

Salon chain nails move to manicures for men

By TOMOKO OTAKE

Staff writer

A man recently turned up at the Omotesando branch of Nail Quick, a major nail salon chain, for a 45-minute treatment. "It's not like I take care of my nails passionately," the man, in blue jeans and a black hat, said, visibly embarrassed to be interviewed and asking not to be identified, except to say that he is in his early 30s and lives in western Tokyo.

"But in December last year, I happened to see a sign for this salon on the street and swung by just to give it a try. I found the treatment quite comfortable."

The man added that his fingernails are fragile and break easily. So on that day, as usual, he ordered the "men's nail"

course, which includes disinfection of hands with an ethanol-soaked cotton pad, nail filing and removal of cuticles. After that, customers can have their nails either polished or coated with colorless manicure.

At Nail Quick, which has 50 outlets across Japan, male customers are still a tiny minority, outnumbered more than 10 to 1 by women. The idea, though, that men are becoming more attentive about their nails is quite new in Japan, where nail salons have long been regarded as a women's domain. The branch, located



Digital delight: A man receives a personalized nail health and beauty treatment from one of the specialists at the Omotesando, central Tokyo, branch of nail-salon chain Nail Quick. TOMOKO OTAKE

in the trendy shopping district in Minato Ward, Tokyo, has offered a course for men for several years now, attracting a loyal clientele of about 10, according to Aya Iwamoto, manager of the salon.

"Many don't want their nails to shine too obviously," Iwamoto said. "They want a natural look, and they don't want to grow their fingernails too long."

Iwamoto, 27, said she often gets asked to give nail treatments to male friends of her generation, or to lend them files and other professional tools.

"Men who smooth out the ends of their fingernails with files, rather than clippers, are no longer a rare commodity" she said. "I also see lots of men with colored nails walking on the streets around here."

Who is coloring the nails, if the men aren't rushing to salons? Are they applying the colors themselves?

"Perhaps they do it themselves . . . or they have their girlfriends do it for them," Iwamoto said.

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