



## The Elusive Male Beauty Consumer

What brand categories are available? Key product types? Plus, four key insights for retailers—as well as answers to other questions.

by Ada S. Polla

### I AM PUTTING THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON THIS

column the eve of Father's Day, which seems particularly timely. Indeed, this month we are exploring men's skin care. "Men's skin care." Is that really necessary? This is a question I hear often. After all, why can't skin care be unisex? Is skin care specific to men needed? Should it be? Can't men just use good skincare products for women? Or should we have men look for different types of products when it comes to skin care?

There are two ways to answer this question—physiologically and psychologically.

### FIRST, SOME CONTEXT

We have definitely witnessed changing attitudes towards men's grooming and skin care. The term "metrosexual" came and went. What we are left with is a growing awareness among male consumers that skin care is essential and nothing to be ashamed of. We have moved beyond soap and aftershave. As noted in the June issue of *DERMASCOPE Magazine*, New Product Development Group reports that 90% of men 18 and older in the United States use some type of grooming product. More specifically (page 68 of the issue):

- One out of three men says he is concerned about dry skin and signs of aging.
- Four out of 10 men use a facial cleanser daily instead of soap or shower gels.
- One out of four men use a scrub.
- One out of five men use antiaging products and eye-contour gels.
- Multiple product use is still low, and an opportunity for growth.

Statista (statista.com) has estimated the size of the global male-grooming market from 2012 to 2020. In 2016, it estimates that the global male-grooming market is worth about \$(U.S.) 21.4 billion.

### MORE ON THOSE MEN ...

There are physiological differences between men's and

women's skin. Men tend to have oilier skin than women as they have more active sebaceous glands. Therefore, men's skincare products tend to have a lighter texture and are more oil-free. Moreover, men do not like a dewy look so their moisturizers need to be different from women's moisturizers.

Men also have more hair follicles than women (i.e., a mustache or a beard), and their hair follicles impede the penetration of very small plant actives to where they need to go. Therefore, extracts in men's products are often more highly concentrated.

**Look for products that heal the skin post-shaving while addressing signs of aging. Remember that "oil-free" are magical words when speaking about moisturizers to men.**

In addition, men have different sensibilities; they don't want to smell like "a girl." Thus, male skincare products tend to have more masculine aromas.

Whether you create a men's section or highlight specific products throughout your beauty-retail brick and mortar and/or online, offering men's products is clearly key to capturing this consumer.

### BRAND CATEGORIES & KEY PRODUCT TYPES

Brands abound, and fall into a few categories:

- Unisex brands that appeal to male consumers such as Kiehl's, Dermalogica, Malin & Goetz and Murad, for example
- Leading women's brands that have developed men's offerings, including Clarins and Clinique
- Leading men-only skincare lines such as Anthony Logistics (although I hear it may be launching women's products), ZIRH, The Art of Shaving, Jack Black, Billy Jealousy, Urth and Grooming Lounge

The key product types to look for are:

- **Cleansers:** Men love active cleansers so look for some that contain enzymes or acids such as glycolic or salicylic.
- **Exfoliators:** This is the type of product that men embrace easily perhaps because of the perception of the efficacy factor.
- **Shaving Products:** This is a no-brainer and requires no explanation.
- **Moisturizers:** Multitasking products are the best option for men. Look for products that heal the

skin post-shaving while addressing signs of aging. Remember that "oil-free" are magical words when speaking about moisturizers to men.

- **Eye Products:** This is the area that will show signs of aging first. And while it might seem a more "feminine concern," eye-contour gels are a hot category. Focus on products that target fine lines and wrinkles, but also puffiness and under-eye bags.

I often get asked about price points. I find that men are willing to spend on themselves. The concern about price points more often comes when a woman is buying grooming products for a man.

### MALE BEHAVIOR & SKIN CARE

Wooing the male consumer, however, is not just a question of having the right products. It is also a question of behavior. Here I have to give credit to my mother, Dr. Barbara Polla. She has a fascination for men, and, in particular, their beauty and grooming habits. So she

interviewed 200 and compiled her findings in her book, *Les Hommes, ce qui les rend beaux* (*Men—what makes them beautiful*). The book is published in only French, and discusses much more than “skin-deep beauty.” Yet some findings directly apply to how to retail grooming products to men. Here are the highlights:

**Insight #1:** Men love to talk about their beauty and their appearance—and are happy that someone is finally engaging in this conversation.

## Whereas marketing beauty to women involves creating the feeling that a product will make them look more attractive and younger, attract male consumers by talking about maintenance.

**Suggestion For Retailers:** Don’t assume that your male customers are shy and wish to be left alone. Interact with them. Ask them questions about their grooming habits and concerns as well as the products they currently use.

**Insight #2:** All men find themselves beautiful, at least until their 50s. Not gorgeous, but definitely attractive.

**Suggestion For Retailers:** Adapt your marketing language. Whereas marketing beauty to women involves creating the feeling that a product will make them look more attractive, younger, less wrinkled, thinner (all comparative adjectives that play on our feelings of insecurity), attract male consumers by talking about maintenance. They don’t need an antiaging moisturizer to become more attractive (they are already gorgeous!), but rather they need a facial to maintain their polished looks and sex appeal.

**Insight #3:** Whether women find them beautiful or not is not important to men until their 50s (the one exception being that it is typically essential to them that their mothers find them attractive); instead, they are above all else beautiful for themselves, and for

other men (this seems to be true as much of straight men as it is of gay men).

**Suggestion For Retailers:** Emphasize the importance of looking good at work (such as in court, on TV, in a business meeting). Link grooming to success in the workplace, power and influence.

**Insight #4:** Around their 50s men finally do become anxious about their physical appearance—weight gain, flabbiness and loss of hair; then the opinion of women about their appearance and

beauty becomes essential to their confidence and well-being. Specifically, hair becomes increasingly important: loss of hair is associated with loss of virility and loss of control; shaving one’s head (i.e., deliberate baldness) enables men to take back control over their bodies and their virility.

**Suggestion For Retailers:** Make sure that your product selection includes haircare SKUs in addition to skin care.

### FINAL THOUGHTS: YOU CAN DO IT!

Creating an atmosphere and ambience that caters to the male beauty consumer is a wise investment. Men are the most loyal of consumers. Once they find a product they like, they will keep coming back for it—like clockwork. ■

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