

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT

Fair and Handsome: Is Vanity catching up with Indian Men?

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Abstract:

Till recent times, cosmetics and allied pursuits have been the main domain of women. Of late, men have also started looking at cosmetics and grooming products with greater favour than before. The current range of grooming products for men extends beyond the traditional after-shave lotion and deodorants. The objective of the paper was to explore the attitudes and perceptions of men towards cosmetics and grooming products and to understand the reasons why men purchase and use cosmetics and grooming products. A mix of qualitative and quantitative techniques were used for understanding the outlook and usage pattern of cosmetics by men. Results revealed that men are increasingly aware of cosmetic trends and products but this awareness does not always result in acceptance. Men look for easy to apply, non-messy cosmetics. Online shopping is the preferred route. There are men who value grooming and are not afraid of visiting the salon to get the best in terms of experience as well as variety.

Keywords: *Self-image, grooming, vanity, factor analysis, cosmetics, men*

1. Introduction

Vanity, till recent times was the stronghold of women. However, this female bastion is gradually but surely being breached by men in search of attractive looks and well groomed persona. An aftershave lotion or a nice deodorant is no longer the end of a man's grooming effort. It goes much beyond...extending from fairness creams, moisturizers, shampoos, face wash, bleaches to complete package of facial, pedicure, manicure, waxing and threading offered by salons. Male grooming, at present a Rs. 3,800 crore market in India is poised to reach Rs. 5,270 crore by 2016 (Mitra, 2013). FMCG players, recognizing this trend are coming up with new and varied offerings in the men's grooming section. Emami, HUL, Dabur, L'Oreal, Garnier, Amway, Godrej and Nivea, are all vying for a segment in the pie. Salons like YLG are earning around 25% of their revenues from servicing male clients. Given this rapid interest in men's grooming products and services, it is logical to try and understand what will make this market tick.

1.1. Research Gap

In India, cosmetics have traditionally been associated with women; the trend for male cosmetics has only recently caught up in a big way. The cosmetic market for men is relatively new. Thus, with not much research on male cosmetic usage, there is very little understanding on what influences the purchase pattern of male cosmetic users (Chen and Cheng, 2004; Nair and Pillai, 2007; Sandhya and Mohamed, 2009; Souiden and Diagne, 2009). With the exception of a handful of studies conducted in India, there is hardly any literature available on the same. The dearth of literature coupled with the potential of the cosmetics and grooming market segment for men, prompted the study. This study, thus, aims to address this gap by examining the underlying factors contributing to the cosmetic purchase decision made by men in India. Further, an attempt is made to classify the potential male population on the basis of the cosmetic usage and selection choices made by them.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study was to explore and uncover the attitudes and perceptions men hold towards the cosmetics and grooming products, i.e. to primarily understand how men viewed usage and purchase of cosmetics and allied grooming products. A secondary objective was to understand the reasons why men purchased and used cosmetics and grooming products.

2. Research Methodology

The research methodology adopted was a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods. The first phase of the research was exploratory in nature where 12 in-depth interviews and 3 group discussions were held to identify the reasons for using and choosing certain cosmetics by men as well as their attitude towards the same. The sample chosen for the interviews comprised men in the age

group of 20 to 40 years. There was a mix of students, businessmen as well as professionals. Each interview focussed on choices made by the respondent with respect to grooming products, necessity of use, connection between the concept of self and grooming apart from factors such as price, quality, accessibility, packaging and advertising. Group discussions were conducted to generate items for framing the questionnaire for the subsequent study. Post interviews and the group discussions, a structured questionnaire was designed and pre-tested on 35 respondents to check its relevance. Once that was through, it was administered to 226 respondents in the age group of 20 to 60 years (Table 1: Respondent Demographic Profile). SPSS 19 was used for analysing the data, thus obtained. Exploratory Factor Analysis was done to identify the underlying factors influencing the male cosmetic purchase behaviour. Reliability as well as the validity were ascertained and were found to be within acceptable values.

Variables	No. of Respondents (226)	Percentage of Respondents
<i>Marital Status</i>		
Single	33	(14.6)%
Married	190	(84.1)%
Divorced or Widowed	3	(1.3)%
<i>Educational Qualification</i>		
Graduate	10	(4.4)%
Post-graduate	48	(21.2)%
Professionals	130	(57.5)%
Others	38	(16.8)%
<i>Age (in years)</i>		
20-29	30	(13.3)%
30-39	150	(66.4)%
40-49	28	(12.4)%
50-59	18	(8.0)%
<i>Income</i>		
Under Rs. 20,000	58	(25.6)%
Rs. 20,001 – 50,000	103	(45.6)%
Rs. 50,001 – 75,000	54	(23.9)%
Rs. 75,001 and above	11	(4.9)%

Table 1: Respondent demographic profile (for questionnaire administration)

2.1. Data Analysis and Results

The initial analysis was made on the basis of the interviews conducted and the group discussions held with the potential as well as the current male users of cosmetics. Excerpts of interviews revealed certain trends which are discussed below:

1. Men are increasingly aware of cosmetic trends and products. However, awareness does not in itself ensure acceptance.

“Sure, I know about men using cosmetics, but I’d rather not use it. I am a tough guy and things like face wash and fairness creams don’t go with my attitude” (Respondent 3)

2. While women spend a decent amount of time applying cosmetics and grooming themselves, men would rather have creams and lotions which are easy to apply, not messy and rapidly absorbed giving a clean look.

“Cosmetics are time consuming. How can we men apply cosmetics when we already have so much to manage?” (Respondent 12)

3. Interviews revealed that usage in itself was not so much of a problem as was the perception that cosmetics and grooming products are used by girls and are not a very manly thing to indulge in.

“It’s more of a girls thing to do. But to tell you the truth, I have used cosmetics and am going to try the Garnier facewash being promoted by John Abraham” (Respondent 5)

Further, the same perception is undergoing a perceptible change as more men specific products are hitting the market and male models, actors and sports stars are used to endorse and promote the product.

4. Men take to creams and treatments faster when afflicted by skin problems and as advised by doctors. Men face as many beauty related issues as women but are shy of admitting the same, often in the bargain depending upon and/or borrowing products used by their sisters/mother and other dependable female relatives/friends.

“I was advised an anti-acne cream by a doc. I tried it for some time and it worked. That got me attracted to trying out cosmetics.” (Respondent 8)

5. The metrosexual man is making his presence felt in the Indian cities. There are men who value grooming and are not afraid of visiting the salon to get the best in terms of experience as well as variety.

“I visit a salon every month. I like keeping myself clean and looking great. What’s wrong about using a moisturizer or getting a relaxing facial? My face loves the pampering it gets!” (Respondent 7)

“I like a well groomed look. It makes me feel sophisticated and creates a great impression on the people I meet” (Respondent 11)

6. Online shopping offers the benefit of anonymity and discretion. In a society where men using cosmetics and grooming products other than deodorants and shaving creams, is still not openly welcomed, a better option is either a single, frequented shop or an online site.

“I do my shopping online or at best there is a shop where the shopkeeper knows what products I might like. I go there when I need some new (cosmetic) product. I prefer not going to new shops though, I am fine with grooming products” (Respondent 11)

In the second part of the research, factor analysis of the reasons as to why men purchase cosmetic and grooming products was undertaken. Since, the appropriateness of data for factor analysis needs to be established, the sampling adequacy test was performed through Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) statistic. KMO value greater than 0.6 is considered as adequate (Kaiser and Rice, 1974), hence, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy with value of 0.801 was acceptable. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (3752.653, df. 276, Sig.0.00) show that the values are significant and hence, acceptable implying that non-zero correlations existed at the significance level of 0.000, it provided an adequate basis for proceeding with factor analysis (Table 2).

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.801
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	3752.653
	df	276
	Sig.	.000

Table 2: KMO and Bartlett's Test

The five factor structure had 22 items with factors relating to Self-Image Enhancement; Celebrity Association; Social Acceptance; Lifestyle and Medical Concerns (Table 3). The reliability of the constructs ranged from 0.800 to 0.892, with the overall reliability at 0.946.

	Components					Cronbach alpha
	1	2	3	4	5	
						0.946
Self-Image enhancement						0.892
Don't mind being the center of attention	.759					
Being well groomed influences people	.750					
I check myself often in the mirror	.707					
I would feel very embarrassed if I were not looking my best in a gathering	.696					
I frequently check my appearance in the mirror	.631					
Celebrity Association						0.889
I am a fan of good looking male celebrities		.738				
I buy products which are endorsed by my favourite celebrity		.720				
I feel proud when people associate/compare me with my favorite celebrity		.712				
When I am compared to my favourite sports icon, I feel happy		.607				
After seeing my favourite celebrity endorse men's grooming products, I no longer think these are girlish		.585				
Social Acceptance						0.87
Sloppy grooming makes one lose out on promotion in the office			.856			
I wear a deodorant because my wife/girlfriend likes it			.806			
I like getting complimented on my looks			.672			
When I am fit groom and cleaned, I would look more attractive			.612			
Medical Concerns						0.881
Prefer cosmetics with medicinal properties				.683		
I use skin care creams to solve my acne problem				.647		
For me hair care products are closer to medical prescriptions than cosmetics				.628		
Help me look younger than my actual age				.608		
Lifestyle						0.798
Grooming products help to distinguish between my social and professional image					.821	
I prefer updating and buying new grooming products					.807	
I keep myself informed on latest fashion trends					.661	
I am proud of being labeled as metrosexual					.608	
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. ; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.						

Table 3: Construct measurement summary, Rotated factor matrix and reliability assessment

The exploratory factor analysis indicated that men purchase grooming products with an eye on:

- Self-Image Enhancement as in I would feel very embarrassed if I were not looking my best in a gathering or I check myself often in the mirror.
- Celebrity Association as in I buy products which are endorsed by my favourite celebrity or When I am compared to my favourite sports icon, I feel happy.
- Social Acceptance as in I wear a deodorant because my wife/girlfriend likes it or Sloppy grooming makes one loose out on promotion in the office or I like it when I get compliments on my looks
- Lifestyle as in I prefer updating and buying new grooming products.
- Medical Concerns as in I use skin care creams to solve my acne problem or For me hair care products are closer to medical prescriptions than cosmetics.

3. Implications of the Study

Grooming products targeting men should address the unique characteristics of the male skin. Men have very different skin from that of women. The skin in case of men is thicker, has a richer hydro-lipidic film and a higher concentration of blood vessels along with more facial hair. At the same time they also have to deal with similar issues like ageing, dryness, pigmentation and acne. With increasing awareness about self care, men are awakening to the need of skin care, hair care and related grooming products. Companies are addressing this issue by launching products in the relevant categories but the awareness created around them has to be improved by increasing the advertising effort and bringing in more celebrity as well as common faces to endorse the products.

Men would stay away if the product needs high time investment. Hence, cosmetic and grooming packages designed for men should be simple to use with better absorption quotient. Easy to use, effective products with attractive packaging and lexicon suited to male psychology would be a better bet.

Since men are only starting off in the field of cosmetic usage, they are often unsure about what to purchase and how to best use it. Guidance seeking from other men is not in the same mode as in the case of women who are more open about the cosmetics they use and the effects of the same. Hence, providing a toll free number where men can have their grooming concerns addressed would help them in opening up and seeking the right advice, which they may have trouble seeking in a face-to-face interaction.

Not many men are comfortable walking into a store and picking up grooming products other than shaving creams, after-shave lotions, shampoos and deodorants. Anonymity and subtlety are still the bywords in the men's grooming segment. Therefore, the distribution of cosmetics for men, too, needs to explore a channel different from that of women's. While online purchase is one option, another is offering products through marketing networks as in the case of Amway or stocking products at hairdressing salons. Men are also conscious about the ingredients used in the products. Companies can launch a line of herbal men's care products with regard to the segment sensitive to artificial ingredients. Since men grooming and cosmetic products seem set to stay for times to come, the companies need to start wooing men with as attractive models and benefits as they have successfully used in the past with women.

4. References

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