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July 03, 2012

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## Cosmetic Applicators Add Flair, Function and Value

**The synergistic coupling of formulation, applicator and delivery system is crucial for product success.**

**Written by Lisa Samalonis, Associate Editor**

When Murad developed its new Time Release Retinol Concentrate for Deep Wrinkles treatment, the company selected an elegantly tapered 0.5 fl oz. silver pearl tube. Created to pinpoint deep wrinkles with the retinol technology, the true star of this package is the tube's tip applicator (supplied by Worldwide Packaging LLC), which is made of a soft flexible silicone that has been enhanced with an antibacterial agent to discourage contamination.



Murad's Time Release Retinol Concentrate for Deep Wrinkles employs a tapered 0.5 fl oz. silver pearl tube with an applicator tip made of soft flexible silicone.

"Murad's Time Release Retinol Concentrate for Deep Wrinkles is a unique dispensing design system which makes this package the perfect complement to the product which it contains," explains Jeff Murad, VP of new product development. "The applicator's narrow dispensing pore allows precision targeted delivery directly into the wrinkle, while the tip's paddle shape allows for hands-free blending of the product into the skin without friction. The packaging eases the application and enhances the benefits of the precise and innovative formula it holds."

### **Synergistic Development**

"The applicator is as much a part of the product, as the ingredients in the product," says Jim Perry, president/CEO, of TaikiUSA. "The initial time a product is applied a judgment is formed about the actual product and its effectiveness. The applicator provides the second moment of truth—the consumer focuses on the entire application experience to fully evaluate the product."

As application specialists, TaikiUSA designs customized packages that work best with different products and formulas. One of the company's latest applicators, the Duo Sponge eliminates absorption. "It has a two-layer barrier that includes two different sponge types that prevent absorption—yet still provides a soft and luxurious feel," he says.

The well-matched combination of formulation, applicator and delivery system is crucial. Pilar Gonzalez-Gomez, vice president marketing, Geka Group, explains, "The packaging's mission is to attract the consumer's attention at the POS, but the applicator itself is the 'secret' that causes the consumer excitement



Albéa has several recent launches with innovative cosmetic applicators, including the Eureka with sponge applicator.



TaikiUSA's Duo Sponge eliminates absorption.

or disappointment, and thus increases the repurchasing rate of the product, or the frustration degree. In the end, the applicator makes the difference and is probably the most important element within the cosmetic product.”

Timing and consumer education are other important elements crucial to a brand’s success with an applicator. “We also see challenges when the applicator is developed separately from the product formulation and not included in the overall product budget. The packaging, formulation and applicator all have to work together seamlessly in order to have an effective product. We recommend developing these in conjunction as early as possible in the design phase,” explains Rachel Pickett, vice president, brand marketing and product development, at Anisa International Inc

“When we look at the development of applicators (as well as other brushes and tools), it is critical that we factor in consumer education as part of the packaging and overall marketing. Innovation without education leads to a less successful product launch if the inherent benefit isn’t as apparent to the consumer. We make sure that we support our clients with education, whether that’s educating their staff in person, video tutorials for the end consumer, printed tip cards or something similar,” says Pickett.

### Increasing Importance of Applicators

Applicators are garnering more attention, particularly in Europe where we are seeing more integrated packaging as part of the brand recommendation, says Pickett, who notes that cost constraints with brands are still continuing. “The brands are looking at these included applicators as a way to demonstrate value to the end consumer. However, it is sometimes challenging to prove out the specific ROI of the applicator or tool from the skin care or cosmetic product if it’s included.”

AuréliE Emond, Albéa’s creative marketing & innovation manager, also notes that in recent years, cosmetic applicators have been more and more prominent in international brands’ marketing campaign. “For foundation and mascara, we noticed an increase of communication and pedagogy from cosmetic brands. For example, what it brings, and how to use it,” she explains. “Technicality in the applicators and the gesture in application are key to obtaining an efficient result and it is the biggest factor of differentiation.”

Emond points out that there are two main challenges within this area. “First, creating applicators that are intuitive for consumers can be challenging. For us, it remains essential that women feel at ease with the pack and know how to use it instantly,” she says. “Second, it can be difficult to make mass market brands realize that they need to put some value/invest in the applicators to gain in quality and thus in makeup efficiency.”

### Next-Gen Designs

Albéa has several recent launches with innovative cosmetic applicators, including the Eureka line and Handle Puff. “The Eureka version with sponge applicator is brand new,” says Emond. The compact comes in a novel shape with a unique application method, especially designed for makeup for the complexion. In addition, the Eureka applicator provides ergonomic use, which facilitates daily application. The “handle” has an easy and practical grip, and is ideal for recreating the tapping technique used by professional makeup artists to even out skin tone, Emond notes.

Albéa’s Handle Puff is a compact with a fully original sponge applicator equipped with an ergonomic handle. It offers more hygienic and comfortable use than a classic sponge and, thanks to its handle, fingers do not have direct contact with the sponge. This grip offers many other advantages such as the use of the entire surface of the sponge, meaning that powder is taken evenly and the compact remains clean, Emond adds. This concept can also be customized to client specifications.

The Sephora Brush Wand from Anisa is another innovative and popular applicator/tool, which is used to create multiple eye looks in a stackable magnetic brush wand. It also is a finalist in this year’s HBA International Package Design Awards (for more on the IPDAs, please see page 52 in this issue). The company also has a series of brushes that have interchangeable magnetic heads that allow for portability. “Examples in the market include the Shopper’s Drug Mart Quo Holiday Set and the Japoneseque Artistry set for CVS,” says Pickett.

Additionally, the company is exploring the use of other materials in applicators and tools, including its Silicone Collection and Sponge Collection “We see these as an effective supplement to traditional brushes and applicators that can deliver a unique performance. For example, with the use of silicone, a product will not absorb into the applicator and will not heat up (and potentially lose efficacy) because it’s not touched by the hands,” says Pickett.

### Multi-tasking Applications

Denis Richard-Orliange, general manager of Cosmogen, notes that consumers now are expecting integrated solutions that facilitate the use of care and makeup formulas. “They request efficient,



Anisa’s versatile brush wand has proved to be a hit with Sephora shoppers.



Cosmogen perfects the application of ultra specific care and developed Mini Squeeze'n Roll.

### Sustainability Trends

In an industry that continually develops sustainable options, the applicator category is no exception. For example, powder puffs that are infused with the actual powder inside them have become popular, according to Jason Clerke, president of Garrett Hewitt International. Traditionally, products had a puff placed on top of the powder in a package. "Now we are infusing the powder into the puff itself, so it already comes with enough for the customer to be able to use it. We have come up with one that is refillable, so once the powder runs out, the design allows the customer to open it up and put another refill sachet of powder inside," he says.

Clerke point out that brushes are also leaning toward more sustainable options as well. "Another trend in brushes—like a lot of beauty products—is a push toward the eco-friendly, and we have recently been doing more brushes that our customers can note are not only eco-friendly but vegan (they don't contain animal products)," he says.

The brush handles typically are made with bamboo, a renewable resource of wood that grows quickly, recycled aluminum is used for the ferrule, and synthetic hair is selected over goat hair or other natural hair. "At this point, we have technology that allows us to basically mimic any animal hair, so we can change the thickness and the flex of the fiber, the shape and length of the fine tip, and also the wave of the fiber," Clerke explains, adding that Garrett Hewitt is one of the few companies that makes the fibers. "Traditionally the brush factories import the fibers, but our factory has purchased a fiber manufacturing facility and so we manufacture the fibers and customize them to mimic the animal hair."

Anisa's Pickett notes the company is also seeing innovations in the actual fiber used in applicators as well, with the move toward more synthetic fibers with Natrafil, a patented fiber from DuPont. Kelley Baker Brows has created a brow brush applicator with Natrafil that gives the performance of natural hair without breakage or fallout, she says.

### Innovation in Demand

Customers are constantly looking for innovative mascara brushes, often molded plastic mascara brushes, says Garrett Hewitt's Clerke. "Clients want things that will allow the customer to do different things with the same product, such as volumizing, separating or lengthening," he says. "A lot of it is being done with the brush and we are getting a lot more demand for our molded mascara brushes."

Geka's Gonzalez-Gomez has also seen the desire for mascara innovations. She notes that the company recently introduced a brand-new technology platform to create eye-catching twisted wire brushes based on a hybrid concept. "hybriTION is a patent pending technology that mixes conventional filaments with a special PE-foil



Garrett Hewitt's powder puffs come infused with powder.



which opens the surface of the brush and thus improves the pay-off effect,” she explains. “The increased reservoir leads to the collection of formulation at the core of the brush which creates an astonishing volume effect on the lashes.”

For lips, Geka has developed its sensualLIPS applicator, featuring a soft and flexible applicator. “Its convenient shape helps to contour the lips easily. The additional reservoir delivers an even and improved pay-off effect,” says Gonzalez-Gomez.

Whether it’s for the latest lip, mascara, foundation or treatment product, innovative and high-functioning cosmetic applicators help make the sale and ensure the customer returns for repurchase.

### More with Wipes

The wheel doesn’t have to be reinvented in order for an applicator to be innovative. “As a contract manufacturer specializing in wet wipe conversion, we are seeing the marrying of conventional health and beauty formulas and tried and true applicators [in this case, nonwoven fabric] that have not previously been explored, creating an unexpected and exciting concept,” explains Tom Hill, senior vice president sales & marketing of Diamond Wipes International.

For example, the company is developing a deodorant wipe concept that doubles as an all-over body cleanser, targeting women who lead an active on-the-go life style. Another similar but distinct concept being explored involves delivering antiperspirant in a portable wipe form, positioned as a fast beauty fix.

“We see that developing unique and innovative applicators is important from both functional and marketing perspectives. The market and consumers continue to expect the newest and greatest innovation,” he says. “With the multitudes of beauty brands and continued expansion of Sephora and Ulta business models, not to mention mass drug retailers such as Walgreens repositioning its operations to brand as retail, health and daily living destinations, the packaging, formulary, as well as its delivery methods, must be a winning combination to stand out in the competition.”



**Diamond Wipes reports the marrying of conventional health and beauty formulas and tried and true applicators.**

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