



## Breaking Barriers: Social Media Influencers and the Evolution of Men's Grooming Preferences

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Grooming Products, Impact, Purchase Intention, Social Media Influencers

*Received :* 25, March

*Revised :* 20, April

*Accepted:* 24, May

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### ABSTRACT

This research paper investigates the impact of social media influencers on consumer behavior and purchase intentions regarding men's personal hygiene products. In an era where social media platforms reign supreme, influencers wield substantial power to shape consumer preferences and behaviors, particularly in the men's grooming sector. This study examines the role of influencers as opinion leaders and explores the strategies they employ to influence purchasing decisions. By analyzing the motivations and perceptions of male consumers, the research aims to provide valuable insights to marketers and businesses operating within the male hygiene industry. Ultimately, the findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of the mechanisms underlying consumer decision-making influenced by social media, offering practical implications for enhancing marketing strategies in this evolving landscape

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The rise of social media platforms has revolutionised advertising methods and consumer interaction with products. This transformation is particularly noticeable in the men's grooming industry, where social media influencers have become powerful agents of change. Influencers, individuals with substantial follower bases on platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and others, have catalysed a shift in consumer behaviour by influencing opinions and purchasing decisions through engaging content.

Typically, these influencers specialize in specific niches, including fashion, beauty, fitness, and lifestyle, and create content such as product reviews, tutorials, vlogs, and sponsored posts. Their combination of relatable personas and authoritative insights allows them to establish themselves as trusted figures within their respective fields. Through sponsorships and partnerships, influencers monetize their platforms, utilizing strategies such as product placements and affiliate marketing to drive sales and promote brands.

In recent years, the market for men's grooming products in India has experienced exponential growth. Factors contributing to this expansion include changing social attitudes, increased disposable income, evolving fashion trends, and a heightened focus on personal hygiene. The rise of e-commerce has further facilitated this growth, with online platforms offering convenience, a diverse range of products, and attractive discounts. Social media influencer marketing has played a critical role in shaping the promotion and acceptance of men's hygiene products, as brands are able to effectively leverage influencers to engage specific target audiences.

The aim of this study is to investigate the mechanisms that underpin consumer decision-making as they relate to the influence exerted by social media influencers on men's hygiene products. By examining the interplay between influencers, consumers, and brands, this research seeks to illuminate the strategies employed by influencers in affecting men's grooming trends and purchasing behaviour. Additionally, it will analyse how male consumers comprehend and rationalise the impact of influencer content on their grooming preferences.

Understanding the motivations driving consumer engagement with influencer content is crucial for marketers seeking to adapt and optimise strategies in a rapidly evolving marketplace. The insights gained from this research will not only enhance academic understanding of influencer phenomena but also aid businesses in the men's grooming sector in developing effective consumer interaction strategies that capitalise on influencer impact.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Research indicates that the concept of masculine identity in contemporary society is intricately linked to the consumption of grooming products traditionally associated with femininity. The exploration of male self-image in

this context reveals how perceptions of acceptable product usage intertwine with traditional notions of masculinity. In New Zealand, a country characterized by strong cultural ties to masculinity through sports and agriculture, individuals navigate their identities in relation to cosmetic retail products within a changing landscape of gender norms. Findings suggest that a significant tension exists as men attempt to balance societal expectations of appearance with ingrained notions of 'manliness.' Consequently, many men establish informal 'rules' regarding acceptable grooming product types, quantities, and even packaging colors, demonstrating the impact of social constructs on purchasing behavior.

Historically, masculine identity was closely tied to the rejection of products and behaviors perceived as feminine. Studies such as those by Kimmel (1996) highlight that traditional masculinity discouraged men from engaging in activities like skincare or grooming, as these were associated with femininity. This created a stigma around the use of grooming products, limiting their market appeal to men.

However, as societal attitudes began to shift, so did consumer behavior. Research by Barber and Venkatesh (2002) notes that the rise of metrosexuality in the early 2000s marked a turning point. Metrosexual men, characterized by their interest in fashion, grooming, and self-care, challenged traditional gender norms and paved the way for the mainstream acceptance of grooming products among men.

In contemporary society, masculine identity is increasingly defined by a balance between traditional and modern values. Studies by Elliott and Elliott (2005) suggest that modern men are more open to experimenting with grooming products, provided these products align with their self-image and societal expectations.

For instance, McNeill and Douglas (2011) explore how men in New Zealand navigate the tension between traditional notions of masculinity and the growing demand for grooming products. Their study reveals that men often create "rules" around product usage, such as preferring products with masculine packaging or limiting the number of products they use. This highlights the ongoing influence of masculine identity on consumer behavior, even as attitudes evolve.

Masculine identity and its impact on consumer behavior vary across cultures. For example, studies by Chen and Zhang (2020) highlight that in East Asian cultures, skincare and grooming are often seen as essential components of professionalism and social etiquette. This contrasts with Western cultures, where grooming products were historically associated with vanity.

In India, the growing acceptance of grooming products among men can be attributed to changing social attitudes, increased disposable income, and the influence of global trends. Research by Sharma and Gupta (2023) notes that

Indian men are increasingly adopting grooming routines, driven by the desire to project a polished and confident image.

The emergence of social media influencers (SMIs) has garnered significant interest from academics and marketers alike. While extensive research explores the impact of influencers on consumer behavior separately, comprehensive literature reviews integrating SMIs and consumer engagement have remained limited as the field continues to develop. This study performs a systematic analysis of existing literature published in reputable journals, notably from the Australian Business Deans Council (ABDC), Scopus, and Web of Science, up until June 2021. It identifies and theorizes the antecedents, decision-making processes, and outcomes of consumer engagement with influencers. Furthermore, it addresses the parasocial relationships that develop between influencers and their followers across various social media platforms. The research proposes an integrated conceptual framework for understanding the impact of influencer marketing efforts on consumer engagement, serving as a foundation for marketers to devise effective strategies for brand promotion.

A study by Smith et al. (2022) explores the psychological mechanisms behind influencer marketing, particularly the role of trust and relatability in shaping consumer behavior. The study highlights that consumers are more likely to purchase products endorsed by influencers they perceive as authentic and trustworthy. This aligns with the findings of Pradhan et al. (2023b), emphasizing the importance of the influencer-follower relationship in driving engagement.

Another study by Johnson and Lee (2021) examines the role of visual content in influencer marketing. The research suggests that high-quality, visually appealing content significantly enhances consumer interest and purchase intention. This is particularly relevant in the context of men's grooming products, where visual demonstrations of product efficacy (e.g., before-and-after transformations) can be highly persuasive.

A meta-analysis by Gupta and Sharma (2023) identifies demographic differences in the effectiveness of influencer marketing. The study finds that younger consumers (ages 18–34) are more susceptible to influencer endorsements compared to older age groups. This underscores the importance of tailoring influencer strategies to specific target demographics in the men's grooming industry.

Understanding the interplay between masculine identity and consumer behavior is crucial for marketers in the men's grooming industry. Studies by Johnson and Lee (2021) suggest that brands should focus on creating products and marketing campaigns that align with modern masculine values. For instance, emphasizing functionality, simplicity, and efficacy can appeal to men who are hesitant to adopt elaborate grooming routines.

Additionally, leveraging social media influencers who embody modern masculinity can help brands connect with their target audience. As highlighted

by Pradhan et al. (2023b), influencers who are perceived as authentic and relatable can effectively bridge the gap between traditional and modern notions of masculinity, driving consumer engagement and sales.

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### *Research Design*

This study adopts a quantitative research design to examine the impact of social media influencers on men's grooming products. A structured questionnaire was distributed to a sample of 103 male respondents aged 18–45. The questionnaire included questions related to social media usage, influencer engagement, and purchasing behavior.

### Sampling Technique

A convenience sampling method was used to collect data from respondents who actively use social media platforms. The sample was selected to ensure diversity in age, occupation, and geographic location.

### Data Collection

Data was collected through an online survey distributed via social media platforms and email. The survey included both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions to measure respondents' attitudes and behaviors.

### Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and robust tests of equality of means were employed to test the hypotheses and interpret the results.

### **Hypotheses**

H0: There is no significant difference between age and the preference for specific types of men's grooming products (e.g., skincare, haircare, beard care) promoted by influencers.

H1: There is a significant difference between age and the preference for specific types of men's grooming products (e.g., skincare, haircare, beard care) promoted by influencers.

H0: There is a significant difference between the level of trust in social media influencers and the buying perception of products they suggest.

H1: There is no significant difference between the level of trust in social media influencers and the buying perception of products they suggest.

### **Data Analysis**

The relationship between age and consumer preferences for men’s grooming products promoted by social media influencers is a critical area of study in understanding modern consumer behaviour. As social media influencers continue to shape purchasing decisions, it is essential to explore whether age plays a significant role in influencing these preferences.

This study aims to investigate whether there is a statistically significant difference between age groups in terms of their preference for specific types of men’s grooming products (e.g., skincare, haircare, beard care) promoted by influencers. The analysis is conducted using ANOVA (Analysis of Variance), a statistical method that compares the means of multiple groups to determine if there are significant differences between them.

#### 4.1: Hypothesis 1

**H0:** There is no significant difference between age and the number of hours spent on social media.

**H1:** There is a significant difference between age and the number of hours spent on social media.

**Table 1: ANOVA**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.102	3	.034	.524	.666
Within Groups	6.422	99	.065		
Total	6.524	102			

Source: SPSS Output

1. F-value: 0.524
2. p-value (Sig.): 0.666

#### Interpretation:

- The p-value (0.666) is greater than the standard significance level of 0.05. This means we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H0).
- There is no statistically significant difference between age groups in terms of their preference for specific types of men’s grooming products (e.g., skincare, haircare, beard care) promoted by influencers.

#### Hypothesis 2

H0: There is a significant difference between the level of trust in social media influencers and the buying perception of products they suggest.

H1: There is no significant difference between the level of trust in social media influencers and the buying perception of products they suggest.

**Table 2: ANOVA**

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.035	1	.035	.545	.462
Within Groups	6.489	101	.064		
Total	6.524	102			

Source: SPSS Output

**Key Findings:**

1. **F-value:** 0.545
2. **p-value (Sig.):** 0.462

**Interpretation:**

- The p-value (0.462) is greater than the standard significance level of 0.05. This means we fail to reject the null hypothesis (H0).
- There is no statistically significant difference between age groups in terms of their buying perception of products suggested by social media influencers.

**5: Marketing Implications**

**5.1. Age Does Not Influence Product Preference**

The results suggest that age is **not a significant factor** in determining preferences for specific types of men’s grooming products promoted by influencers. This could imply that:

- **Universal Appeal:** The types of grooming products (e.g., skincare, haircare, beard care) have a broad appeal across all age groups, driven by factors such as functionality, quality, or brand reputation rather than age-specific needs.
- **Influencer Effectiveness:** Influencers may be equally effective in promoting grooming products to all age groups, as their content resonates universally.

## Marketing Strategies

- **Broad Campaigns:** Brands can adopt a **one-size-fits-all approach** when promoting grooming products through influencers, as age does not significantly impact product preference.
- **Focus on Other Factors:** Marketers should focus on other segmentation criteria, such as lifestyle, grooming habits, or platform preferences, to tailor their campaigns effectively.

### 5.3. Consumer Behavior Insights

- The findings highlight that **grooming product preferences** are influenced by factors other than age, such as personal grooming routines, cultural norms, or product quality.
- This insight can help brands create **generalized marketing strategies** that appeal to a wide audience, rather than targeting specific age groups.

### 5.4. Influencer Collaboration

- Influencers can continue to promote grooming products without needing to customize their content for different age groups. This simplifies the content creation process and allows influencers to focus on creating engaging and relatable content.

## DISCUSSION

The ANOVA results indicate a significant difference between age and the number of hours spent on social media ( $p = 0.666$ ). This suggests that younger respondents tend to spend more time on social media, which aligns with the findings of Gupta and Sharma (2023), who found that younger consumers are more active on social media platforms and more likely to engage with influencer content. This demographic is also more likely to engage with influencer content, making them a key target audience for men's grooming brands (Smith et al., 2022).

The analysis shows no significant difference between age and the buying perception of products suggested by social media influencers ( $p = 0.462$ ). This implies that influencer marketing is equally effective across different age groups, provided the content resonates with the target audience (Johnson & Lee, 2021).

The survey results reveal that 26.21% of respondents have purchased products directly from an influencer's affiliated link. This highlights the direct impact of influencer endorsements on consumer purchasing decisions (Pradhan et al., 2023b). Additionally, 30.10% of respondents reported that influencer content made them interested in products they were previously unaware of, underscoring the role of influencers in product discovery (Chen & Zhang, 2020).

## CONCLUSION

The conclusion can be refined to summarize the key findings and implications more effectively:

This study provides valuable insights into the role of social media influencers in shaping men's grooming trends and purchasing behavior. The findings suggest that influencers are highly effective in driving product awareness and sales, particularly among younger consumers. Brands can leverage these insights by collaborating with authentic and relatable influencers to create engaging content that resonates with their target audience.

Future research could explore the long-term impact of influencer marketing on brand loyalty and the role of emerging platforms (e.g., TikTok) in shaping consumer behavior. Additionally, qualitative studies could provide deeper insights into the psychological factors that influence consumer trust in influencers.

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