

The Month in Fashion

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● Houston, we have an oily T-zone. Until now, it's a safe bet that not many companies have given much thought to the particular dermatological problems astronauts face when they're up above the stratosphere. Fortunately, beauty brand Coty is moving on the project. The manufacturer has an agreement with the National Aeronautics & Space Administration to develop and provide space-friendly personal-care products that will make our space racers feel a bit fresher. Right now, orbital hygiene consists mainly of variations on a sponge bath. It's going to be an interesting development period, said Coty's vice president of new ideas Raymond Nadeau, who is in charge of the project. "You basically have to start over," he said. "Dry skin happens to everyone, but is that exaggerated in space?" And packaging is a problem, since NASA prohibits anything volatile. Okay, so the demographic is kind of narrow, but ultimately the project could blast off; after all, the average space mission now lasts upward of two or three weeks, and that's a lot of cleansing products.



Strategy

Brand Watch

Coty to NASA: 'Houston, We Have a Deal'

By Christine Bittar

Coty, looking to inspire an image of over-the-top creativity, has teamed with NASA to jointly develop personal care products for NASA employees to use in extreme space environments.

The unusual union exemplifies both Coty's ongoing efforts to remake itself into a future-focused beauty company and NASA's continuing commercialization.

Operating with its new corporate "surprising beauty" theme in mind, Coty's inspiration came from an internal brainstorming session, spearheaded by Ray Nadeau, vp of Coty's two-year old ideas and images department.

The partnership represents

Coty's desire to ally with high-tech entities and become more forward thinking, engaging bored consumers with "products that have a story behind them" and unusual ads and media outlets. However, Arthur Gallego, a Coty rep, said it is too soon to speculate how the collaboration might affect consumer marketing.

Preliminary details have not yet been worked out, but the basic plan is for Coty R&D to work with NASA scientists at the LBJ Space Center in Houston to advance technology and study the adaptability of the current array of personal care products in a zero-gravity environment.

In the short term, NASA presumably is interested because of the extended length of time

now spent in space. There is a need for more hygiene/beauty products in that environment, Gallego said. For example, NASA astronauts use a wipe-off body wash.

Though NASA has long made its technologies available for everyday applications, Coty initially had the loftier idea of perhaps being able to immediately employ new-found technologies in its own consumer beauty products.

"The project is in its infancy ... we hope to develop something truly unique, with tangible applications for all consumers; we want our work with NASA to benefit the beauty industry, if that's possible," said Doug Toews, evp, ideas and image. ■