

Publication:	SPC Asia
Issue/Date:	March 2009
Country:	UK

cosmoprof asia 2008 event report

A flexible future

The 13th edition of Cosmoprof Asia (12 - 14 November 2008) promised more beauty, more trends and more business, but did the show live up to expectations? Emma Reinhold reports

Faced with the prospect of a global recession and the inevitable slowdown in consumer spending, industry executives put on a show of determined optimism at Cosmoprof Asia. The atmosphere in the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre was undeniably more sober than in recent years and some exhibitors complained that the show seemed quieter, despite there actually being a 6.4% increase in visitor numbers to total 40,000, according to organisers SoGeCos and CMP Asia.

"The economic downturn is a problem and there is a lot of speculation about companies struggling, but people still have to do business and walking around I have seen a lot of meetings taking place," said Jessica Chor, marketing information manager, CPL Anomas (Far East).

"The Hong Kong show is the Asian fair for the cosmetics industry and Asia is a key market for us. We have a full diary of meetings for the three days – more than last year, so for us so far at least we are seeing the people who matter and business is continuing," added Anabella Ferrari, corporate strategic marketing director, Intercos.

But other industry insiders were more cautious. "We are waiting for the spring," said Adam Huang, vice general manager, Sheercolor. "Seeing will be believing. At the moment there is just speculation but the results will show what effect the global financial situation is having on our industry."

Cosmoprof Asia prides itself on being the cosmetics powerhouse of Asia and as such attracts exhibitors from across Asia as well as the wider world. The show brought together 1,357 exhibitors from 40 countries, up from 1,265 in 2007, and these included importers, distributors and hair and beauty salon owners, as well as packaging, spa and finished product manufacturers.

The international characteristic of Cosmoprof Asia was underlined by the presence of 17 country and group pavilions, which enabled small and medium sized brands to participate at the show. Pavilions

included Australia, mainland China, France, Germany, Spain, the UK, Israel, Japan, New Zealand, Korea, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan and the US. The event also marked the inaugural show for Switzerland, which profiled seven Swiss companies including the skin care brands Swiss Alpine Beauty, JV Cosmetics, Alpeur, Skin Concept and Elvacare.

"We have been very pleased with the impressive numbers that provide positive signs in the current challenging economic scenario," said Laura Zaccagnini, international affairs manager, SoGeCos.

"Cosmoprof Asia represents not only the premier beauty event in the Asia Pacific region for the established business, but also has become a strategic place to be at a time when the industry is questioning its future." SoGeCos ceo, Aureliana de Sanctis added: "We have to look at how we do business in a different way because the world around us has changed so much – we must adapt as it changes."

True to this, Cosmoprof Asia introduced several new initiatives to enable visitors and exhibitors to achieve the most from the show. A special focus was put on the packaging sector with the debut of the International BOD, Packaging and Full Service 'Business or Dinner', held at the prestigious Pierre restaurant. The selective event enabled Asia-based manufacturers of finished products to network with raw material, packaging and contract manufacturing suppliers and attracted 64 participants.

"This programme has been very successful throughout the Cosmoprof network and we will continue to try and suit the needs of our customers and visitors," said Zaccagnini.

In addition, the show featured a number of educational events including the *Spa and wellness beyond 2010* conference, which brought together some of Asia's leading spa experts to discuss how to develop the market. Other presentations included *Packaging and ingredients for personal care & cosmetics*, featuring Jonathan Cohen, global



Despite some concerns about visitor numbers and the economic climate, Cosmoprof Asia welcomed record numbers of exhibitors and visitors

marketing manager for cosmetic and personal care packaging at DuPont; *How to enter the Chinese cosmetics market – regulations and problems encountered*; and *The science of cellular winter*, a presentation by dermatologist Dr Howard Murad on how the loss of water in cells and connective tissue can induce ageing and disease.

The popular International Buyer Programme also returned for its second year, this time with a special focus on India, Japan and Australia. Buyer delegations from the three countries, covering all sectors of the beauty industry, attended the show looking for new business at the three-day event as well as participating in presentations which explained their buying criteria.

TAKING THE GREEN PATH

As in recent years, promoting an eco-friendly and safe green message was a major theme amongst exhibitors and in the packaging halls in particular, exhibitors were keen to put this message across.

FS Korea showcased two new cosmetic solutions – a new range of cosmetic brushes and an innovative sponge for personal care use. "We are a very environmentally focused company and as the trend moves more into environmental issues we hope to be able to

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meet our customers' needs," said sales manager, Brandy Baik. The new cosmetic brushes are manufactured with a wood plastic composite created from wood recovered from sawdust and each contains a seed in the handle, which can be planted. "The idea behind the brushes was to remind consumers about the environment – when the brush is finished with you can grow a tree," added Baik. Also new was a vegetable sponge material derived from the devil's tongue plant. The sponge, which is activated by water, is said to be soft enough for use on sensitive and baby's skin and helps remove dirt, whilst protecting moisture and sebaceous layers in the skin.

Contract manufacturer Sheencolor also focused on the green movement, introducing Be Organic, a comprehensive organic colour cosmetics range certified by Ecocert. The 13-sku line is said to be free of parabens, GMOs and synthetic colours and fragrances, and includes eye shadows, pressed powder, concealers, bronzers and blushes. The packaging is also said to be environmentally friendly and is manufactured from non toxic colours as well as being recyclable. The company is also looking at expanding into organic personal care.

"Our strength is still colour cosmetics but we want to give our customers the flexibility and choice," explained Huang. "Being able to offer something a little bit different is the key to success in the current market."

Alean Packaging Beauty also showcased its full service organic range alongside a plethora of other new packaging

developments. "We have had a good response from our Asian customers to our novelties and overall we are pleased with the show," said Isabelle Kaiffer, part of Alean's communication department.

Elsewhere on the show floor, the organic movement also dominated. Japanese skin care brand Aska unveiled three new organic ranges, all certified by biosagricert. The ultra premium Organic Grand Aska de Paris skin care line comprises five skus and is said to contain rare plant ingredients and mineral rich spring water from France. Organic Grand Aska de Spa Bretagne, a nine-sku spa range contains mineral rich seaweed, mud and seawater from the French region of Brittany, while Organic Marine 99.999 Fresh is a body and hair care line that features water from the foot of Mount Fuji in Japan.

"Organic is becoming more and more important to our customers and we are responding to their demands," explained Aska's Carmen Chu. "Japan is a pioneer in Asia and we expect other countries such as Korea, China and Taiwan to follow this trend as well."

Eko Wang, channel manager for distributor Great Empire Development agreed. "Organic is really growing in China – you can see how quickly the movement has grown. Consumers are becoming more educated on quality and Ecocert thanks to the press and in-store information."

UK brand Organic Apoteke continued its assault on Asia, launching a new sun care range and previewing an anti-cellulite treatment. "Asia is a very important market



for us and we are currently looking to expand our presence beyond the existing markets of Singapore, Hong Kong and Japan," said Nirasha Boleão, founder Organic Apoteke.

SERVICE INCLUDED

The wondrous flexibility, adaptability and originality seemed to take on a new meaning at the show with exhibitors keen to promote their commitment to their customers.

Contract manufacturer Hwa Sang prides itself on offering easy to use cosmetics and new additions to its range included an all-in-one blush and brush combination. The product can also be adapted for other cosmetics such as eye shadows. "Customers like our products because we are so innovative. Our customers are also unique so the two work well," explained Kim E.H, vp global sales and marketing. "Everyone is having problems at the moment but as long as you have a good product, you should be ok. Women still want to look good whatever the situation."

Flexibility was also a key word at Rexam, which debuted its stock make-up line, offering ten packaging lines for compacts, lipsticks, mascaras and pansticks. Each line can be customised with a range of different decorative technologies including metallization, lacquering, silk screening and hot stamping.

On the finished goods side, the sentiment was the same. "In this current climate you have to offer the customer something different," said Gabrielle Bomo, promotions executive, Napoleon Perdis. "We are already an established brand in many markets but we are looking for Asian distribution and you can't take anything for granted."

Cosmoprof Asia 2008 will be remembered for the feelings of anticipation over what the coming months hold for the beauty industry. Whatever the outcome, the industry gave a clear message that it intends to continue to face any financial difficulties with optimism. However, the true test will be which companies make it back next year. **CD**

Cosmoprof Asia 2009 runs 11-13 November
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