

## Motivations to Male Grooming: The New & the Old Masculinity

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is an attempt to explore influence of the newer concept of masculinity along with its the traditionally held notions in the contemporary yet changing world that motivate the consumption of grooming products for metrosexual men. The usage of grooming products is previously perceived as a concern of feminine indulgence in a country like India, historically known to be a patriarchal society. The study is conducted through one-to-one discussion with ten metrosexual men, who are the active users of grooming products to explore the degree of impact of previously held notions in motivating them to groom, to see if the qualities are still desirable along with investigating the newer socio-cultural factors around them reinforcing the use of male grooming products. In the methodology, the interviewees were asked questions based on grooming products & brand preference and their usage along with discussions around masculinity & society. The study finds a remarkable degree of influence of traditional notions in addition to the societal pressures retaining them. However, the new definition of masculinity seems to have enforced new socio-cultural factors such as profession, self-care & the usage of social media that significantly galvanize the usage of grooming products in men.

### Keywords

Male- grooming, Shopping behavior, Masculinity, Traditional Masculinity, Modern Masculinity, Qualitative Research.

### Introduction

For ages, the grooming, personal care & make-up market has been associated and dominated by women but now the trend is changing. Men represent a huge market size for beauty and personal care industry. The market for men's grooming industry has shown meteoric growth in recent decades in India. In a latest report by ASSOCHAM, Indian male grooming industry is projected to grow at a growth rate of approximately 45%. The male grooming segment is reported to have worth around Rs. 5000 crores. Tracking the evolution of the industry, PGA Labs calculated the market was worth \$1.28 billion in 2016, 2.6 billion in 2018 and is expected to soar to 5.5 billion in 2021. Additionally, there are companies which offer grooming products just for men. Traditionally for men in India, grooming only meant basic haircut and shaving, with the evolution of metrosexual men who pay attention, time & money over grooming have developed the segment blisteringly.

Indians who reside in metro cities have a knack of doing all of their tasks even when they travel. They can chop vegetables in locals, even create presentation for the meeting 10 minutes before in their cabs. Not only this, it is a common spectacle to watch a man applying hydrating sheet mask with ingredients from black mud to honey when he is stuck in traffic. This is indicative of how Indian males are disintegrating themselves from the stereotype that places grooming as "feminine indulgence". The changing times also has its root reasons in the ever-increasing social media usage where being ready to take a shot is a necessity 24/7. In a market research conducted by Neilson, 177 new male grooming variants and categories were launched in the period of April 2018-2019 where half of the products accounted for beard and facial care with evolution of newer

categories concerning body and hair. In a growth forecast for the newer categories by The Man Company, a men's grooming products company based in Gurugram India, the shaving category grows at Rs. 8.5 billion, other toiletries like shower, hair and skin care at Rs. 15.7 billion and fragrances, Rs. 15.5 billion between 2017-2021.

For a long time, studies show that Indian men are gradually becoming self-aware and spending in grooming products to improve their physical appearance, have sense of confidence & get some advantage over peers both- professionally and personally.

The degree of acceptance of grooming products in metrosexual men finds its significance in lot of factors such as from demographic to economic to cultural as well as social factors. There is prevalent stigma attached to it. The stigma of grooming products associated with women. Notwithstanding the blurring of gender gaps and increasing diversion from traditional notions of masculinity which stipulates qualities like strong, aggressive, powerful, hard, active, violent, rational and competitive (Milestone & Meyer, 2012, p. 114; see also Messner, 1993; Pleck, 1995), some authors interrogate the degree of acceptance of grooming products within male consumers (e.g. Mason, 2002; Salzman et al., 2005). In a country like India, where national culture is patriarchal & strongly masculine, given the influence of cinema where male protagonist from the inception represent the qualities of masculine with all the elements being traditional, the acceptance and readiness of metrosexual men is interesting to study from socio-cultural perspective. The motivations to and factors affecting usage of grooming products has been studied before but how the influence of the notions of masculinity preoccupied in the Indian culture plays a role in metrosexual men has never been studied before. Neither there has been research on how

metrosexual men, who are quite comfortable with the usage of grooming products perceive masculinity.

## Literature Review

Several researches examining the difference between men and women's shopping behavior has built the basis of gender differences. It has also been studied that men and women tend to process information related to use and consumption of products distinctively (Coley & Burgess, 2003). Moreover, women are known to be aesthetics centric, while men are found to be pay attention to functional aspects of the product. (Rook and Hoch, 1985; Dittmar et al., 1996). Women are presumed to associate shopping as an interpersonal affair while men think of as more of instrumental in nature (Knowledge@Wharton, 2007). Women's attitude to the shopping has been associated to be more of emotional & impulsive while men are thought to be lesser susceptible to emotional & impulsive buying behaviour. However, there are strong foundational researches suggesting the paradigm shift in the earlier findings concerning attitude, behaviour & motivations to male shopping. Earlier men were recognized as 'producers' and women as 'consumers' (Bakewell et al., 2006) but now it has become old fashioned. Men are now increasingly becoming participants in shopping relayed activities (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2006) who were traditionally being thought as unenthusiastic and inactive consumers (Lee, Ibrahim, & Hsueh-Shan, 2005). Researchers even suggested that if the no. of purchases are kept fixed, men and women share the same magnitude of vulnerability towards impulse purchases (Kollat and Willett, 1967). The observed shift in behaviours has motivated many researches on male consumers. Subsequently, even the researches in attitude, behaviour and motivations in male grooming products. While there is plethora of studies done in examining female consumption related motivation, attitude and behaviour, the respective men's cosmetic shopping motivations and behaviour have received scant attention (Woodruffe-Burton, 1998).

One can't deny the fact that consumption of cosmetic and grooming products has traditionally been associated with women (Dano et al., 2003; Nixon, 1992) as they are perceived as ineradicable aspect of their culture (Coulter et al., 2003). However, changes have occurred to the extent that there is a whole men-grooming & cosmetic industry and there are several cosmetic companies even which have men as their key consumers (Souiden & Diagne, 2009). Men have started to become comfortable in buying grooming, cosmetic and personal care products for themselves (Sturrock & Pioch, 1998). Now maintaining masculinity and engaging in consumer behaviour simultaneously is possible (Lee, Ibrahim and Hsueh- 7 Shan (2005). In fact, a study shows that male shoppers between the age of 18 to 34 are found to be more active in retail channels than older men and those between the age group of 16 to 24 are more involved in shopping for beauty products than in the earlier times (Coley & Burgess, 2003). So how have these changes occurred? These changes in men's attitude and behaviour find their explanations in a variety of factors: the ever-

increasing emphasis on appearance in the society (Salzman et al., 2005), the fad of paying attention to self-care and health activities (Thompson & Hirschman, 1995) along with the blistering rise in men's lifestyle magazines (Bakewell et al., 2006). Also, the blurring of lines stating gender-specific roles & habits has promoted a refurbished the idea of being masculine which not only has an impact on how the men think & but also how they and their lifestyle looks (Salzman et al., 2005). Apart from these factors, the change in men's attitude toward grooming partially finds its roots in sociocultural pressures (Coulter et al., 2003). For example, as people are living in the transition period from modern to postmodern world in the western countries, the technological and social changes are reflected in their behaviour as a consumer behaviour (Van Raaij, 1993). As one of the most popular and extensive change in the postmodern world is men and women are equally taking part in the consumption practices.

Marketers took into notice these social changes in order to make them prevalent & tap into wider market, they have been promoting new products through encouraging gender-blurring & subverting old stereotypes of gender (Kacen, 2000). Subsequently, cosmetic industry has conducted multiple studies and researches & developed tactics to answer men-centric cosmetic needs (Weber and de Villebonne, 2002). The ascent in the number of appearance-conscious men can be clearly observed with the upsurge of terms such as "metrosexual" (Salzman et al., 2005). Metrosexuals can be defined as the men who reside in big cities, take care of their physical appearance and spend sizeable amount of money and time in enhancing their self-image and lifestyle (Souiden and Diagne, 2009). It is important to note that metrosexual men are neither homosexual or androgynous. They don't doubt their masculine identity and openly display their feminine side (Salzman et al., 2005). They go to salons & gyms & are consumers of fashion. Not only this, the term "ubersexual" (Salzman et al., 2005)- type of men who believe and exhibit traditional qualities of masculinity but are involved in shopping appearance-related products though lesser than the metrosexual men. With the changing times, the definition of masculinity has also been changing and also differs across cultures, demography and society. This also partly means that their still notions about the shopping of male-grooming products and involving in beauty and skin care are a threat to masculinity. Moreover, perceiving this activity as nurturing feminine indulgence (Salzman et al., 2005).

Different studies across the world brought upon different factors influencing the men's behaviour and attitude towards grooming products. In a research conducted to find the difference in men's behaviour & attitude towards buying grooming products across the USA and France, Weber and Capitand de Villebonne (2002) were successful in finding some major factors impacting the consumer's choice: quality, price, promotion, package, advertising, local recognition, knowledge of the salesperson & opinion towards the firm its product. On the similar lines, the impact of three major categories personal variables (e.g. self-image, confidence, health, aging concerns, physical appearance &

preoccupations), marketing variables (advertising, promotion & purchase intention) & socio-cultural variables (beliefs, culture & lifestyle) has been observed when Canadian and French men were compared Souiden and Diagne (2009). Their study suggests that physical attractiveness and advertising are the strongest factors in inflicting the shopping of grooming products. Factors such as purchase intention, lifestyle, image consciousness, aging etc. found to have varying degrees of influence. Their findings also have an interesting element- health concerns and social beliefs have reported to be irrelevant in impacting the men's consumption in both the countries. Research in the same area of knowledge conducted by McNeill and Douglas's (2011) revealed that in young males, the notion of masculine identity is traditional and find its significance in their national culture. Grooming is perceived there as a feminine indulgence and the grooming products that are used are truly functional in nature. In fact, there exists an unwritten rule about the limited quantity and type of grooming & personal care products that can be used by men and require no justification. The mentioned studies as well as other ones (e.g. Maulina, Chan, & Ridwan, 2017; Khan et al., 2017) have taken into account different variables responsible for attitude and behaviour of men towards grooming and personal care products. All of them show that the variables may vary geographically. As it is clearly expressed by Tungate (2008) that approaches vary geographically when it comes to grooming.

While the above-mentioned findings seek to take into account a wide array of variables this research paper seeks to delve deeper into the social construction and understanding of masculinity and its impact on men to influence behaviour and attitude to grooming. According to (Pleck, 1995), the concept of masculinity is not universal or fixed; our expectations and standards to benchmark it keeps varying with time and culture. It is therefore impossible that the definition of masculinity has its roots away from social, geographical & cultural contexts. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, what is referred to as "traditional masculinity", the quality of being "strong, active, powerful, authoritative, hard, aggressive, violent, competitive and rational, and lacking sensitivity and emotions" (Milestone & Meyer, 2012, p. 114; see also Messner, 1993; Pleck, 1995) according to which men are encouraged to prove their manhood and involve in competition and heterosexual activities was endorsed. Although the definition is not permanent, its elements are still idealized. When the western countries experienced radical social changes in the 1960s and 70s, the conventional definition came under scrutinization, which was termed as "crisis of masculinity" (Atkinson, 2011; Green & Van Oort, 2013; Kimmel, 1987, 2012). This crisis led to regressive as well as progressive responses from men. The latter called for repudiating existing notions of masculinity & ensuring gender equality while the former encouraged retreat to traditional concept of masculinity where gender identities are clearly bifurcated and defined (Kimmel, 1987). As Atkinson (2011) explains, this polarization continues and the contemporary identity of masculinity crises became associated with other crises emanating from consumer and visual culture which is

magnificently pays attention to physical appearance. Therefore, the spectacles about a man's physical appearance & physique became the reflection of masculinities in crisis (Bordo, 1999; Green & Van Oort, 2013). It can be concluded that the ads in media reinforce goals in fact, necessitates men to work on their bodies to create desirable masculine identity & compensate for inner fallacies. Although the use of grooming products seems to contradict the institution of traditional masculinities which the ads seems to restore, the association of grooming with femininity can be removed "by associating activities impeccably with male indulgence" (Dworkin and Wachs 2009, p. 92). The use of such products in ads pictures having healthy physique, self-control, body to attract opposite sex. Analysis of the ads indicate that men are supposed to keep up with a number of qualities to ensure their manliness. If one tries to analyse, there is checklist to complete in order to be proven as a "masculine man". Different ads depict different eligibility test and provide the solution to pass the eligibility test. In a research conducted, a North American magazine, Esquire, centred at male consumer lifestyle provides strong proofs when in its every issue -from 2011 to 2013 the ads endorsing grooming products are analysed. The ads declare one or the other qualities mandatory for being a man provide a solution wrapped as a grooming product. In the ad lines of Axe toiletries, single bold phrase "Keep your cool" asserts that how important it is for men to keep in control their bodies & emotions (Axe, 2013). Gillette, in another ad, a white man in grey t-shirt has a sweat stain in a shape of basketball player. Below the t-shirt is written "Great things can come out of sweat. Don't let odour stop you." (Gillette, 2012). The ad tends to suggest that it is the responsibility of a man to maintain his personal hygiene & Gillette has the solution to prevent the anxiety about unnecessary smell and secretion. "The man who gives a damn is the man who comes out on top" – a statement besides a photo showing men with drinks around a roulette table gambling in a casino- a masculinised public space (Nivea, 2011a, pp. 8-9). The Nivea ad for shaving cream & moisturizer depicts a traditional masculine drive to be competitive and especially succeed. It reinforces and even nurtures the idea that aggression & domination are qualities of those who have "manned up". Heterosexuality, throughout the history has been the fundamental & mandatory premise of masculinity (Milestone & Meyer, 2012). Notwithstanding, homosexuality & effeminacy are often considered as contradiction & breach to masculinity. Therefore, ads never show a homosexual a man but rather a heterosexual man to reassert the cosmetic product with an association with masculinity & a tool to appear desirable to women. The ad, subsequently focusses on men's insecurities about their body image and impression along with sex appeal. An ad by Gillette shows an image shows a woman lying on a man and the two romantically smiling at each other. On the top left corner, a text reads- "Love is never letting stubble come between you." On one hand the ad necessitates hair removal & on the other hand it eradicated feminizing stigma by presenting heterosexual men in pursuit of women.



The above analysis presents the social construction of masculinity which are desirable and exploited by ads in a magazine of North America. It provides an understanding about the contemporary and yet changing definitions of masculinity. The same thought-provoking ads are created in India. With the concept that “If you smell like women you become woman” Wild Stone talc (2010) for men came up with an ad where they convince that if you use women talc, you will smell like one and consequently you will start behaving like one. With the theme of “Manning Up” by keeping a strong, muscular and aggressive man as a main character who screams wildly to make people aware of their machismo - “You gotta care for that man hair.”, breaks a thick wooden block, scares a bear, is attractive to women along with a strong personality in an ad for Beer shampoo by Park Avenue (2013) tries to bottle masculinity. They add beer by ingraining a thought that men’s hair is different and we need to care with our most special drink- beer. The ad tries to instil drive of “manliness” by echoing that “you are men!” with pride and “your hair needs special treatment”. On the similar lines, Emami Fair & Handsome (2007) has been positioning its fairness cream for men by instilling fear on two aspects. First, Femininity- if you use women-fairness cream you will become like women. Second, Repulsiveness- if you use women-fairness cream to look fairer women will be repulsive towards you. Thus, creating an insecurity and then creating a solution. Such examples of positioning traditional masculinity as a necessity as well as its loss as a fear, Indian ads are playing on the similar lines to create a market for men grooming industry as North America does.

## Topic

A quantitative study has been conducted in Gujrat that find the motivations to grooming in men but no research has been conducted in India addressing the influence of the traditional and modern definition of masculinity and its influence on the usage of grooming products. With the existence of crisis of masculinity, that focuses on setting standards to appear masculine enough through the usage of grooming products, the research is centred towards metrosexual men who are active users of grooming products and are comparatively comfortable with their usage of grooming products. This research paper strives to find the definition of masculinity in India for metrosexual men & the influences/qualities from the institution of “masculine identity” that motivates them to groom & buy grooming products. It also seeks to explore the new socio-cultural factors that are responsible for grooming in metrosexual men.

## Subtopic

The research paper addresses two questions:

- Exploring the influence of traditional elements of masculinity that drive metrosexual men to groom.

- Identifying the newer socio-cultural factors contributing to grooming in metrosexual men.

## Methods

- “Identity work” by Whitehead (2002).
- Semi-directed one-to-one interviews using word associations & brand personalities as projective techniques (Boddy, 2005; Hofstede et al., 2007)
- An audio-based zoom call to let the respondents openly and freely express their opinions towards how they associated themselves with their grooming habits, products and brands (Belk, 2007).
- “Grand tour” open ended questions (McCracken, 1988)

## Methodology

A qualitative research was preferred taking into account the intricacy of a topic like gender. A qualitative study could be helpful to explore the diversity of opinions and thoughts on masculinity and inquire their influence on attitude & behaviour towards preference and usage of grooming products & brands. It is assumed to be preferable to concentrate on men’s discourse as the means by which men come to know themselves and practice “identity work” by Whitehead (2002). In order to so, semi-directed one-to-one interviews using word associations & brand personalities as projective techniques (Boddy, 2005; Hofstede et al., 2007) were conducted ranging from one to two hours in length with 10 metrosexual men through an audio based zoom call to let the respondents openly and freely express their opinions towards how they associated themselves with their grooming habits, products and brands (Belk, 2007).

For choosing the product categories and brands ads on social media and TV which loudly spoke about masculinity and the newer standards to be masculine enough were selected as to be the part of questions. The interviews started with “grand tour” open ended questions (McCracken, 1988) where participants were asked about how they start their day to walk through their background & lifestyle practices. Then they were asked to express their opinion on what is their “definition of masculinity” & what truly “being a man” meant to them using word association technique (What are the thoughts, actions, practices & habits you associate with bring a man?). Such projective technique is useful in examining attitude, opinion, perception and feelings along with enabling reach to the unconscious inner world of the respondent (Boddy, 2005). Using this technique, it was easy to explore their view about the society, the social media, the pressure felt on account of them and the crisis they felt about the definition of masculinity in the later part. In the last part of the interview, open- ended questions focussed on the current topic of the study: the desirability to achieve traditional elements of masculinity through the products they use, how it influences grooming along with their narratives on story of the incidents successful in inducing

grooming habits in them. These topics were explored through discussions around the products they use (along with the products they do not use) and their brand perceptions through brand associations & word association techniques (For example, “Do you use beard oil? Why? What does having a good beard means to you?” or “what ideas, impressions & feelings do you associate with this particular brand? Or “Why did you start using this brand?”). Usage of such projective techniques is particularly useful in exploring brand image Hostede et al., 2005; Pich et al., 2015) because it provides in-depth insights. Additionally, earlier researches have asserted that brand gender perception can sourced from various components such as logo, packaging and advertising (Lieven et al., 2015; Azar, 2015, Ulrich et al., 2010). Finally, the relationship between grooming habits, aspirations, products, brands & masculinity was established through the questions in reference to the socio-cultural factors the participants are associated with.

For the research 10 participants were chosen. For selecting the participants, snowball sampling technique was used. Participants were among the author’s friends & acquaintances (Grady, 1998). The criteria for recruitment was: Metrosexual men, who exhibit heterosexuality, reside in metro cities and belong to age group of 20 to 30 years. The participants were also chosen according to varied occupations so as to assess the impact of social spaces & personalities of peers if they are influenced by. The author recorded the interviews and analysed the statements in order to develop thematic categories and examine potential relationships between products, brands, aspirations, & interviewees’ profiles. Building on different themes, we saw different masculinities emerge that emanated with participants’ narratives about the reasons and motivations to groom. Participants asked for keeping their identities safe so as to openly express their thoughts.

## Data Analysis

Profile of the participants:

Participant	Age, Professional Information with Corresponding Cities
<b>P1</b>	23, Student, Mumbai
<b>P2</b>	28, Student, Mumbai. Experience- 3 years as market research fellow in Mumbai.
<b>P3</b>	26, Employed, Pune
<b>P4</b>	23, Employed, Mumbai & Kolkata
<b>P5</b>	24 years, Employed, Hyderabad. Worked in Kolkata, Bangalore, Mumbai, Ahmedabad.
<b>P6</b>	24, Employed, Hyderabad.
<b>P7</b>	30, Unemployed, Bangalore. Worked in Advertising, Mumbai.

<b>P8</b>	25, Self- employed, Mumbai.
<b>P9</b>	26, Student, Experience- 3 years in advertising, Pune
<b>P10</b>	25, Employed, Part-time Model, Mumbai

## Results & Discussions

Each stage of interview resulted in depiction of key themes that subsequently guided the questions and creation of further themes. The influences to groom reported to emanated from the following themes:

### Strength, Power, Male Ego & Aggression

While the metrosexual interviewees showed comfort towards use of grooming products indicating them being confident about their masculinity, they showed the desire to be characterised as having traditional masculine qualities. There are very many instances discovered indicating their desirability towards exhibiting traditional masculine qualities. When the participants were asked to choose from the traditional aspects of masculinity which they most relate to, they showed most connection towards qualities such as “Be a Man!”, responsible, emotionally balanced, strong, powerful & aggressive. “*We, as men should keep the attitude of not backing out*” -(P4) one of the statements recorded showing its depiction. They also have elucidated the pressure felt by even men of today about necessarily being masculine enough. Apart from that, participants also tend to have a personal choice for aspiring these qualities if not triggered by pressure. None of the participants showed the fear of being called “effeminate” on usage of grooming products when exposed to the idea that grooming is primarily known as an activity of feminine indulgence. Instead, the usage of grooming product was linked as a source to enhance their identity as masculine along with redressing the insecurities of not appearing masculine enough. For example, almost every participant, the brand Old Spice is in use or has been in the use, as a source to Man Up! As positioned by the ads, participants agree that they started using the brand after watching the ad where the main character influenced them to use the brand. As agreed by one of the participants- “*I started using the deo after watching the ad in which the main character who appears to be successful, muscular and appealing to women advertises it. I knew this is just an ad but next time the ad influenced me to pick up old spice instead of any other deo. Somewhere in back of my mind that aspiration to be a complete man had played a role.*” (P8) Old spice is exposed to have instilled many other different emotions of masculinity in different people. The goal to feel masculine enough and achieve machismo is also a driving force to use it as explained by a participant- “*Old spice is my favourite brand. For me it is childhood attraction when my father, the only man in the family used to use it with the razor of English style. For me he was always a perfect man to whom everyone listens and follows. Its classic smell makes me nostalgic of class, style and Manning Up!*” (P1) along with the choice being emotional stability & control by the another- “*Having a nice*

*haircut & a freshly trimmed beard makes me feel that my life is in order. As a man, a shaving cream of Old spice is all I need to have a sense of balance & discipline in my life.” (P6)*

Along with it the participants showed an inclination towards aiming for strength and power through the use of grooming products. When asked about the significance of beard and beard care products, participants showed its association with manliness thereby strength, respect and power. As explained by one of the participants- *“A thick & well-groomed beard adds to the personality. It makes you look really powerful. That I have experienced ever since I have started using beard oil. The first impression of a person who has a nice, well -maintained beard is that he seems to be very respectable. Also, guys who really try hard for beard do this because they think that they are not respectable and having a beard will earn them respect.” (P5).* Participants also agreed to find their depiction of strength and power through going to gym and usage of shaving products. While going to gym adds to achievement of such qualities, usage of shaving products makes them acknowledge such strength by keeping their body appear muscular. For one of the participants, having muscular body means nothing if it is covered by hair. For him to feel powerful it is important to regularly shave it and get a sense of manliness. The participants also desired to have qualities like aggression & risk-taking– some of the other qualities of what is known as traditional masculinity. They tend to like characters in the ads and movies who show aggression and dominance. The aspirations in life of some of the participants involved risk taking and playing with danger as explained by one of the participants- *“I like aggression. Even women are attracted to danger. Not only women, men also. Men find the life of people not being chained by anyone. It’s always attractive. Because someone who is wild, aggressive is his own master and is perceived as a leader of community as even asserted by Jordan Peterson. They take the biggest decisions and get the prettiest of the girls. Being at the top of any ladder for example being CEO attracts me. And if ad shows a way to reach there, there is a chance that men including me would fall for it.” (P3)*

Participants also acknowledged the confusion that has come up with the changing gender roles. Along with discussing how patriarchy has resulted in men becoming insecure, participants have also talked about how gender gap blurring have a negative impact on male ego and resulting in feeling loss of power & dominance. The participants also depicted elements of competition. As states one of the participants discussing instances of his workplace- *“Even in the metro cities and the modern corporate culture, if a man and a woman work at same level but a woman gets a promotion, then men feel that their male ego has been hurt. They start feel shameful of themselves and start to work on their physical appearance as a means to address it. Even for me having a chiselled & well shaved chest is a daily necessity. It makes me feel confident & competitive.” (P2)* Agreeing to the use of grooming product men seem to acknowledge the sense of loss of machismo. Incidents of restoring the manhood through usage of grooming products has been frequently depicted by participants. They also talk about the

pressure that comes from societal expectations about how a man should look like. *“This angle of patriarchy comes and bites the people that even men are victim of patriarchy. People laugh off at the people to whom beard doesn’t come naturally or immediately. When I wasn’t getting beard, I visited a dermatologist to know if some beard oil exists to grow beard. Not having beard ate me up. I use good volume of beard care products.” (P7)*

### **Identity, Heterosexuality and the Influence of Women**

When asked about their opinion regarding openness to try personal care & make-up products that are usually available for women, participants showed no hesitation in trying new products if there is necessity. While the flexibility to try and experiment is being avidly shown by them, the participants sought and used different category of products that exclusively cater to their needs as men. Upon asking the reason about this way of consumerism most of the participants answered that it gives them the sense of identity. Sense of Identity for them is a necessity for recognition as a man or a fraternity different from that of women who too use grooming products but differentiated ones. Such kind of opinion has been spotted when encountered in behaviour such as- *“Earlier, I was happy to use a soap which everyone in the family used. But later, I was happy to choose a soap which was positioned as a man soap especially at the times when I started earning & could take decisions. Because I was a different man then.” (P9)* Participants also showed a necessity that their products should be differentiated from the women-centric products in terms of packaging or even a whole company when asked about the reasons for their switching to companies which made only male-centric products. When asked about the reasons for usage of bear a participant replied- *“I started using bear shampoo because its concept is very unique. Also, it stands out from the other bottles of shampoo giving a sense of identity. Also, men love beer and for the love of machismo it attracted a lot of men like me.” (P3)* On the similar lines participants also showed inclination to have consumption habit different from what they used to have when they were dependent or younger. The goal here was redefinition. Even when the products were generic or catering to needs of everyone, through making a distinct choice of brands they took a moment to redefine themselves. To oneself and to others too. When asked about the moments of switching brands and products and the reasons behind it, one participant asked in following way- *“There is a lot of difference between a park avenue soap that I currently use and a cinthol soap that I used as a child where I was surrounded by only women. A park avenue soap and a cinthol soap appear to me almost like a male soap and a female soap to me. You need such kind of products and moments in life to define yourself better.” (P10)* Heterosexuality, surprisingly came as a quality not be innately felt but as a necessity to be proved through performing certain actions. *“Being called feminine is taken as an insult.” – (P1)* a participant explains it pretty well. It also found in significance when participants intended to categorise attributes of the product on the basis of gender (as masculine and feminine) as well as with the type of zeal



marketed by the brand. When asked about the procedure to choose deodorant one participant responds- *"I pay too much attention of its ingredients. I keep myself away from those which smell fruity or flowery. Because this is how women smell. okay! I like Adidas that's why! Also, because it gives me a sporty feeling. As sports and men are inseparable."* (P5)

Influence of women has been frequently talked about as a reason to groom. When asked to the participants if they ever used Axe deodorant, every participant agreed to have used it in some point of their lives while most of them still use it. The participants were asked reasons behind using this product and for them attracting opposite sex and getting attention were the top-most goals. An excerpt by one of the participants- *"The way things are presented in the ads act as driving force for call to action. For example, as claimed by SETWET or AXE that you will be flocked by the girls. That unknowingly stays in your mind next time when you go to buy something. And if the freshness and fragrance stay for long then it's our deodorant. Its stability is of foremost important. That's how men choose deodorant."* (P1) Along with that, women have played an important role in influencing men to take care of their physical appearance and appear masculine. When asked to a participant who is a personal trainer in a gym about what are the motivations of his clients to get muscles he replied- *"People usually come to gym so that they can make their body presentable besides being fit. They literally can do anything to achieve it. One example is protein powders. I know people literally spending Rs. 5000 a jar without having prior knowledge about how it works, what proteins really are, what is a balanced diet. They just know one thing that if I eat protein, I will get muscles. If I get muscles, I will get attention. And girls will be getting attracted. They would literally start shaving their body even before getting a gram of muscle."* (P9) Participants also talked about how the portrayal of "alpha man" in Indian movies makes women set expectations regarding how their male partner would look. They also talk about how the society is changing but the portrayal of men as perfect in the cinema as successful, strong & good-looking unknowingly stays as benchmark of how a man should be not only in the brains of women but also men. This does not directly have shown pressure in men to fulfil those expectations but somehow have made them conscious of how they look. *"Beard gives your face a shape. When you trim your beard, it improves the definition of your face especially when you don't have a very good jawline. It's all about looking good & even women are attracted to a good jawline."* (P4)- explains one of its participants about the significance of beard and its grooming for him.

Influence of women has also been in making participants more involved in skin care products which are not common in men without any hesitation. For some men, women introduced them to a new product which they later started using on their own, for others it was when their female friend or family member who explained them how skincare is better for their own good. When a participant was asked about how did they started to go for monthly facial he answered- *"My sister had gone for it once and suggested me too to do so. She really looked refreshed and told me that*

*women like men who take care of themselves. I think both of the reasons pushed me to hard."* (P8)

### Social media, External validation & Role Models

There is an ever-increasing importance of body image and physical appearance as placed by the modern society (Kacen, 2000; Salzman et al., 2005). Participants felt the ever-increasing emphasis on physical appearance as the advent of social media has set standards of how they should look with a pressure to conform to those standards. They also talked about how the social media has got people restless and insecure as to necessarily have a perfect body image: *"There is an increase in focus on how you look. The main role in this is played by social media. It is more than usual that you are likely to see the person on social media before face to face. You tend to form prejudgments about that person. So, how the person looks is the first thing you see. We all are in a race to be perfect. For instance, when people don't get validated, it sorts of compels them to use fairness creams."* (P4) For men, the further results conform to the literature suggesting that the media has a powerful role to play to reflect, reinforce and shape society's expectations from males, with media and society pressurizing men to be more appearance focused (Patterson and Elliott, 2002; Gray, 2004). As one participant expresses- *"At the end it all boils down to external validation. In social media, it is number of likes and followers. You have to upload muscular & sleek body image on the social media. Not only grooming products, you can also see a lot of people riding bikes like KTM & bullet at very younger age. They think that all these things might attract the opposite sex, not only the opposite sex but also the other male members in the society."* (P6) The results are not in contrast to previous gender norms where the weight of expectations has influenced men towards the usage of grooming products along with making those norms outdated (Bakewell et al., 2006). With the ascent in engagement with social media, has also come the trend to follow social media influencers with a lot of participants stating them being the reason to use a particular grooming product or a specific brand: *"Earlier I used to use facewash that my mom and sister used. Around that time, I used to watch some vlogs of a biker on YouTube. He suggested Garnier Men's facewash that I started using and still love it. It just gave me sense of personal identity & touch as I admire that man personally. A feeling that this facewash is ONLY mine."* (P1)

The men born in eighties and nineties have grown in an India which harbored a patriarchal masculinity in its society. Men use to have dominant position in the society. With the changing times, India is known to have encountered what is known as the "crisis of masculinity" which meant a situation where women's demand for equality & freedom has left men confused about their roles. Surprisingly, as referenced from the interviewed metrosexual men the definition of masculinity seemed to be changing with different definitions attracting different people with varied motivations in life. The participants did not show very strong aspirations have a strong masculine self-image as depicted by the role models they follow in life. For quite a few interviewees, their personal aspirations which influenced usage of grooming

products had a moment away from traditional notions of masculinity: *"For me using old spice was for a very different reason. For me, Milind Soman (the protagonist in the ad) was a junkie, always involved in drugs. And in the ad, I see him to have changed completely and progressing in both ways- personally and professionally. If he was endorsing the product, I had a notion that- isme kuch baat toh hogi!"* (P3) However, for many participants role models emerged from sports and especially cricket, a sport which Indian men relate to at an emotional level. The role models from indeed have shown to influence the participants' usage of grooming products. When asked a participant why he started using hair cream, he replied- *"Because it was advertised by Yuvraj Singh. I connect with him at personal level as I am also left-handed batsman like him. Besides being my favourite cricketer, how he fought with cancer when India was leading for world cup is an inspirational story for me."* (P9)

### The Profession & the Concept of Self

As the study was conducted with metrosexual men, profession hailed as an inseparable influencer among the motivations to groom. Every participant reiterated the importance of grooming at workplace. For some participants, grooming was a necessity as a result of being at a social space and making a good impression: *"Grooming has become more of a necessity when you are involved in a profession especially that involves meeting with a number of people. It just shows how much you invest in yourself. Or if you are lazy or how do you like to view yourself as."* (P2) While for quite a few others it was a means to feel confident: *"Keeping a groomed beard does give me a sense of confidence to go about things. For example, if I have a presentation, to speak to the media or even a client I just feel I am ready to ace the tasks of the day."* (P8) The most common view of grooming in relation to profession was as a tool to maintain basic hygiene standards. Absence of which results in looking down upon.

When asked participants the definition of masculinity for them, one of them responded: *"Traditional masculinity was all about strength. You were supposed to have no weaknesses. In new masculinity, strength is in accepting those weaknesses. New masculinity is about accepting and being comfortable with the man you are."* (P5) The statement is indicative of participants openness to being a man in a way different from what has been previously defined. In the traditional set standards of masculinity, men were not allowed to cry or show their emotions. This notion seemed to be challenged by almost everyone when asked about their opinions on masculinity. The participants tend to believe that the time is changing with quite a few of them giving example of an ad by Gillette "Man Enough!" which talked about shaving stereotypes. On the similar lines, interviews significantly focussed on grooming as an activity in reference to the concept of self. Participants find the motivations to groom in taking care of oneself, accepting themselves as who they & feeling comfortable in their own skin without feeling pressure to have an ideal masculine body image: *"I think grooming products are a means to*

*make feel more comfortable in their bodies. For metrosexual, it about taking care of yourself before anything else."* (P6) The other socio-cultural factors mentioned by the participants included increase in mental health awareness, a previously not a frequently talked-about topic, which influenced the way participants spend- both time and money in grooming products. The statement about the same by one of the participants- *"For me having a good body or a shaved body is a source of confidence. It's not a desire for muscles or abs. It's more of a mental relaxation and a source of breather after 9 to 5 job. I keep my mental health at uppermost priority. I spend 2-3 hours every weekend in grooming myself."* (P7) Participants also mentioned their escalation in self-esteem with the usage of grooming products.

### Conclusion

The objective of the study was to explore the how masculinity as a concept and the contemporary socio-cultural factors impact grooming in metrosexual men with the backdrop of India as a patriarchal society with masculine dominance where grooming is primarily considered as an activity of feminine indulgence. Results show that even in metrosexual men the traditional qualities are desirable and are seen with regard. The depiction of these qualities is now linked to physical appearance with grooming products helping metrosexual men enhance their self-image rather than threaten it. Participants also discussed insecurities felt when not appearing masculine enough. The ascent in paid attention to grooming is discovered on the account of increase in usage of social media which set standards for people about how they should look.

For metrosexual men, the choices of role models don't depict aspirations of machismo. Rather, different people reveal different values derived from their role models. Participants also show strong inclination towards depicting and maintaining their heterosexuality but asserting that they don't fear being called effeminate with their involvement with grooming products. The involvement of opposite sex is reported to have strong relationship in influencing men to groom.

There seems to be new definition of masculinity emerging as reiterated by informants. The new definition doesn't seem to excessively promote previously held definition of masculinity and promotes grooming rather as a necessity and a means to maintenance of hygiene. For metrosexual men, necessity to use grooming products comes from the profession, the social spaces they are involved in. Newer concepts like mental health, self-acceptance & self-care seem to have emerged that are facilitated by grooming. Thus, there is a shift in how masculinity is being perceived along with how it has motivated usage of grooming products for metrosexual men.



## Limitations and Future Studies

There are some limitations of this research. First, we tried to optimize the diversity of our sample size to a great extent with paying attention on cultural as well as demographic aspects. But the sample size consisted of 10 participants which might have limited the variation of insights. Secondly, we first discussed the definition of masculinity, then the pressures from the society, then finally their engagement, preference & usage of grooming products. This might have created in them the recency bias thereby influencing the answers. Thus, this must have even created a bias in them about speaking their heart out & not being honest in talking about their insecurities. Moreover, in choosing the participants, no consideration was made about their social & cultural class (Holt, 1998). Future research can take into account these variables while choosing the sample size (Klasson and Ulver, 2015) as these only represents the population from middle class and upper middle class.

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