

The Expanding Male Skin Care Market

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The male skin care market is rapidly expanding in the United States because of new product developments and aggressive marketing tactics. Manufacturers see male skin care as a large area for economic growth because the female skin care market has shown high sales for a number of years. Much of the interest in male skin care has focused on the concept of the metrosexual man who is concerned with fashion, hair care, nail appearance, skin treatments, and cosmetic products. This image is in contrast to the urban man who is low maintenance and uses toothpaste, bar soap, mass-market shampoo, and shaving cream as the sum total of his products. The advertising push to popularize the concept of the metrosexual man is seen as a way to boost sales of hair, skin, and nail care products and services by creating an image to which men of all ages can aspire.

The creation of the high-maintenance female image by Coco Chanel was popularized by major cosmetic companies, clothing designers, and accessory manufacturers, which boosted sales tremendously. Women of all ages, including prepubertal teenagers, feel the need to engage in such activities as nail painting, hair coloring, applying makeup, and ear piercing in order to attain the media's perception of beauty. This perceived need by females has resulted in tremendous sales in multiple segments. Creating purchasing opportunities for males similar to those available to females could conceivably double the economic potential of this category.

This leads us to wonder whether men require unique skin care products. Does male skin differentiate so much from female skin? Could a moisturizer formulated for women be put in a different bottle and achieve the same results for men? This article examines the unique issues differentiating male and female skin care.

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The author reports no conflict of interest in relation to this article.

Male Versus Female Skin

It is said that women are made of sugar and spice and everything nice, whereas men are made of snips and snails and puppy dog tails. From a dermatologic perspective, this is an oversimplification. The differences between the skin of males and females are obvious to the human eye. Male skin is thicker than female skin, in part due to the presence of terminal hair follicles covering much of the body. This difference is most pronounced on the face where women have only vellus hairs, which are fine and colorless, whereas men have fully developed terminal hairs, which are coarse and pigmented and take up space within the skin. The presence of male facial hair is partially responsible for the more favorable appearance of mature men over mature women. As UV radiation activates collagenase to destroy dermal collagen, the male beard prevents skin from wrinkling. Thus, photoaged males do not exhibit the pronounced redundant facial skin seen in photoaged females.

The male beard also gives skin the ability to camouflage surface irregularities, such as scarring. If the skin under the beard is stretched, hypopigmented depressed acne scars may become apparent. Beard stubble also provides skin color irregularity, which camouflages telangiectasias on the lower cheeks. In summary, male skin has a coarse appearance, which is considered masculine and desirable, as opposed to female skin that must be even in texture and color. Thus, women are more preoccupied with fixing skin problems than men because men do not see changes in their skin as easily or as early in life.

Cleansing Male Skin

The most basic skin care need is facial cleansing. Most men wash their face twice daily with bar soap. Why have men been satisfied with bar cleansers instead of purchasing more pricey facial cleansers like their female counterparts? The answer is because bar cleansers work quite well on average male skin. Males have more sebum, eccrine sweat, and apocrine sweat than females, and the excellent cleansing offered by bar cleansers meets their hygiene needs. Males also have the need to control odor because bacteria degrade the apocrine sweat, which mixes with sebum to create a characteristic musty smell.

The most popular facial cleansers used by men are known as combars, a contraction of combination bars, which contain synthetic detergent cleansers, a small amount of soap, and usually antibacterial agents. The most popular antibacterial is triclosan, also found in antibacterial waterless hand sanitizers. Triclosan interferes with the formation of the bacterial cell wall, thereby effectively reducing the bacterial degradation of apocrine sweat. Facial cleansers formulated for females typically mask body odor by adding a fragrance, rather than incorporating an antibacterial, and do not remove sebum as thoroughly as facial cleansers formulated for men. This is because men prefer their skin to feel tight after cleansing whereas women, who are sensitive to flaky skin that disrupts smooth cosmetic application, prefer a softer feel.

The one new development that may change the male skin care market more than ever is effective laser hair removal. Some men are electing to permanently remove facial hair, which creates hygiene needs more aligned with female skin care. This leads to another consideration in male skin care, which is shaving.

Shaving

While laser hair removal for men is gaining in popularity, most men still consider facial hair an important part of their masculinity. The razor market is well ahead of the skin care market in developing products specifically for men. Shaving has an important impact on facial skin care for men. Shaving is probably the most effective physical method of exfoliation and is more effective than topical α -hydroxy acids, hand-held microdermabrasion devices, or mechanical brushes. Shaving efficiently removes desquamating corneocytes along with beard debris obviating the need for facials and other spa procedures. Shaving is also an effective method of removing comedones from the skin, thereby providing acne treatment.

However, improper shaving techniques can result in razor burn and pseudofolliculitis barbae (PFB). Razor burn results from the removal of skin where the hair exits through an opening known as the follicular ostia. Newer razors that are designed to rest flat against the skin, along with multiple spring-mounted blades decrease razor burn. The flat razor design minimizes the need to keep the razor at a certain angle to avoid cutting the skin. It is easiest to maintain a steady angle when the flat razor can glide over the skin's surface, requiring less manual dexterity. The multiple blades provide a closer shave without pressing the razor into the skin. The first blade lifts the hair from the skin and each successive blade cuts the hair closer and closer to the skin's surface.

The success of a shave can also be improved by selecting a shaving gel. Postfoaming shaving gels, which are dispensed as a gel and then rubbed into the skin to form a foam, enhance the absorption of water into the hair, softening the protein bonds in the hair and decreasing the force required to cut the hair. It is said that a dry hair shaft has the same resistance to cutting similar to that of a copper wire. The shave gel reduces razor burn and PFB as seen in individuals with kinky facial hair where the sharp edge of the cut hair reenters the skin, thereby decreasing skin friction and improving the closeness of the shave.

Moisturizers

Shaving is usually the final activity in the male grooming routine, which differs from females who usually apply a facial moisturizer after cleansing. Why do most men skip applying a moisturizer? The answer is because male facial sebum production is typically high, obviating the need to moisturize. Most men do not need to retard trans-epidermal water loss because they do not expose their skin to the number of products used by females, they do

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not engage in multiple barrier damaging procedures, and their rapid sebum replacement is adequate. Men typically need emollients, rather than moisturizers, unless skin disease is present that smoothes down the desquamating corneocytes by filling in the intercellular spaces where lipids may have been removed from overaggressive cleansing. The most popular emollient is dimethicone, which may be delivered to the skin's surface in the form of a toner, aftershave lotion, or skin bracer. This is a key difference in products developed for males and females.

Moisturizers formulated for females are typically more occlusive to increase skin hydration and minimize periorbital wrinkling due to dehydration. These fine periorbital wrinkles are seen as signs of aging in women, but appear to contribute to character in males. Thus, antiaging moisturizers have been slow to catch on in the male skin care market. Whereas women are eager at a young age to engage in the purchase of wrinkle creams, men are more resistant. A man's rugged, coarse look is valued as a sign of masculinity and maturity. The thick male skin is also less able to respond to the beneficial effects of moisturization, especially on the hair

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located on the upper cheeks. Wrinkle creams simply do not have early appeal to men because of their perceived lack of need and poor immediate efficacy.

Photoprotection

The male skin's resistance to aging is partly due to the photoprotection afforded by facial hair. The follicle also increases skin thickness, decreasing the penetration of UVA radiation into male skin. This allows women to age more rapidly than men, a phenomenon magnified by the media's preference for younger women paired with older men. Thus, men do not see the need for the application of sunscreen to the same degree as their female counterparts.

Summary

Male skin care is similar to, yet different from, female skin care. The presence of a facial beard provides photoprotection and resistance to facial wrinkling, but hair removal can be challenging. Shaving can improve skin texture and minimize acne, but poor shaving techniques can cause razor burn and aggravate PFB. The unique male biofilm, composed of apocrine sweat and sebum, requires different hygiene needs. It is not enough to package male skin care products in blue bottles and female skin care products in pink bottles. The materials inside the bottles must cater to the unique skin needs of the different sexes. ■