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## Feature

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### The Mechanics of Good Skin

**FaceLube is a new line of skin care products geared for the average Joe who's more comfortable talking to his local mechanic than an aesthetician.**

**By Christine Esposito  
Associate Editor**

If only men would care about their skin like they do their cars, the men's skin care market would be booming.

Well, one new player in the skin care market, FaceLube USA, is putting a new twist on that very idea by offering a line that plays on men's love of all things automotive from its marketing to the packaging to its distribution plan.

In fact, recognizing that new companies face big challenges in the personal care marketplace, this premium line is taking the road less traveled. In addition to being sold online at its own website (facelube.com) and on amazon.com, the company has embarked a pilot program with Meineke Auto Care and Econo Lube & Tune in Northern and Southern California. Plus, the Los Angeles-based firm is in the process of bringing new car dealerships and regional tire centers on board as well.

To founder Candace Chen, it all makes perfect sense.

"The men's market is extremely competitive within the beauty industry's traditional distribution channel, because there simply isn't enough premium shelf and floor space to go around," said Chen, who spent 18 years in the automotive industry before embarking on FaceLube.

After nearly 20 years in the automotive industry building an aftermarket equipment company, Chen wanted to take a breather to pursue a personal passion in couture and beauty.

"Much to my surprise, when word got out that I've taken an interest to the beauty business, my male friends and colleagues started asking me for skin care advice," said Chen, noting that the "men in the automotive industry and my social circle are far from the typical metrosexual. In fact, they are about as masculine and meat and potatoes as they come."



Conversations with average Joes led to insights about "psychological barriers related to the social stigma around his adopting a skin care routine—generally considered a female ritual, the physical barriers related to the current retail environment – generally female centric, and the scarcity of men's skin care products that speak to his nature, rather than against it."

She created FaceLube, which is based in Los Angeles, "from the ground up to address these barriers."

Chen's automotive background is clearly evident throughout the line. For example, the FaceLube logo resembles a motor oil spot and the packaging has an overall industrial feel.

"The product design had to resonate with a man's nature and trigger a positive emotional response. So we decided to tap into a man's natural affinity to his ride with packaging that closely resembles car care products. Next, the content had to speak his language, so we used automotive descriptions, in lieu of traditional beauty terms and utilized 'car talk' to educate men about the need for proper skin care."

The secondary packaging was designed to work with FaceLube's unique distribution plan as well.

"The packaging needed to fit seamlessly into the automotive environment and not look out of place. And what could be more iconic of the automotive aftermarket than a motor oil bottle? We love it when customers who come across the FaceLube display in automotive locations do a double take," she said.

But there's more to FaceLube than revved-up packaging. The line utilizes a combination of "super botanicals – fruits and

plants with anti-aging properties, and cutting edge science-based anti-aging active ingredients to achieve realistic and sustainable results” Chen said, noting that FaceLube turned to select private label manufacturers for the formulations.

“We have to be highly selective about our manufacturing partners to make sure that we deliver top-notch products, because cutting corners is bad for cars and just as bad for skin care.”

According to Chen, user favorites include FaceLube Germany kit (\$245)—a three- step kit that comes with an organic, sulfate-free, rosewood and argon oil-based cleaner, a caviar-based/peptide-infused treatment, and a marine-based/peptide-infused protectant—and FaceLube Premium, another kit that comes with a sulfate-free, algae-based cleaner, a hyaluronic acid-based treatment and a protectant featuring Matrixyl 3000.

The range also includes FaceLube Natural Anti-Aging Sunscreen, which Chen notes has “garnered a nice cult following this year.” The SKU offers broad-spectrum protection with anti-aging properties and is approved by the Skin Cancer Foundation.

Chen is borrowing sales tactics from the auto industry too. FaceLube will be having a model year-end sale to entice men to test drive line, but rather than liquidating 2011 models, the firm will be selling all-new 2012 FaceLube Germany Kit at 50% off MSRP, according to Chen.

“It’d be like getting a BMW for the price of a Hyundai,” she quipped.

And while the automotive industry seems far removed from the beauty/HBA business, Chen’s business acumen is the fuel behind the brand.

For more than 15 years, Chen has been a small business advocate. She serves as an appointed trade policy advisor on small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to two Cabinet level government officials —the U.S. Secretary of Commerce and the U.S. Trade Representative. Chen was first appointed under the Clinton Administration, re-appointed under the Bush Administration, and is continuing her service in the Obama Administration.

### Traffic Report

Recognizing that new lines face big challenges in the personal care market, FaceLube has mapped out its future by is taking the road less traveled.

“The men’s market is extremely competitive within the beauty industry’s traditional distribution channel, because there simply isn’t enough premium shelf and floor space to go around.”

In addition, Chen says she’s found two fundamental problems with the men’s skin care market.

“One, male consumers did not embrace men’s skin care and anti-aging as expected, because of the social stigma and psychological barrier attached to men’s use of skin care products. Two, the beauty industry lacked the opportunity to educate men about the need for proper skin care routine, because men did not feel comfortable shopping at female-centric beauty retail venues,” she said.

Secondly, Chen disagrees with the beauty industry’s marketing approach to men.

“We believe that high-end men’s skin care products shouldn’t follow the same premise as women’s; that to perpetuate their upscale image, high-end men’s skin care should only be sold at department stores and major beauty retailers where the vast majority of men won’t even shop. We believe that these products should be readily available to men at retail locations where he is comfortable shopping,” she said.

And while the men’s market appears to be stuck in low gear, Chen sees potential down the road.

“Men are half of the population and the men’s market is big enough to accommodate everyone who sees the explosive potential of this segment,” she said. “There is no reason why the men’s market could not rival the women’s in revenue within a short time.”

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