's breasts, or nowadays, men's chests.

Other examples of non-invasive treatments for men include chemical peels and hair laser therapies.

New Zealand men spent more than \$22 million on such injections and dermal fillers in 2011 — almost a 20 percent spike from the previous year, according to New Zealand College of Appearance Medicine.

A charming point of these non-invasive treatments is that they promise instant effects that hours of gym time are unlikely to achieve.

A downside, however, means they are not long-lasting and require constant maintenance.

"Males tend to prefer treatments with little or no downtime as most men are working, so non-invasive type treatments are most attractive to them," Dr Low explains.

Despite their growing popularity, not everybody is ready to embrace cosmetic treatments. Ah Fung recalls his relatives' reaction upon his first injection: "They called it insane and crazy, and asked: 'Are you not afraid of dying?'"

### Ideals of beauty

"Society is in a dilemma," he says. "On one end, they want to benefit from the new technology. On the other, they want to uphold the mentality that men are men. They should never put on makeup. Nor should they get any aesthetic injections."

The Asian ideal of beauty, rather than being the mere pursuit of perfect appearance, is almost inseparable from a more practical cause — career advancement.

Younger males often regard cosmetic therapies as an affordable investment to enhance one's chances of success in the highly competitive job market.

While a box of skincare costs around \$30, the price of cosmetic therapies is seen as affordable by many.

Non-invasion lasers, Botox and filler treatments range from \$400 to \$1,200, depending on the area of treatment. Cosmetic surgeries, such as nose jobs, are priced around \$4,000.

"Who doesn't want to look better? It's a realistic society," says Kenneth Ma, a student from Hong Kong who just turned 18. "If you are not physically charming enough, a polite way of phrasing it is 'you look natural'. Others simply say you look ugly behind your back."

Ma's only apprehension is down to the consequences associated with cosmetic surgery. "But if cosmetic surgeries come with no risks, I don't mind giving them a try."

Freelance makeup artist Taki Lo considers cosmetics as an alternative to plastic surgeries. "Makeup can give you almost the same effects although they are not permanent," he says. "Going under the knife should be the last resort."

To some, the psychological notion of being natural perhaps plays a part.

"I can still tell everybody proudly, I'm not artificial," says Mak Tung, owner of cosmetic academy MT Makeup, who is hesitant about undergoing aesthetic surgery.

"But it's harder to say that when I turn 50," he adds.

# CoverStory

## Cosmetics: Men face facts

### FROM PAGE 1

Today, a real man need not be as rough and tough as Indiana Jones. Soccer star David Beckham has redefined masculinity, modeling underwear with his waxed legs and clean chest.

It is no longer embarrassing for men to be called "metrosexual," a term coined to describe metropolitan men willing to spend on appearance and splurge on fashion.

For most commoners, the desire for an edge in the workplace is the real reason for paying attention to grooming. This notion seems to be supported by radical findings.

US economics professor Daniel S Hamermesh points out in his book, *Beauty Pays*, that the best-looking people will earn about 10 percent to 15 percent more every year than the ugliest.

Former British prime minister Tony Blair spent £1,800 (\$2,750) on cosmetics and makeup artists during his time in office — compared to just £195 by an average British woman on makeup and skincare over the same timeframe, as the media widely reported.

Miu Lou, general manager of Beauty Tech, a Hong Kong-based makeup academy, is seeing an increase in nervous job seekers looking for last-minute grooming service.

Standard service ranges from helping clients to trim facial hair to hiding excessive blushing with makeup.

"When over 100 candidates are competing for a job, your presentation and appearance are as important as your resume," Lou says. "Some of our clients simply want a promotion."

Nevertheless, to reach out to the average Joe, cosmetic sales and marketers say the rule of thumb is: Don't call it "makeup".

Male consumers are still squeamish about overtly feminine products with "bling bling" packaging and overwhelming advertising. Simplicity is the key.

This psychology largely stems from ordinary men's resistance to the emerging concept.

Chinese University's Jacobs is

intrigued by a peculiar form of "split personality" among Asian men.

"They want to do it but they don't want to admit it. They would rather have perfect skin without admitting they actually (use cosmetics)," she says.

A gender-fluid male image is yet to take root in Asia's bigger cities. The traditional gender role still has a part to play.

"A change in attitude has to be co-opted by the (prevailing) gender norm in society ... Overall, there is still a lot of patriarchal thinking in Asian societies," Jacobs adds.

On the business front, beauty firms avoid fragrances and colors in most cosmetics products for men. Others let their creative juices flow by packing men's items into cigar boxes crafted with simple black-and-blue color schemes.

The use of secretive makeup such as concealers and creams to cover up spots, blemishes and razor burn is gradually gaining popularity.

Skincare for men is more on the upswing. It includes products such as facial cleansers, moisturizers, toners and exfoliants.

"Men look for high-performance skincare that delivers results, just like women, but where they differ is that they want fast, easy-to-use and easy-to-understand products," says Stephane de la Faverie, senior vice-president and general manager with Lab Series, a luxury skincare brand for men by Estée Lauder.

"Another thing men look for is travel-ability. Men are traveling more and more on business these days and being able to take their products along is a key consideration," de la Faverie adds.

The brand's most popular product is an all-in-one face treatment that moisturizes, repairs damage and controls shine throughout the day in one go.

Taglines for male brands are crafted to ensure their psychological comfort. Lab Series' "High Tech. High Performance. Skincare for Men. Only." provides a clue.

"It's all about psychology," says Mak, owner of MT Makeup. "If a product is labeled as 'for men only', men (are) less embarrassed to use it."



**The saleswoman gave me an astonished look ... I'm grateful she didn't turn away."**

SHUM PAK-HIN,  
MARKETING OFFICER AND BLOGGER,  
ON HIS VISIT TO A COSMETIC COUNTER

While men's skincare appears to have a smaller market, it is the fastest growing sector in the beauty industry.

"We don't see this changing," says de la Faverie. "You can already see a huge shift, especially in Asia, where (some) men are no longer using their wives' or girlfriends' products — they have their own."

Makeup artist Ranson Lau recalls seeing a ludicrous cardboard shelf at a grooming counter a few years back. The limited range of for-men products meant everything was cramped on the temporary shelf without even being categorized.

"You'd find a cleanser, lotion, after-shave and deodorant on the same shelf, as each brand had only one or two products for men," he says. "It's perhaps getting a little bit (better) organized now."

Retailers are now flocking to create shopping spaces and hoping to put men at ease. Some carve out spaces dedicated to men's skincare products.

Today, what puts Shum at ease is that whenever he shops at beauty counters for men, he is surrounded by male customers and life-size billboards of handsome male celebrities.

"The best part is when you are in doubt, there is always a male sales (person) around," Shum adds.



**If a product is labeled as 'for men only', men (are) less embarrassed to use it."**

MAK TUNG,  
OWNER OF COSMETIC  
ACADEMY MT MAKEUP

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# Keeping up corporate appearances

MEN ARE NOT EXEMPT FROM FIRMS' IMAGE TRAINING PROGRAMS, WHICH INCLUDE STYLING AND GROOMING MAKEOVERS

By JENNIFER LO in Hong Kong  
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Some women envy the impeccable makeup and hairstyles of corporate-uniformed flight attendants or boutique sales staff. Others covet these employees' perks of attending free beauty workshops and consultations for styling and grooming.

Now, image consultants working with multinational companies want to make sure men are not excluded from this training.

Companies are increasingly seeing an ardent need to establish a good first impression on the business front. "A clean and smart image is always the first step to get people to acknowledge you and consider you fit for a role," Miu Lou, image director and general manager with Beauty Tech tells *China Daily Asia Weekly*.

The Hong Kong-based beauty academy provides corporate image training programs to clients ranging from Shangri-la Hotels to Nokia.

Image consultants are often hired by multinationals to project an appropriate and effective image for their given company. They identify the firm's vision and help to discover the best colors, uniforms, makeup and grooming skills for its staff.

A basic three-hour grooming session for 20 people costs around HK\$10,000 (\$1,290).

It's not unusual to see leading providers in the service sector willing to invest in staff image, for male as well as female employees.

All new male and female hires at InterContinental Hotels undergo grooming during their first three days of orientation. They are required to follow the hotel's grooming guidelines called the "New Look" — covering hair, hands and fingernails, facial appearance, uniform and accessories.

"Our staff are the most important part of the hotel experience," says James Koratzopoulos, area general manager of InterContinental Hotels in Shanghai. "We are the representatives of our hotel and the business

relies on our people to present its image."

Koratzopoulos says there is not a huge difference in the grooming training for male and female staff, although the emphasis on male staff is a "sharp and fresh look that fits them perfectly".

The hotel chain encourages male staff to pay more attention to the little daily details, such as applying hair gel, light cologne and moisturizer.

A training menu for men typically focuses on skincare and hygiene. The widespread belief is that if a man's skin condition is good, he is already looking smart.

"Male flight attendants don't tend to need makeup, unless they use a concealer for dark eye circles," says Ranson Lau, a makeup artist and tutor at Beauty Tech, saying partial makeup would suit most men who don't spend much time on grooming every day.

"To them, quick techniques are essential," he adds.

Facial hair trimming is next. Lou always recommends that male airline staff, including flight attendants and cabin crew, bring their shavers and razors on board.

Think about a 12-hour-plus flight to New York. "That's probably the only way to keep your good looks," she says.

It is not surprising that airlines such as Cathay Pacific have hired grooming personnel for frontline departments to ensure all staff adhere to styling and uniform standards and guidelines.

"For an airline industry, like any other service industry, uniform represents and projects the corporate brand and image," says a spokesperson with Cathay Pacific, a Hong Kong-based airline, adding that airlines nowadays are keen to invest in training staff to project the right image.

"(The company's image) covers from head to toe, including how a person carries himself and (the way he interacts) with others," she says. "Personal hygiene is also important



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Attendees at a Beauty Tech training course. The Hong Kong-based style academy specializes in providing corporate image training to high-profile clients.



LILLY WANG / CHINA DAILY ASIA WEEKLY  
Miu Lou, image director and general manager of Beauty Tech.

as flight attendants have close contact with passengers."

While makeup is sometimes unavoidable for male staff, image consultants tend to be cautious with their choice of words. "For men, we call it grooming, not makeup," Lou says.

The lighting of the workplace matters. As a corporate image consultant, Lou conducts site visits at various office locations from time to time.

She says the unflattering fluorescent lighting accentuates under-eye puffiness, and it's inevitable even for male staff to apply a concealer or foundation under dazzling lighting in purple or lime.

"Makeup for women can be a complete transformation because it's more acceptable that they use fake eyelashes," Lou says. "But it could look weird on men."

Corporate image building for male staff can be tricky, as men are often reluctant to participate in programs.

The hardest part about corporate male makeup is "it looks like you have done nothing at all, but you need to see the effect of makeup," Lau says.

Say for liquid eyeliners, an application too dense will make the appearance too feminine, he says. The same with applying foundation and pow-

## GROOMING GUIDE

Source: InterContinental Shanghai

### HAIR

- Must be clean, neat and tidy
- May not look wet and oily
- No unnatural colored hair
- No mixed coloring or highlights permitted
- Well combed, not loose
- Fringe must be above the eyebrows
- Extremes of any nature — in length, style or color — are generally discouraged, except when treated as part of outlet concept
- Short length not covering ears or collar
- Sideburns must be trimmed regularly and cut straight at the end
- Must not exceed half the length of the ear
- Not distracting or covering the face

### FACE

- Must be clean shaven at all times
- No beards, goatees or mustaches

### UNIFORM

- Must fit well
- Be well dressed
- Clean & spotless
- Jacket/blouse/shirt/cuffs buttoned
- Tie/bow tied/knotted
- Shirt/blouse tucked in
- Correct name tag in the right place

### NAILS

- Clean, short
- Nails should be manicured to same length no longer than fingertips
- Nail decals, jewels and airbrush designs are not permitted
- French manicure is not allowed

### ACCESSORIES

- No jewelry
- You are allowed a simple wedding band
- No brooches, bracelets, anklets or lip/nose/earrings
- Only one conventional metal watch or leather-strap watch can be worn
- The color of the leather strap must be black or dark brown
- The dial of the watch should be one color. Colorful and large ones are not allowed

### FEET

- Plain black shoes for men
- Skirts must always be worn with pantyhose for women, black and no runs/holes
- Shoes polished and in good condition

### OTHERS

- Use perfume or cologne in moderation
- Avoid garlic, onions and strong spicy smelling food before reporting for work
- No protruding nasal hair

der. "If the color contrast is too much from neck to face, you look like as if you are wearing a mask."

Looking ahead, men's grooming in the corporate world isn't something to be overlooked or dismissed.

"What you wear and how you present yourself reflects on your awareness of the world around you," says Beauty Tech's Lou.

Modern slim-fit suits worn by men are cut in a manner that hugs the body perfectly.

"If you're still wearing a suit that is rectangular in shape, how are you going to face a new generation of customers who are just in their 20s or 30s? At least you need to make sure the client isn't talking to an antique," she adds.