

Japanese Camera Sales Boom

(By an AAP-Reuter Correspondent.)

TOKIO.—A rapidly increasing enthusiasm for photography in Japan has created a boom for the camera industry and made it one of the country's most prosperous light industries.

According to a recent press survey, 3,500,000 Japanese own cameras. If the present sales rates continue, one-third of Japan's 86,000,000 people may possess cameras within a few years.

Wealthier Japanese were noted for their interest in

photography before the war. But interest in the subject is now far greater than at any previous time and is much more widespread.

Photography in Japan has now become a hobby for the rich and poor.

Immediately after the war, there was little money for cameras or other goods which were not essential, and many optical and camera factories had been damaged and destroyed. With a rise in the standard of living people have had more money for hobbies—and photography has proved about the most popular.

Thousands of camera shops have sprung up throughout the country during the past three years.

Major camera manufacturers and photographic magazines hold nationwide annual contests which attract worldwide attention.

In addition to contests, manufacturers advertise their products through the press,

manufacturers advertise their products through the press, radio, signboards, radio trucks and balloons.

Studios Flourish

Studios, where amateurs can photograph models, have flourished along with the public's interest in photography.

The studios, which claim to be artistic centres, advertise in the press that clients need only money—everything else is taken care of.

The client does not need a camera or film—they are supplied by the studio along with models. At some studios, so the advertisements say, the client does not even need to click the shutter; that will be done for him, if he wishes.

United Nations servicemen stationed in Japan are as enthusiastic as the Japanese about photography. There are few servicemen in Japan or Korea who do not own a camera.

An agency that supplies cameras to military stores in Japan reported that in the first eight months of this year it bought 40,663 cameras worth 2,029,537 dollars from 11 different Japanese companies.

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Japan produced 402,769 cameras last year and 72,483 (valued at 1,220,000 dollars) were sold to United Nations forces. The remainder went to the home market.

To increase sales, and to earn foreign currency, the Japanese Government allows tourists to buy cameras free of tax. Several firms in large cities deal only with tourists.

A spokesman for the Tokio Chamber of Commerce said about four per cent. of Japan's foreign exchange was earned by cameras and accessories.

The United States was Japan's biggest customer, followed by South America and South East Asian countries. Manufacturers were now trying to develop a market in

European countries, the spokes-

The spokesman said Japanese cameras were popular in the United States, but German competition in that market was increasing. He said that annual sales in Japan last year reached a record of 45,900,000,000 yen (about £45,900,000 sterling).

A further increase in sales was expected because the Government recently cut purchase tax to 30 per cent. of the manufacturer's price, the spokesman said.

The price of Japanese cameras on the home market now varies from about 7,000 yen (about £2 sterling) for simple types to 100,000 yen (about £100 sterling) for high class models.