



A new skin care line called Kyoku For Men, which was inspired by the longevity of particular villagers in Japan, is making its U.S. debut this fall.

The London-based brand comprises six products and was first launched in the U.K. at Selfridges during the spring. It has gotten off to a quick start in the U.K. — with sales upward of \$250,000 so far according to industry sources.

Kyoku founder Asim Akhtar was inspired to create the line after travels to Japan. In particular, Akhtar visited a village two hours from Tokyo called Yuzuri Hara, which is known as the village of long life, he noted, because 10 percent of the village's population is more than 80 years old.

Akhtar, a medical doctor, attributes the villagers' longevity foremost to diet, which includes bamboo shoots and starchy potatoes, he said. But he also pointed to high levels of hyaluronic acid in villagers' skin due to treatment regimes that involve a range of plants, vegetables and herbs.

His aim was to compose a skin care line using the same active ingredients the villagers use.

"I asked, 'How can we mimic those effects in men's skin?'" said Akhtar, whose family has been in the private label cosmetics manufacturing sector for more than 30 years via Chicago-based RNA Corp. "We developed a delivery system for our [Kyoku] products that encapsulates all the active ingredients into micro-particles," said Akhtar. "The technology has been in our lab for 20 years," he added, "and we refined it and made it applicable for a male grooming range."

The technology is designed to allow active ingredients like ginseng and calendula flower extracts to reach fibroblasts in the skin. The aim is to help rebuild the skin's collagen structure, which is susceptible to UV damage.

One of the challenges, Akhtar noted, was getting through the thicker, more acidic skin men have as compared with women. Akhtar also wants to get through to men that being a little vain is OK. "Men are apprehensive in buying skin care due to a lack of knowledge about it," he said. "They have to get to a point where they accept the vanity of taking care of their skin."

Indeed, Akhtar, who called getting to this point an "epiphany," named the brand Kyoku because, he noted, it means "climax" in Japanese.

The product lineup includes the SPF 15 Facial Moisturizer, \$43 for 50 ml., which features bamboo and pea extracts, and Oil Control Lotion, which is also \$43 for 50 ml. The Razor Repair Balm, \$29 for 50 ml., combines aloe leaf juice and witch hazel with herbal extracts, while the Exfoliating Facial Scrub, \$19 for 100 ml., uses volcanic ash to exfoliate and Japanese rice bran to smooth and tone the skin.

Rounding out the line are Daily Face Cleanser, \$19 for 100 ml, with ginseng, peppermint and camellia seed extracts, and SPF 15 Lip Fuel, \$11 for 10 ml.

The line is scheduled to be launched this month in eight Harvey Nichols locations in the U.K. and on Harrods' Web site. In September, the line is to be launched at Liberty in London.

Initially, the U.S. launch will comprise a Web site, kyokuforamen.com. The aim is then to launch the brand into upscale specialty stores.

