Grooming Men: Consumer Culture and the Constitution of Masculine Identities

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PhD Thesis
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The thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of Portsmouth.
Declaration

Whilst registered as a candidate for the above degree, I have not been registered for any other research award. The results and conclusions embodied in this thesis are the work of the named candidate and have not been submitted for any other academic award.

Word count: 75,511
Abstract

Consumer culture expanded considerably throughout the twentieth-century. Consumer commodities, goods and services became ever more significant in the everyday lives of those living in the Western world. Consumer and marketing industries have invested considerable resources into sites of information that have cultivated a relationship between consumer commodities and identity with consumer brands and products positioned as signifiers of owners' identities, used to reflect individuals' tastes, preferences, sexual orientation, class, income, ethnicity and gender. Drawing on Zygmunt Bauman’s extensive body of work as a framework for analysis this thesis examines how a shift from a production-led to a consumer-driven culture has impacted on the identity of modern men, an identity that was until the late twentieth-century more closely associated with employment and production than consumption.

By focusing on men's relationship with and involvement in consumer markets, particularly the male grooming product market, this thesis makes an empirical contribution to the men and masculinity academic field, examining new ways of understanding male identity, masculinity and the male gender role. This focus is achieved through a modified grounded-theory approach which draws data from document analysis, a focus group, an online questionnaire and an online discussion forum.

The findings show an increasing fluidity in the ways in which male identity, masculinity and the male gender role are represented in media content. These representations have stimulated and reflected modern men's greater identification with and embodiment of a growing number of liquid identities and a blurring of gender roles. I argue that whilst male identity is still shaped by men's involvement in production consumer commodities are increasingly significant, with men's interest and engagement in consumer markets, particularly the male grooming product market, facilitating the cultivation of short lived identities which constitute new ways of understanding and being a man in the twenty-first century.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my supervisor Professor Barry Smart who nurtured and sustained my interest in the subject area of male grooming for eight years. I am gratefully indebted to his very valuable comments on this thesis. My thanks also go to my second supervisor Professor Kay Peggs who developed my ideas and provided countless hours of encouragement.

To Georgina, my inspiration for starting and staying on this journey, I could not have finished it without your example, thank you. Finally to Tiggy, for bringing such light into my life.
Table of Contents

Abstract
Acknowledgements

List of figures i
Source location of images used in figures iii
List of tables xi
Glossary of abbreviations xii

1. Introduction 1

2. Consumption and the transformation of modern social life: Bauman’s thesis 12

3. Being a man: Identity and work 27

4. Consumer culture: Grooming the male consumer 39

5. Men’s media: Selling new identities to new men 59

6. Identities in liquid modernity: The fluidity of modern masculinities 78

7. Methods and data 98

8. Marketing, consuming and grooming to critical male consumers 126

9. Consuming symbols of masculine identity and lifestyle 151

10. The changing face of modern men 177

11. Conclusions: Consuming futures 196

Bibliography 205

Appendices
Appendix One – Glossary 242
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix Two – Magazine Profile</th>
<th>247</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Three – Grooming Brand Profile</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Four – Statement of Ethical Compliance from FHSS Ethics Committee</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Five - Ethical Matters (I) - Information Sheet Focus Group</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Six - Ethical Matters (II) - Information Sheet Online Questionnaire</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Seven – Online Questionnaire</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Eight – Online Forum Profiling Questionnaire</td>
<td>277</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Nine – Logos Included in Profiling Questionnaire</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Ten – Online Discussion Forum Threads and Questions</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix Eleven - Summary of Online Discussion Forum Sample</td>
<td>281</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Number</td>
<td>Chapter Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Chapter Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Chapter Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Chapter Four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Chapter Four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Chapter Four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>Chapter Five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2</td>
<td>Chapter Five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Chapter Five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Chapter Five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Chapter Five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>Chapter Five</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>Chapter Six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>Chapter Six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Chapter Six</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Chapter Six</td>
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<td>6.5</td>
<td>Chapter Six</td>
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<td>6.6</td>
<td>Chapter Six</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Chapter Seven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Chapter Eight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Chapter Eight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Chapter Nine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>Chapter Nine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Number</td>
<td>Chapter Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>Chapter Nine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>Chapter Nine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>Chapter Nine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Chapter Ten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>Chapter Ten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>Chapter Ten</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2.1</td>
<td>Appendix Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2.2</td>
<td>Appendix Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2.3</td>
<td>Appendix Two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.1</td>
<td>Appendix Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.2</td>
<td>Appendix Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.3</td>
<td>Appendix Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.4</td>
<td>Appendix Three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Number</td>
<td>Figure Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Economic recession 1980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Butlin’s poster 1950s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>H.I.S. Jeans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>Men’s Health front cover April 2015 issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.4</td>
<td>Examples of male grooming product advertisements that focus audiences' attention on men's appearance by sexualising women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Number</td>
<td>Figure Description</td>
</tr>
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<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>guilty-pour-homme/images/gucci-guilty-pour-homme-perfumes.jpg</td>
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<td><em>Axe</em></td>
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<td><em>Nivea Men</em></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All accessed 31/03/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Examples of male grooming product advertisements that focus exclusively on men's appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>accessed 07/11/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Number</td>
<td>Figure Description</td>
</tr>
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<td>---------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Biotherm Homme</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.6</td>
<td><strong>Gods of Football</strong> Australian rugby player Nick Youngquest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.1</td>
<td><strong>Still images from Lynx Find Your Magic</strong> television campaign 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Number</td>
<td>Figure Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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<td>Diesel</td>
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<td>Huggies</td>
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<td>118 118</td>
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<td></td>
<td>All accessed 01/10/2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>Joop! Homme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Hugo Boss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>Images of David Beckham’s changing appearance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2015/04/14/07/278A20E500000578-0-image-m-9_1428993937050.jpg">http://i.dailymail.co.uk/i/pix/2015/04/14/07/278A20E500000578-0-image-m-9_1428993937050.jpg</a></td>
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<td><a href="http://i4.mirror.co.uk/incoming/article5620630.ece/ALTERNATES/s615b/David-">http://i4.mirror.co.uk/incoming/article5620630.ece/ALTERNATES/s615b/David-</a></td>
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<td>Figure Description</td>
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<td>Beckham.jpg</td>
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<td>All accessed 19/01/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>Body Beckham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>H&amp;M Body Wear  <a href="https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/5b/6a/1d/5b6a1d8789c3ccf903e995692eadc3b5.jpg">https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/5b/6a/1d/5b6a1d8789c3ccf903e995692eadc3b5.jpg</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Gillette  <a href="http://smg.photobucket.com/user/titom23/media/beckham0001.jpg.html">http://smg.photobucket.com/user/titom23/media/beckham0001.jpg.html</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All accessed 15/01/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Tiger Woods Gillette</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>‘The One’ Dolce &amp; Gabbana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><a href="https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/25/31/48/253148276410a601b72a7e1b0efee155.jpg">https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/236x/25/31/48/253148276410a601b72a7e1b0efee155.jpg</a></td>
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<td></td>
<td>accessed 16/10/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>Selection of images from The GQ Collections fashion feature</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|               |  https://steelmachines.wordpress.com/2010/09/02/autumnwinter-2010-the-gq-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure Number</th>
<th>Figure Description</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 2010</td>
<td>Still image from the television advertisement for the <em>Gillette Fusion ProGlide Styler</em></td>
<td><a href="collections/#more-2220">collections/#more-2220</a> accessed 16/10/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Number</td>
<td>Figure Description</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>Example of a print advertisement for Bulldog</td>
<td><a href="https://s-media-cache-ak0.pinimg.com/originals/3f/bb/dd/3fbbdd9d3b3754de8b33c02b2599aea7.jpg">link</a> accessed 19/10/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>Dolce &amp; Gabbana Fall/Winter 2010 Menswear Advertising Campaign</td>
<td><a href="https://1.bp.blogspot.com/_zWbq9p9HtO8/TB0WtRaELNI/AAAAAAAAR04/mD8B-34i2GA/s1600/8.jpg">link</a> accessed 10/10/2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2.1</td>
<td>GQ front cover September 2010</td>
<td><a href="http://i30.tinypic.com/5v6ux4.jpg">link</a> accessed 21/03/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A2.2</td>
<td>Nuts front cover 10th – 16th September 2010</td>
<td><a href="http://ebook.it580.com/files/2010/09/Nuts-2010-09-10.jpg">link</a> accessed 21/03/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure Number</td>
<td>Figure Description</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.1</td>
<td>Gillette brand logo</td>
<td><a href="https://wallpaperscraft.com/image/gillette_razor_body_care_logo_brand_98156_3840x1200.jpg">https://wallpaperscraft.com/image/gillette_razor_body_care_logo_brand_98156_3840x1200.jpg</a> accessed 04/04/2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A3.2</td>
<td><em>L’Oreal Paris Men Expert</em> brand logo</td>
<td><a href="http://dgpharma.com/image/cache/data/sport_market_references_logo_l_oreal_men_expert_250x250-500x500.jpg">http://dgpharma.com/image/cache/data/sport_market_references_logo_l_oreal_men_expert_250x250-500x500.jpg</a> accessed 04/04/2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table Number</th>
<th>Chapter Number</th>
<th>Page Number</th>
<th>Table Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Chapter Seven</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>Focus group sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>Chapter Eight</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>Respondents' main motivation for shopping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>Chapter Eight</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>Respondents' estimated monthly expenditure on personal care products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>CAQDAS</td>
<td>Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>IS</td>
<td>Information Services</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LGBTQ</td>
<td>Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender, Queer / Questioning</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>ONS</td>
<td>Office for National Statistics</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Standard Occupational Classification</td>
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<td>SPSS</td>
<td>Statistics Package for Social Scientists</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>VLE</td>
<td>Virtual Learning Environment</td>
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<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Chapter One

Introduction

Extent and nature of the male grooming market

With an estimated value of £869 million in 2016 the men’s grooming market has been recognised as a growing sector in the UK beauty industry with an increasing number of men demonstrating a greater interest in the way they look and consumer commodities associated with their appearance (Simpson: 12/03/2017, Mintel: February 2017, Fury: 14/01/2016). The male skin care market indicates the most significant growth of all male grooming markets with consumer spending on men’s skin care products expected to increase from £104 million in 2015 to £132 million by 2020 (Mintel: May 2016). The men’s hair care market is also regarded as an area of significant expansion with a growing number of hair care brands and product ranges being designed and marketed specifically for male consumers (Mintel: March 2017). Sales of men’s fragrance / aftershave demonstrate the continuing popularity of these products among male groomers with 73 per cent of men regularly consuming and using these consumer commodities (Mintel: August 2017). The use of fragrance / aftershave is even higher among men aged 16 – 24 with 84 per cent of men in this age group using fragrance / aftershave, an increase in use that is perhaps indicative of young men’s greater awareness of and engagement in grooming compared to that of older men (Mintel: August 2017, Mintel: February 2017). Despite recent changes in facial hair fashion impacting on consumer spending on shaving preparations, razor blades and electric shavers the men’s shaving market remains buoyant with sales figures totalling £330 million in 2011.

Whilst female consumers have been an important factor in the growth of the male grooming market with female partners, family members and friends purchasing male grooming products for the men in their lives, men are themselves becoming increasingly active consumers of male grooming products (Mintel: August 2017, Simpson: 12/03/2017, Mintel: March 2017, Fury: 14/01/2016, Coslett: 13/09/2013, Mintel: October 2011). Sales figures of men’s fragrance / aftershave as well as sales of premium skin care ranges illustrate these changes in male consumers’ attitude, interest and behaviour most effectively with grooming products such as these, which were once bought predominantly by female consumers and ‘gifted’ to

1 A third of men do not associate being well-groomed with being clean shaven (Mintel: October 2011)
men, becoming grooming products men regularly purchase for themselves (Mintel: August 2017, Mintel: June 2017).

The term grooming has been broadly used to refer to and describe the consumer commodities, goods and services associated with men’s physical appearance with consumer and marketing industries as well as consumers making reference to a female beauty industry and a male grooming industry (Mintel: February 2017). This distinction highlights not only the different nomenclature used to sell the increasing number of consumer commodities, goods and services that are frequently the same product labelled, described and marketed differently for each gender, but also the complex relationship male consumers have with their appearance, and their perception of and engagement with consumer commodities, goods and services related to the way they look. These complexities are explored throughout my thesis with men’s reluctance to be linked to any consumer commodities, goods and services that have historically been associated with women and homosexual men seemingly contradicted by their increasing consumption and use of male grooming products, and their growing interest in their appearance (Mintel: August 2017, Mintel: August 2017, Simpson: 12/03/2017, Mintel: February 2017, Barber: 2016a, Walker: 21/02/2014, Ricciardelli, Clow and White: 2010, Bakewell: 2006, Mitchell and Rothwell, Dodd, Linakar and Grigg: 2005, Connell: 2005, Simpson: 15/11/1994).

Male grooming products include items such as skin care (moisturisers, exfoliants, masks, serums, lotions, self-tanning preparations and applications), hair care (shampoos, styling products, treatments, dyes), deodorants and fragrances, shower and bath products (washes, gels, soaks, soaps), hair removal and hair styling items (razors, replacement blades, electrical shavers, beard trimmers, nose hair trimmers, straighteners), and grooming gadgets and accessories (tweezers, nail buffers, nail clippers). Male grooming also refers to treatments and services performed by barbers and salon therapists (waxing, threading, facials, tanning, manicures, pedicures, teeth whitening, anti-aging solutions e.g. chemical peels, Botox injections). The terms grooming and grooming products have been used by market analysts and in market data (Mintel: February 2017, Libby: 29/07/2015, Walker: 21/02/2014, Mintel: October 2011, Tucker: 09/01/2011, Euromonitor International: 30/06/2011, Marketing Week: 15/09/2010, Lennard: 2009), in popular culture and media content (Dalley: 24/01/2017, Fury:
Chapter One

14/01/2016, Buchanan: 27/04/2015, Cosslett: 13/09/2013, Hsu: 08/02/2012, Gray: 28/10/2004) as well as in academic research studies (Barber: 2016b, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Sturrock and Pioch: 1998). Whilst male consumers in the USA, UK and Korea have responded positively to the term grooming it has not been as well received in Russia where it is associated with pets, in India where markets and male consumers are more likely to refer to ‘personal care’ products, or in Latin America where proud male consumers prefer to use vanitas to describe the care they take in their appearance (Wilscam: personal communication: 27/04/2015). With these cultural differences in mind, the discussion in this thesis and the data collected from my empirical research studies will focus on men’s consumption and use of male grooming products, goods and services in the UK. In my discussion I will explore the ways in which the male grooming market has both stimulated and responded to an increasingly diverse male audience by manufacturing and marketing a range of grooming brands, products, goods and services for different ethnicities, lifestyles, sexual orientations, age groups and gender identities (Daniels: 24/02/2016, Marketing Week: 15/09/2010, Strutton: 01/08/2010, Simpson: 17/04/2010).

Sociological explanations

Whilst the consumption of commodities has been present throughout history it is the current "way of life that is perpetually preoccupied with the pursuit, possession, rapid displacement, and replacement of a seemingly inexhaustible supply of things" (Smart: 2010: 5) that has marked the present-day society distinct from previous eras (Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a). Society for Zygmunt Bauman, whose extensive discussion on the subject of consuming will form a framework for this thesis, has increasingly moved from a production-led to a consumer-driven culture wherein individuals are now more inclined to define and express their identity through consumer commodities rather than in terms of the items they produce (Bauman: 2005a). This development has led to the commodification of everyday life whereby every facet

2 Tom Wilscam is CEO of HOMMAGE - the supplier of luxury grooming products and services for affluent male consumers. The HOMMAGE company has partnership deals with chains of luxury hotels, spas and speciality stores in over 20 countries

3 The male grooming product market is increasingly recognising and responding to Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, Transgender and Queer / Questioning (LGBTQ) audiences with the inclusion of transgendered models in advertising campaigns as well as the development of consumer commodities that target LGBTQ consumers e.g. grooming brands and make-up products designed specifically for transgendered men (Lubitz: 23/02/2016, Daniels: 24/02/2016)
of existence e.g. relationships, religion, politics, education, gender and identity have become ‘things’ for consumer and marketing industries to turn into commodities and for men and women to (rapidly) possess, discard and replace (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 1999, Bauman: 1996).


Review of existing literature and identification of further areas of discussion


⁴ The member of a household who provides financial support for others (Meisenbach: 2010)

In addition to my review of existing sociological literature I engaged with relevant consumer and market reports providing quantitative data that demonstrated the size and scope of the male grooming market, and indicated men’s changing attitude to grooming and their appearance. Whilst these reports were useful in developing my understanding of men’s engagement in consumer markets they neglected to include sociological analysis of the significance of men’s increasing interest and involvement in grooming. With these considerations in mind I designed a research project to collect new quantitative and qualitative data, and provide sociological analysis on the relationship that has developed between consumer commodities and men’s sense of self.

Research design

I was aware that being a female researcher in a male focused subject area could affect the recruitment to and participation in research studies, and my analysis of the data collected (Yassour-Borochowitz: 2012, Arendell: 1997, Williams and Heikes: 1993, Gurney: 1985). As a result I had to give additional consideration to the research design, over and above that which relates more generally to empirical research and data analysis, recognising and responding to the ways in which my gender could impact on the empirical studies I conducted. On reflection I consider my gender and position as a female ‘outsider’ from the issues effecting male consumers to be a strength in my research design as it encouraged my greater critical assessment of the research design and research tools available to me. I also regard that my gender encouraged the male participants involved in the qualitative studies to be more
Chapter One

descriptive in their responses than they may have been had the studies been conducted by a male researcher (see further discussion in Chapter Seven).

The central research question of my thesis through which I engage with both the men and masculinities agenda and the continuing development of contemporary consumer culture is: Why has men’s grooming become a growing sector in the beauty industry? To achieve a comprehensive sociological response to this question I identified the following four research aims:

1. Consider the recent proliferation of men’s grooming through the lens of Bauman’s thesis concerning the transition from a society of producers to a society of consumers;
2. Investigate the consumption of male grooming products in terms of social integration, social stratification and the formation of identity;
3. Examine the growth in the number and types of grooming products available to male consumers and analyse advertisements that are used to market these products;
4. Explore men’s perspectives on and engagement with grooming, the promotion of grooming, and the consumption of grooming products.

Having established my research aims I conducted a review of research tools that would respond to my central research question, minimise the potential impact of my gender and appeal to male participants (Yassour-Borochowitz: 2012, Ono and Zavody: 2003, Arendell: 1997, Williams and Heikes: 1993, Gurney: 1985). With these considerations in mind I included the following approaches in my research design:

1. Documentary analysis of a sample of men’s magazines and advertising campaigns aimed at male audiences to explore representations of masculinity in media content;
2. A face-to-face focus group of male participants to explore their responses to media representations, social expectations and their relationship with grooming and male grooming products;

3. An online questionnaire to build a profile of a sample of male consumers and assess the impact of lifestyle factors on male grooming product expenditure and use;

4. An online discussion forum to explore the ways in which participants used male grooming products in their everyday lives.

I anticipated that this mixed methods modified grounded theory approach\textsuperscript{5} would:

1. Provide data from different aspects of the subject area (e.g. market data, male participants’ perspectives);
2. Immense myself as a female researcher in a subject area focused on men;
3. Use research methods that would appeal to male participants;
4. Give male participants the opportunity to discuss the subject area using their own words.

Research samples and recruitment process

My documentary analysis of men’s magazines and advertising content for men’s grooming products involved a sample of three men’s magazines and three male grooming brands. Justifications for the magazines and brands included in the sample of media content analysed is provided in Chapter Seven with further information about each magazine and grooming brand detailed in Appendix Two and Appendix Three respectively. The face-to-face focus group, online questionnaire and online discussion forum I conducted involved male

\textsuperscript{5} I consider my approach to be modified grounded theory as I used existing literature and secondary quantitative data to inform my research design (further discussion concerning my approach is provided in Chapter Seven)
Chapter One

participants aged over 18 years old. I recruited volunteers to these research elements using snowballing and convenience sampling methods whereby I invited male colleagues, friends and family members to take part in my research and asked them to extend this invitation to their male peers (Bryman: 2016). Further information concerning the recruitment processes and samples involved in each of the research elements is provided in Chapter Seven.

Areas of discussion

In order to pursue these research aims in the thesis my analysis of the complex issues associated with male identity, consuming and grooming, is organised in the following chapters.

Chapter Two introduces the work of Zygmunt Bauman, indicating the relevance of his sociology as a framework for my thesis. Key aspects of Bauman's work are presented to demonstrate how men's identity has been influenced by transformations in social and economic life and their increasing engagement in consumer activity.

Chapter Three examines the significance of paid employment in defining gender roles and shaping identity. Consideration is given to the ways in which several economic, political and social changes in the twentieth-century contributed to new ways of understanding gender roles and the development of more fluid male identities that are no longer as predicated on men’s employment or their dominance in work.

In Chapter Four I explore the growth of the consumer industry from the late twentieth-century focusing particularly on the expansion of the male grooming product market in the last thirty years; a development that highlights significant changes in terms of the consumer markets men are engaged and interested in. Bauman’s discussion of a consumer-driven culture introduced in Chapter Two is returned to in Chapter Four in order to explore the significance of men’s greater involvement in new consumer markets.
Chapter Five focuses on the ways in which the men’s magazine market has stimulated men’s engagement in consuming and their growing interest in their appearance. These media sources highlight significant changes in regards to the way male identity and the male gender role is presented in media content and understood by audiences, cultivating and reflecting new male identities such as the new man, the new lad, the übersexual and the spornosexual which are all underpinned by men’s engagement in consuming and their display of relevant consumer commodities (please see Appendix One for a glossary of these new male identities).

Chapter Six addresses the diverse representations of male identities included in media content. In this chapter I explore the ways in which fluid representations of men in marketing material reflect Bauman’s concept of a liquid life. The well-known retired professional footballer and celebrity consumer icon David Beckham is discussed as a case study to explore the importance of consuming, grooming and appearance for modern men. Beckham has inhabited a range of fluid identities that reflect the changing social expectations on men in a liquid modern consumer orientated world.

My research aims and the methods I have used to respond to these aims are outlined in Chapter Seven. In this chapter I reflect critically on the research design and the research methods used in each of the four research elements conducted for this study. I address the considerations I made as a female researcher in a male focused subject area. I outline the ways in which the research design has contributed to the subject area of male identity, facilitating the collection of new qualitative and quantitative data that indicates men’s response to changing cultural expectations, the new ways men construct and manage their identity, and the increasing focus on men’s appearance in a consumer-driven society. I present my analysis of the data collected in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten.

Chapter Eight centres on the ways in which men’s consumer engagement has been stimulated by the increasing number of media messages that signal the ways in which men might dress, care for, present, and express themselves through the purchase and use of consumer commodities.
Chapter One

Chapter Nine focuses on male grooming products through an examination of relevant media content and expression of interest in and experience of their use by male consumers. This is a particularly rich research field for the exploration of consumption as a system of signs, where it is the image, the sign, the message that is consumed, that is central within contemporary consumer society. This chapter draws on examples from participants’ discussion that suggest the ways in which participants recognised and used consumer commodities in their own lives to signify their identity, lifestyles, tastes, preferences.

Against a backdrop of the increasing range of representations of men and masculinities in media content, Chapter Ten focuses on the objectification of men in the media, and in advertising and marketing texts in particular, and the associated expectations that may be engendered and experienced by men. The ways in which men think about and respond to the objectification of men in media content is explored and consideration is given to the ways in which men modify their appearance in response to what they perceive to be more fluid social expectations about appearance, masculinity, and male identity.

Several documents have been included in the appendices to support and contextualise this discussion. These documents include a glossary of terms frequently used throughout this thesis such as new lad and metrosexual, and grooming terms such as manscapping and threading, as well as a profile of the men’s magazines and male grooming product brands used in the research elements. Also included in the appendices are the documents that were made available to those who volunteered their participation in the research elements such as the participant information sheet and the questions included in the online research elements.

Concluding comments

This thesis is an examination of the ways in which a shift to a consumer-driven culture has impacted on male identity in the twenty-first century. The research elements designed for the purpose of this thesis provide new data on the subject area of male consumers’ relationship with their identity and consumer commodities, contributing to existing research and knowledge
Chapter One

in the men and masculinities academic discipline, as well as enhancing understanding of contemporary consumer culture.
Chapter Two

Consumption and the transformation of modern social life: Bauman’s thesis

The transformation of modern social life has been a longstanding concern and a significant focus of inquiry within social and historical analysis. Within the extensive range of studies of the respects in which modernity has been transformed the growth and development of consumption has become a major theme for sociologists, historians, and social theorists. Analysts have made reference to a ‘consumer revolution’ (Campbell: 1987), ‘a consumer age’ (Leach: 1993), the increasing significance of a culture of ‘consumerism’ (Smart: 2010, Gabriel and Lang: 2006, Bauman: 2005a, Rojek: 2004, Schor: 2002), and, in turn, consideration has been given to the advent of a ‘consumer society’ (Bauman: 1999, Baudrillard: 1998) and its consequences for individuals, communities, societies and the environment (Cahill: 2001, Whiteley: 1987). A key figure within sociological thought in this respect has been the social theorist Zygmunt Bauman who has produced numerous papers and books on developments in modern forms of life and, in particular, the consequences that have followed from the growth in consumer activity and the increasing prominence afforded to consumption.

A major preoccupation in Bauman’s work has been to provide analyses of modern life and the transformations to which it has become subject. To that end Bauman has employed a range of pivotal concepts to capture the distinctive features of the changing social world, using these concepts in a range of ways to describe a society that is increasingly liquid, diverse and global (Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2005b, Bauman and May: 2004, Bauman: 2001c, Bauman: 2000). The concepts that are particularly relevant to the concerns of my thesis are modernity, postmodernity and a later term liquid modernity, terms which Bauman has used to conceptualise changing times and explore the impact a shift from a production-led to a consumer-driven culture has had on the resources individuals use to construct, define and express their sense of self in the twenty-first century.
Bauman’s conceptualisations of changing times

Modernity to postmodernity

Bauman has described modernity to be the period in which administrative bureaucratic tasks became the mechanism that organised and regulated the ways in which society operated (Bauman: 1991). Modernity was characterised by strict regulations, processes and structures which were brought about and enforced by three powerful forces – a national state, science and capitalism. These forces worked together to cultivate an obligatory way of life that “devalued and demonized the ‘raw’ human condition” prompting “an incessant drive to eliminate the haphazard and annihilate the spontaneous” (Bauman: 1992: xi). Whilst all three forces impacted on the ways in which society operated Bauman suggests that it was the state’s involvement in all aspects of everyday life that influenced citizens most significantly (Bauman: 1992). By regulating the economy, industry, politics, education, health, transport the state was able to ensure standardisation and uniformity in the lives of its citizens, diminishing if not uprooting local cultures and reducing if not destroying regional, ethnic and cultural communities, traditions and identities (Bauman: 1992). This regulation was facilitated by what Bauman has described to be heavy capitalism - the solid, stable, fixed method of production associated with the manufacturing industry and the extraction of raw materials performed by predominantly male workforces (Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2001b). Bauman’s description of modernity identifies the significance of paid employment in the lives of its citizens, suggesting that whilst the debasing nature of routine, repetitive tasks trained and drilled workers into a ‘placid submission’ it also cultivated social relations and local communities that were united by a collective identity associated with work (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman and May: 2004, Bauman: 2001b).

The institutional processes that operated in modernity regulated how individuals lived their lives, with fixed structures such as employment shaping the identity of local communities and their citizens. But in the second half of the twentieth-century the self-critiquing nature of the postmodern society that developed contributed to an erosion of the social and economic structures of modernity, impacting on the ways in which individuals understood and managed their sense of self (Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2002, Bauman: 1999, Tester: 1993). Used to describe an experience (with no authoritative solution to questions or truths), a world view (marked by plurality) and a social system (that has weakened once solid structures)
(Smart: 1993, Bauman: 1992) the postmodern ‘state of mind’ has according to Bauman criticised everything about the strict ordered society of modernity but proposed no meaningful alternatives in its place (Bauman: 1992). In comparison to the collective society of modernity Bauman’s description of a postmodern society presents an individualised society; one in which all the truths or answers sought collectively by citizens in modernity have been undermined, placed in question, or abandoned, where duty and worry have been privatised and where individuals have been prompted to find their own way of understanding and responding to ‘fears’ (fears that Bauman has argued are a consequence of individuals ‘shouldering’ greater responsibility for the direction of their own lives) (Bauman: 1992: xviii).

Bauman suggests that in the present-day society individuals increasingly search for answers, respond to their fears, and look for purpose in their lives in and through the activity of consuming with individuals using consumer commodities to reflect and facilitate their short-lived fluid identities (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman and Yakimova: 08/11/2002). Individuals’ increasing interest and engagement in consumer markets and the greater emphasis placed on consumer brands, goods and services in liquid modernity will be explored further in the following sections and returned to throughout my thesis with qualitative and quantitative data collected for this study used to demonstrate the significance of consuming for individuals in contemporary society.

Postmodernity to liquid modernity

Bauman’s presentation of a postmodern society described a society that attempted to re-evaluate and critique every aspect of everyday life e.g. institutional processes, hierarchical structures, politics, religion, class, race and gender relations, individual identity, art, architecture, education (Bauman and Yakimova: 08/11/2002, Bauman: 1997, Bauman: 1992). But Bauman identified an increasing fluidity in contemporary society which he suggests is more accurately reflected in, and captured by, the term liquid modernity (Bauman and Yakimova: 08/11/2002, Bauman: 2000). Bauman’s conceptualisation of this term emphasises the malleable liquid nature of present-day social conditions; the ‘loose’ ‘frail’ social bonds and the constant state of ‘flow’ or change (Bauman and Yakimova: 08/11/2002, Bauman: 2000). By introducing the concept of liquid modernity Bauman demonstrates the significance of movement and transition in his thesis, arguing that the
bureaucratic regime and fixed sites of work e.g. the Fordist factory¹ which immobilised labour and capital, and helped to form and maintain the ‘shape’ of society in modernity have become increasingly liquid in their nature with a shift to a fluid economy and a globalised workforce (Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2001c, Bauman: 2000). This shift has had implications for all members of a liquid modern society, but particularly for male workers whose involvement in paid employment and their role as ‘breadwinner’ significantly shaped and informed the identity of many men in the Western world (Bauman: 2005). The factors that led to a liquid labour market and the impact employment changes have had in regard to men’s relationship between their employment and their identity will be explored in Chapter Three.

Solid to liquid modernity

Bauman uses the properties of solids and liquids to describe the shift from established, relatively stable institutional structures in modernity to more fluid processes in liquid modernity (Bauman: 2000). Bauman highlights the properties of liquids that “neither fix space nor bend time . . . do not keep to any shape for long and are constantly ready (and prone) to change” (Bauman: 2000: 2) to suggest the ways in which present-day society reflects a liquid form with state control, economics, politics, social relations and everyday life becoming increasingly fluid and subject to continual change, in short becoming processual in character (Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2000). The fluid nature of liquid modernity has deregulated the once solid structures imposed on individuals, freeing up the ways of interacting and operating in the social world. It has also helped to erode social bonds and community identities, which sites of employment as well as fixed location communities (as opposed to the virtual and globalised communities of liquid modernity) helped to cultivate (Bauman and Bauman: 2011). The lack of form Bauman describes in liquid modernity has facilitated a re-evaluation of identity, prompting individuals to look for alternative resources that will allow them to construct and display a fluid constantly evolving or ever changing sense of self (Bauman: 2000).

¹ A term used to describe the economic and working conditions that operated in the industrialised world throughout the twentieth-century
In his description of the shift from solid to liquid modernity Bauman identifies a distinction between the citizen of solid modernity and the person or consumer of liquid modernity; describing a citizen to be a member of a society and a consumer to be a self-serving individual concerned with their own well-being and their individualised self-project (Bauman and Bauman: 2011; Bauman: 2000). The distinction Bauman makes highlights the increasingly individualised nature of everyday life in liquid modernity, as well as the significance of consuming in his thesis (Bauman and Bauman: 2011; Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 1999). The role of consumption in liquid modernity will be discussed shortly and returned to in the chapters that follow in which I explore the ways in which some male consumers use consumer commodities to construct and manage fluid self-projects in a liquid late modern culture.

Heavy to light modernity

Bauman uses the analogy of solids to liquids to emphasise the lack of shape or form in modern living, his distinction between heavy and light modernity serves a similar purpose, highlighting the developments that have occurred in the labour market over the last two centuries which have helped to change the significance of work in the lives of some individuals and have impacted on individuals’ sense of self (matters of great significance for my thesis) (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman and Yakimova: 08/11/2002, Bauman: 2001b). Referring to the mass-production methods used throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth-century Bauman describes a sense of heaviness and permanence to paid employment, which was bound to a physical site of work such as a factory and provided the large majority of its workers with a stable source of income throughout their working life (Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2001b). The relative shift in the balance of industry (from manufacturing to service sector), the privatisation of state owned services (e.g. British Gas, British Telecom), the feminisation of the workforce, the ‘offshoring’ of labour to the developing work, the greater flexibility of employment contracts, and the development of technology and communication hardware (all of which will be discussed in Chapter Three) have for Bauman, as well as other sociologists, led to less structured working conditions and a precarity of the labour market that has meant jobs-for-life are increasingly scarce and employment security increasingly unlikely (Urry: 2014, Sennett: 2006, Crompton: 2006, Bauman: 2005a, Collinson: 2003, Beck: 2000, Millward, Bryson and Forth: 2000). The economic and political developments that led to such significant changes
in the labour market have been attributed to the state’s greater involvement in industry and market forces (Bell: 1976), an involvement that is notable for my thesis as it effected the ways in which society operated and the resources individuals used to construct, define and express their sense of self (Sennett: 2008, Bauman: 2005a).

The contrast drawn between heavy and light capitalist modernity allows the changing form of aspects of paid employment, job, and work to be identified and explored, in particular in respect of spatial location and degree of fixity or rootedness, durability or temporal duration - where it is performed, for how many hours and by whom – and it opens up the prospect of exploring the changing relationship or connection some individuals may experience between paid employment and their sense of self with a relative shift of emphasis from heavy to light forms of employment (Bauman: 2005a). This changing relationship is significant in Bauman’s discussion as he suggests the role once performed by paid employment in terms of cultivating social bonds and shaping collective identities has become increasingly light - looser, transient or less durable - with many individuals finding it difficult (or unnecessary) to form solid relationships with their place of work, their employer, or their work colleagues. Bauman suggests that in light modernity commitment and loyalty to an employer are not an essential, or indeed for some any aspect of a ‘game plan’ that favours a short-term, flexible approach to work; an approach that has freed-up the labour market and allowed individuals to move from role to role, organisation to organisation, country to country in an increasingly fluid globalised world of employment and work (Bauman: 2001b). Bauman’s discussion concerning the increasing fluidity, movement and precarity in the labour market, and the lighter workplace relationships (which he suggests have contributed to the declining significance of work in individuals’ lives) (Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2000) provides an appropriate framework with which to explore the resources individuals’ draw on in liquid modernity to shape and inform their sense of self.

**On production and consumption: work ethic and aesthetic of consumption**

Bauman argues that the increasing processual character, movement or liquidity of social and economic conditions was stimulated by, but also contributed to, a relative shift of emphasis from a society of producers to a society of consumers (Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2001a). The society of consumers is different to that of its predecessor because of the ways in which
Chapter Two

it ‘shapes up’ or engages its members (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Bauman, 2005a, Bauman: 2000, Bauman: 1998). Whilst this difference is not ‘radical’ with both societies engaged in the production and consumption of ‘things’ (Bauman: 1998) this shift is significant and has made “an enormous difference to virtually every aspect of society, culture and individual life” (Bauman: 1999: 36). In the heavy capitalism stage of modernity workers were engaged – primarily – as producers. Paid employment was associated with the Protestant faith which helped to cultivate a ‘work ethic’, a relationship between employment and social duty, that deemed citizens of the society of producers to be morally ‘good’ if they had an active engagement in work (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2005a). For Bauman the less structured, lighter social, economic and political conditions of liquid modernity, and in particular the shift of emphasis in the economy from manufacturing to service industries and increasing precarity of waged-work have affected the daily life of paid employment for the large majority of workers in the Western world and as a result a significant and growing number of members of liquid society are engaged increasingly – primarily – in their capacity as consumers (Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2001a, Bauman: 1999). Bauman proposes that for a society of producers work provided a sense of purpose or meaning in individuals’ lives but the increasing precarity of employment and the shift to more fluid social relations have contributed to a society in which individuals are searching for a new sense of purpose (Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2001b). For Bauman, a growing number of members of a society of consumers have found this purpose in the ‘pastime’ of consuming and as such “The role once performed by work in linking together individual motives, social integration and systemic reproduction, has now been assigned to consumer activity” (Bauman: 2005a: 27).

The shift in emphasis from production to consumption, work ethic to aesthetic of consumption has placed increasing attention on the individual and the choices they are persuaded to make in a culture driven by a process of attainment and display of consumer commodities (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2002). Unlike the work ethic that united producers the aesthetic of consumption has divided citizens, casting them as lone individuals who dutifully perform their solitary role as consumers (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a). This role has prompted an individualised fear of “being caught napping, of failing to catch up with fast-moving events, of being left behind, of overlooking ‘use by’ dates, of being saddled with possessions that are no longer desirable” (Bauman: 2000: 2). These fears have been stimulated and responded to by consumer and
marketing industries which have turned virtually every aspect of modern life into a consumer choice and strategically positioned consumer commodities as resources that allow consumers to manage fears that have been prompted by their awareness that “Time is indeed passing, and the trick is to keep pace with it. If you don't want to drown, you must keep on surfing: that is to say, keep changing, as often as you can, your wardrobe, furniture, wallpaper, appearance and habits, in short – yourself” (Bauman and Bauman: 2011: 24) (emphasis added).

As well as individuals’ fear of being left-behind or of not keeping up Bauman has identified increasing insecurities concerning group acceptance and individuality which have arisen from consumers’ “dream of belonging and a dream of independence; the need for social support, and the demand for autonomy; a wish to be like everyone else and a pursuit of uniqueness. In short, all these contradictions come down to conflict between a need to hold hands because of a longing for safety, and the need to let go because of a longing for freedom. Or if we look at this conflict from another perspective: the fear of being different and the fear of losing individuality” (Bauman and Bauman: 2011: 20). Using the fashion market as an example Bauman describes how individuals’ use the consumption of an item of clothing from a brand as a way of publically displaying their ‘membership’ to a peer group. The item of clothing helps to achieve group acceptance by uniting the consumer with other consumers who have also purchased the item and who may share a similar identity. Conversely the way the consumer uses or wears the same commodity cultivates and displays a sense of consumer individuality or uniqueness, allowing the consumer to mark themselves as ‘different’ to other consumers who have consumed the same item as well as those who have chosen not to or have not been financially able to consume the item (Bauman and Bauman: 2011). This discussion will be continued in the data analysis chapters with data gathered for this study used to illustrate the ways in which the consumption and use of male grooming products cultivated a sense of shared consumer identity as well as displays of individuality and uniqueness (Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005).
Chapter Two

Consuming life

Bauman describes consumption to be the “metabolic cycle of ingesting, digesting and excreting” performed by all members of society on a daily basis, suggesting that consumer activities or consumer-related activities (the production, storage, distribution and disposal of the objects of consumption) have been a permanent and irremovable condition, an aspect of life throughout human history (Bauman: 2007: 25). In the society of producers consumption was largely performed to meet basic consumer needs (which Bauman identifies as being fed, clothed and sheltered) (Bauman: 2005a). Much like the conditions of solid modernity these needs were stable, inflexible, finite and fixed, and once met consumers had little or no need to engage in further consumer activity. Understanding consumption in this way meant that consumers only returned to the consumer markets when commodities needed to be replaced or when their needs prompted further fulfilment (Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a). This approach to consuming limited the scope for economic growth and product expansion in the consumer markets and so marketing and consumer industries embarked on the production and stimulation of consumer desires (Bauman: 2007) (the stimulation of these desires will be explored further in Chapters Four and Five). Unlike the functional aspect of consumer needs consumer desires were fluid, aspirational and subject to change, they were associated with comparison with consumers’ peers and the expression of consumers’ identities (Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2001a, Schor: 1999). Bauman argues that the expansion of consumer markets since the mid-twentieth century has meant that these desires have now been superseded by consumer wishes which he describes to be whimsical, unplanned, casual, spontaneous and fleeting, offering “a comforting certainty of the present without the frightening prospect of mortgaging the future” (Bauman: 2002: 196). Unlike consumer needs wishes are not solid or permanent, in contrast they represent nothing more than a moment in time, a succession of nows, an immediate sense of gratification and instant fulfilment for the consumer (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2002). These wishes also reflect the fluid nature of identity in liquid modernity, facilitating and stimulating consumers’ continual movement from one public presentation or performance of their identity to another, using consumer commodities to re-invent or ‘reform’ themselves as “the chances of any particular identity being placidly accepted as the ultimate one, calling for no further overhaul or replacement are equal to the proverbial survival chances of a snowball in hell” (Bauman: 2007: 112).
Bauman’s description of consumers’ needs, desires and wishes emphasises the distinction he makes between consumption – a banal, trivial occupation of individual human beings – and consumerism “an attribute of society” (Bauman: 2007: 28) (italics in original) that recycles wants, desires and longings into the “principle propelling and operating force of society” (Bauman: 2007: 28) (italics in original). Consumerism, described as “a way of living that revolves around the wanting of things, the longing for things, the purchasing of things, a way of life in which having, desiring, and wishing for more and more things have become significant preoccupations for late modern subjects whose identities are increasingly bound up with what and how they consume” (Smart: 2010: 5), has become the driving force of a society that was once driven by production and formerly engaged its members primarily according to their involvement in paid employment (Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2002, Bauman: 1999, Bauman: 1998). Bauman’s presentation of a consumer society provides a relevant framework to explore the ways in which the shift to a consumerist culture has changed and shaped individuals’ identity, an identity which the following section will suggest is increasingly ‘packaged-up’ by consumer and marketing industries for individuals to consume, try-on and cast aside in order to keep up with ever-changing liquid times (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005b, Bauman: 2000).

Whilst Bauman recognises that the significant shift from a society of producers to a society of consumers (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 1999) has not affected the identity of all members of present-day society equally (suggesting that there are flawed consumers who are not able to fully engage as consumers and who will be discussed shortly) he does not comment on the identity of those who have actively chosen not to engage as consumers e.g. freegans\(^2\) or consumer minimalists\(^3\). Neither does Bauman’s discussion address the identity of those in the Western world who remain to be – primarily – engaged as producers e.g. those whose local community is still significantly shaped by agricultural, manufacturing, mining and quarrying industries or those in professions and other related occupations for whom identity may continue to be bound up in important respects with the work that they do. Bauman pre-emptively responds to such a critique in his text Consuming Life (2007) recognising that there will always be members of

\(^2\) Those who attempt to minimise the impact of consumption on the environment by retrieving, consuming and using discarded consumer commodities such as food, clothes furniture and books (Edwards and Mercer: 2007)

\(^3\) Those who focus on purposeful consumer choices, attempting to reduce the unintentional excess associated with mass-consumption (Fields-Millburn and Nicodemus: 2016)
Chapter Two

society who do not fit into his ‘ideal types’, which he regards as tools to analyse rather than
descriptions of reality (Bauman: 2007: 27)⁴. This critique of Bauman’s work is also
responded to by his presentation and discussion of consumption and consumerism,
suggesting that whilst there are those who are not engaged in the individualised act of
consumption as vociferously as others, as well as members of society who are engaged
primarily as producers and do not fit into the clearly defined concepts he describes in his
understanding of present-day society (light capitalism, liquid society, consumer culture),
the culture these individuals operate within, the social values and the education, economic,
political, bureaucratic processes they are exposed to are all products of a consumerist
culture – a culture fixated on material acquisition - and therefore have an identity that is
significantly influenced by the liquid consumer culture that dominates everyday life in the
West⁵ (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007).

Consuming identity

Bauman’s thesis describes the relationship between consumer commodities and individuals’
identities, recognising consumer commodities to be resources that enable consumers to
construct a fluid identity that is temporary, fleeting and subject to change (Bauman and
of work on the subject of consumption highlights similarities between consumer activity and
the construction of identity, suggesting that in a liquid modern society both can be regarded
as a series of tasks performed by individuals that require little or no personal or emotional
Bauman: 2001a, Bauman: 1999). Unlike the more stable identities cultivated in modernity
through solid structures such as paid employment, identities in liquid modernity can, like a

⁴ Similar tools are used by business, media and marketing industries with brands crafting and using
‘prototypical characters’ in their business models or advertising campaigns. These archetypes are
considered to be reflective of characters and ways of behaving rather than representations of real-life
identities (Faber and Mayer: 2009)

⁵ The consumer behaviour of *freegans* and *consumer minimalists* can be regarded as a response to
the wider culture these individuals operate within, and so their identity as a *freegan* or a *consumer
minimalist* has been shaped and informed by a critical reaction to the consumerist culture that
dominates

⁶ The introduction and greater availability of credit cards and unsecured loans has meant that financial
investment from consumers is no longer required as it once was to make consumer purchases
(Ritzer: 2001)
Chapter Two

saint's cloak⁷, be easily cast off or thrown aside to be replaced by another temporary liquid identity constructed and expressed, indeed cloaked and branded, with consumer commodities as “Today's all-encompassing culture demands that you acquire the ability to change your identity (or at least its public manifestation) as often, as fast and as efficiently as you change your shirt, or your socks” (Bauman and Bauman: 2011: 25). The ways in which individuals understand, manage and express their identity will be returned to in Chapter Three with the discussion drawing on the work of relevant sociologists.

The relationship that has developed since the mid-twentieth century between consumer commodities and individuals’ identity (which will be explored in Chapter Four) has, to varying extents affected all members of liquid modern society, but it is of particular significance for my discussion of the factors and processes involved in the constitution of men’s identity in a liquid, late-modern, capitalist consumer society. Men’s engagement with paid employment and their close relationship with the solid structure of work throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth-century cultivated the male ‘breadwinner’ role which defined and shaped men’s sense of self (Gregory and Milner: 2011, Kimmel: 2009, Sennett: 2008, Bauman: 2005a, Connell: 2005, Edley and Wetherell: 1999) but the move from a society of producers to a society of consumers (reflected in the precarity of work, the flexibilisation of the labour market and the development of a vibrant consumer culture and associated industries) has cultivated new ways of understanding and performing what it means to be a man in a consumer-driven society (Simpson: 10/06/2014, Bauman: 2007, Connell: 2005, Stevenson, Jackson and Brooks: 2000, Bauman: 1999). Whilst consumer market data demonstrates men’s more active engagement and interest in a wide range of consumer commodities since the late twentieth-century (Mintel: August 2015, Mintel: May 2015, Mintel: March 2014, Mintel: June 2013) it is the male grooming product market that is central to my thesis as its rapid expansion arguably demonstrates the most significant changes in the ways in which men manage and modify their identity, with men now using a growing number of products, tools and services that had once been more closely associated with women and the female beauty industry (McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell: 2006). Men's increasing engagement in the male grooming product market and their growing interest in their physical appearance demonstrates not only the shift in emphasis Bauman describes (from identities shaped by an involvement in paid work to

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identities shaped and expressed through an engagement in consuming) men’s engagement in grooming also highlights the fluidity of men’s identity in liquid modernity with male consumers using grooming products to construct physical identities that can be enhanced, modified and updated to suit changing social expectations and environments.

Using Bauman’s presentation of the relationship between work, identity and consumer commodities (as well as discussion by other analysts (Smart: 2010, Klein: 2010, Tuncay and Otnes: 2008, Walker: 2008, Gabriel and Lang: 2006, Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell: 2006, Connell: 2005, Schor: 1999, Baudrillard: 1998)) the chapters that follow will focus on the ways in which a transition from a production-led to a consumer-driven culture has impacted on men’s sense of self and the resources men may use to define, construct and manage their identity. This discussion will use Bauman’s terms to explore the ways in which a liquid labour market and an expanding consumer culture have facilitated more fluid understandings of men’s identities which are now more likely to be shaped and expressed by what men consume rather than the items they produce and the forms of employment in which they are engaged (Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a).

**Flawed consumer identities**

Bauman’s thesis places a significant emphasis on the role of consumer commodities in a culture fixated on material acquisition (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2001c, Bauman: 1999), but what of those who are unable to consume, those with limited financial means, those who are physically unable to engage in the activity Bauman considers to be the driving force of the consumerist culture? These flawed consumers as Bauman describes them are ‘not wanted’, they are ‘useless’ and ‘stigmatised’ for their inability to take part in consuming and their inability to reform, and perform in a consumer oriented manner, their identity in order to keep up with changing social expectations and consumer trends (Bauman: 1998: 96). Whilst Bauman focuses on the financial limitations of flawed consumers the qualitative and quantitative data included in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten will suggest another interpretation or use of Bauman’s term. The data presented in these chapters will outline the ways in which consumer and marketing industries have encouraged consumers to regard consumer commodities to be resources that may help them to ‘fix’ their ‘flawed’ identity and appearance. This interpretation of Bauman’s term is
particularly relevant to the male grooming product market which has targeted male consumers since the late twentieth-century with messages in grooming product advertisements and marketing content in men’s magazines that have attempted to raise men’s awareness of their physical flaws e.g. their wrinkled skin, grey hair, body odour. Having identified men’s physical flaws these media sources have presented the consumption and use of male grooming products to be solutions or masks for men’s physical imperfections, resources that will enable men as flawed consumers to reduce or conceal their flaws and better present their selves by manufacturing expressions and displays of more physically appealing identities.

Concluding comments

Bauman’s conceptualisation of modern times – his presentation of solid to liquid, heavy to light, modernity to liquid modernity, producer to consumer society – refers to changing conditions that have impacted on social relations and individuals’ understanding of their identity (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2002, Bauman: 2001b, Bauman, 2001a, Bauman: 2001c, Bauman: 2000, Bauman: 1999). The transition from a production-led to a consumer-driven society has effected all members of society, prompting and facilitating new ways of understanding identity in an increasingly liquid culture (Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005, Bauman: 1999). For the purposes of this thesis the transition to a consumer society is of most significance for men who up until the mid-twentieth-century had been engaged or regarded – primarily – as breadwinners, financial providers, soldiers, producers (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a). The chapters that follow will explore how men have been increasingly encouraged by consumer and marketing industries as well as by their consumer society peers, to regard themselves – primarily – as active consumers. Men’s engagement as consumers and their growing interest in consumer commodities (an activity and interest that were once more closely associated with women and domestic servitude (Sennett: 2006, Bauman: 2005a, Connell: 2005, Breazeale: 1994)) has therefore impacted on the ways in which male identity is understood and performed in liquid modernity (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 1999). Bauman’s relevant conceptualisations will be returned to throughout this thesis as his work constitutes a relevant framework to explore the ways in which male grooming products have enabled male consumers to fashion, cultivate
Chapter Two

and present a series of liquid identities that can be adapted or if necessary cast-off to keep up with fluid social expectations and the changing trends of a consumer-driven culture.
Chapter Three

Being a man: identity and work

The focus of this chapter is on the relationship between male identity and paid employment, hereafter referred to as ‘work’. Consideration is given to the relationship between male identity and work in two stages, first by focusing on perspectives of identity and then by examining men’s involvement in work from the eighteenth-century through to the present-day. Particular attention is given to the structural changes that took place in the late twentieth-century that have effected male identity, including a decline in manufacturing, an increase in service sector roles, and a rise in female employment. These changes transformed the British labour market and led to employment insecurity for men, a transformation that has significantly impacted on men’s identity and the resources they use to construct their sense of self (Bauman: 2005a, Millward, Bryson and Forth: 2000, Sennett: 1998).

Defining identity in liquid times

Chapter Two introduced Bauman’s body of work which identified the greater fluidity of life in the twenty-first century and outlined the ways in which once solid structures such as work have become increasingly fluid in a period of transition which has been referred to as liquid modernity (Bauman: 2005b, 2002, 2000, 1999), late modernity (Giddens: 1991) and second or reflexive modernity (Beck: 1992). Bauman suggests that the loose, brittle, breakable social relations that operate in liquid modernity have facilitated and stimulated a re-evaluation of the ways in which individuals understand, construct and manage their sense of self, and have cultivated the recognition of identity as a ‘self-project’ that individuals ‘work’ on in order to keep up with emerging systems of understanding and new ways of living (Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2005b, Bauman: 2004, Bauman and Yakimova: 08/11/2002). At this stage of the discussion it is important to outline what is meant by the term identity in order to explore in the chapters that follow the ways in which men’s identity has been effected by the increasingly fluid nature of modern times and the shift from a production-led to a consumer-driven culture.

Whilst the term identity has been discussed in relation to the psychology of individuals with attempts made to understand the nature of the human psyche (Dewing and Foster: 2007,
Fischer and Arnold: 2006, Edley and Wetherall: 1999) this thesis is concerned with the sociological aspects of identity, examining the social factors that shape individuals’ sense of self and the ways in which individuals express this in the social world. The concept of identity has already been introduced in Chapter Two with a discussion that focused on Bauman’s understanding of identity in contemporary society, an understanding that considers the ways in which changes in the social world have impacted on individuals’ sense of self and the resources individuals draw on to understand and express their identity. Bauman’s thesis provides a framework with which to explore the subject area of identity in the chapters that follow however his is not the only body of work to have contributed to the discussion concerning identity in contemporary society (Butler: 2006, Lloyd: 2005, Connell: 2005, Shilling: 2003, Beck: 1992, Giddens: 1991, Goffman: 1990, Mead: 1934). Whilst a range of theorists have offered various ways of exploring the subject of identity the term has been broadly used to refer to individuals’ unique understanding of who they are and their role in the society they operate within (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Butler: 2006, Lloyd: 2005, Bauman: 2004, Connell: 2005, Hall: 1996, Beck: 1992, Giddens: 1991, Goffman: 1990, Mead: 1934). These analyses suggest that to varying extents individuals reach a sense of self-understanding through their engagement in the social world and through a process of self-reflection or reflexivity (Giddens: 1991). It is through this process that individuals are able to see themselves from the perspective of others and cultivate a sense of who they are or their identity in relation to their peers (Hall: 1996). Individuals’ reflection on their social interaction provides them with an opportunity to consider the ways in which they present aspects of their identity such as their behaviours, appearance, dress, speech or lifestyle, evaluating how they have been perceived and received by those they encounter (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Schor: 2002, Hall: 1996). Reflexivity can prompt individuals to change or modify how they present themselves in social situations, adapting the ways in which they display or perform aspects of their identity so that they might ‘fit in’ with the social conditions or the expectations of society (Bauman and Raud: 2015, Sennett: 2008, Bauman: 2007, Butler: 2006, Schor: 2002, Giddens: 1991, Goffman: 1990, Mead: 1934). Chapters Four, Five and Six explore the ways in which the consumer industry has exploited the process of reflexivity, presenting consumer audiences with a growing range of consumer commodities that are marketed as resources consumers can use or display to reflect fluid identities and help them to fit in and / or keep up with constantly changing liquid social conditions (Bauman and Raud: 2015, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 1999).
Identity and gender: social understandings and individual action

It is the nature of social conditions that shapes the ways in which identity is understood and expressed with an increasingly liquid social form producing increasingly liquid identities (Bauman: 09/01/2014, Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2004, Bauman: 2001c, Bauman: 2000, Bauman: 1999). The fluid processual nature of contemporary society is also appreciated by Anthony Giddens who comments on the significance of changing social conditions in relation to the ways in which individuals behave and express their sense of self (Giddens: 1991). In his theory of structuration Giddens states that “society only has form, and that form only has effects on people, in so far as structure is produced and reproduced in what people do” (Giddens and Pierson: 1998: 77). Structuration theory suggests that whilst social conditions will shape the ways in which individuals behave or the actions they ‘do’, individuals can challenge the social form and stimulate change by performing new actions or cultivating new ways of being (Giddens and Pierson: 1998). Giddens refers to not only the fluid nature of present-day society but also the fluid nature of identity, suggesting that the form individuals construct and display can be adapted to reflect, suit and contribute to changing social conditions.

Writing on the subject of gender, sexuality and identity Judith Butler argues that gender identity should be regarded as a free-floating fluid variable rather than a fixed construct (Butler: 2006). In her text Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity (2006, 1990) Butler describes an understanding of gender identity that is defined by the actions performed by men and women, by the meaning or significance ascribed to these actions and by the position these actions afford each gender. Butler argues that gender identities can (and should) be continually re-defined to suit changing social conditions, environments, expectations, ways of living and so what may be regarded as male identity, an activity or a performance of male characteristics in one period of time or by one culture may be quite different in another (Butler: 2004). By recognising the performative nature of gender identity Butler, as well as others, have suggested that if individuals are to change their actions or the ways in which they enact and perform aspects of their gender new ways of understanding what it means to be a man or a woman, that challenge the current social conditions or ways

1 This understanding reflects the discussion in Chapter Two which outlined Bauman’s argument that shifting social conditions from heavy to light capitalism have impacted on the social form and cultivated new ways of behaving or acting in a liquid culture (Bauman: 2005b)
understanding gender, can be cultivated (Peggs: 2009, Connell: 2005, Lloyd: 2005, Butler: 2004). The concern of this chapter then is to examine the actions men perform that help to define understandings of masculinity and men’s role within society. Whilst these actions may not be enacted by all men they signify the currently most honoured way of being a man (Connell and Messerschmidt: 2005: 832) and by performing these actions men, consciously or unconsciously, emphasise their similarities with each other as well as the ways in which they are different from women and indeed other men who do not perform these actions or activities (Connell: 2005). Throughout the nineteenth and early-twentieth century men’s engagement in paid employment together with characteristics, attributes and activities such as men’s interest and involvement in competitive sports, men’s physical strength, men’s virile heterosexuality as well as men’s purported ‘superior’ intellect and resourcefulness helped to define the male gender role and their position in society (Chen, Romero and Karver: 2016, Letherby, Scott, Williams: 2013, Kimmel: 2009, Butler: 2006, Bauman: 2005a, Connell: 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt: 2005, Sennett: 1998) but significant social and economic changes that took place in throughout the twentieth-century promoted a re-evaluation of this understanding (Carrigan, Connell and Lee: 1985). The discussion that follows explores the relationship between male identity and paid employment, examining new fluid ways of defining, performing and managing what it means to be a man in contemporary society, ways which are no longer as closely linked to men’s dominance in the labour market (Crompton: 2006, Butler: 2006, Sennett: 2006, Connell: 2005, Bauman: 2005a, Alcock, Beatty, Fothergill, Macmillan, Yeandle: 2003, Butler: 1993, West and Zimmerman: 1987).

The significance of paid employment

If, as structuration theory suggests, the social form has effects on members of society in so far as it creates structures that are produced and reproduced in individuals’ actions (Giddens and Pierson: 1998) it is possible to understand how men’s involvement in paid employment throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth-century and up until the late twentieth-century cultivated the close relationship between work and men’s identity or the male gender role (Aarseth: 2009, Sennett: 2006, Butler: 2006, Crompton: Bauman: 2005a). Sennett (1998)

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2 An understanding of masculinity that has been increasingly challenged by women’s active involvement and interest in competitive, professional sports, as well as considerable advances and greater equality in employment (Office for National Statistics, 2012, Lewis and Smee: 2009, Duffield: 2002)
suggests that men’s dominance in the public world of paid work in heavy capitalism\(^3\) cultivated the male ‘breadwinner’ model whereby men’s sense of self or their identity was predicated on their ability to work and provide financially for their family. During this period of capitalism work not only provided financial resources and a clearly defined structure to a man’s waking day it also determined and signified many aspects of his identity including his leisure preferences, political views, religious beliefs, aspirations and personal relationships (Winlow and Hall: 2006, Sennett: 2006, Bauman: 2005a, Weber: 2001). But significant changes in the labour market (Alcock, Beatty, Fothergill, Macmillan and Yeandle: 2003, Millward, Bryson and Forth: 2000) and the growth of consumer culture in the twentieth-century (Smart: 2010, Klein: 2010, Bauman: 2007, Dawson: 2003, Fine: 2002, Schor: 2002, McCracken: 1986, Douglas and Isherwood: 1979) prompted a re-evaluation of gendered identities and stimulated new ways of understanding, defining and performing gender in the twenty-first century (Butler: 2006, Connell: 2005, Woodruffe-Burton: 1998, Simpson: 15/11/1994). Before these new understandings can be explored in Chapters Four, Five and Six it is necessary to examine how men’s relationship with work developed throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth-century as well as outline how changes in the labour market have significantly impacted on the construction and performance of male identity.

**Paid employment in the eighteenth and nineteenth-century: a man’s world**

During the eighteenth-century the labour market expanded considerably as Britain experienced an ‘Industrial Revolution’ (Hopkins: 2000). Paid employment moved from predominantly agricultural and crafts based tasks performed on a piece-meal basis to a factory model that operated under long working hours and harsh working conditions for a largely male workforce (Sennett: 2008). Developments in technology and manufacturing methods used to perform factory work enabled textile mills to expand throughout the century which facilitated greater levels of production and fast growing workforces (Sennett: 2008, Hopkins: 2000). As manufacturing industry expanded the conditions of employment became increasingly hard; workers were subjected to long gruelling hours in unsanitary factory premises for relatively low wages and eventually Parliament and national trades unions intervened in an attempt to improve the working conditions of the labouring poor with

\(^3\) An era in which capital, wealth and labour were rooted in large-scale factory production and the extraction of raw materials e.g. coal or iron ore mining (see further discussion in Chapter Two)
Chapter Three

legislation designed to regulate the hours of work and ensure greater safety in regards to the activities performed by workers (Hopkins: 2000, Crompton: 2006).

As manufacturing industry steadily expanded throughout the nineteenth-century greater demand was placed on the coal mining industry and the production of raw materials. Much like the factory work performed in the eighteenth-century manufacturing roles were physically demanding, requiring men’s strength to operate the machinery and perform the labour-intensive tasks. To encourage greater numbers of men to perform the physically demanding repetitive manufacturing tasks factory owners tried to instil the notion of a work ethic among their workers, cultivating the association between work and the Christian faith (Crompton: 2006, Bauman: 2005a, Weber: 2001, Bauman: 2000, Mangan: 1991). Men were encouraged by their employers to 'work hard' and provide for their dependents as testament to their commitment to their families, to God and to their community, and so by the end of the nineteenth-century paid employment had become a potent symbol of a man’s moral worth and reflective of his social standing (Crompton: 2006, Akerlof and Kranton: 2000, Sennett: 1998, Mangan: 1991).

Paid employment in the early to mid-twentieth century: working women in a time of war

Manufacturing industry continued to expand throughout the nineteenth-century and so by the early twentieth-century factory employment had become a stable source of income for labouring men (Lindsay: 2003). Whilst men remained the dominant gender in the labour market in the early twentieth-century the two World Wars that took place in the first half of the twentieth-century prompted significant social and economic changes, making it necessary for growing numbers of women to enter full-time paid employment (Lindsay: 2003, Walsh and Wrigley 2001). Prior to the two World Wars women’s ‘work’ had tended to be unpaid work performed in the home or on a piecemeal basis in seasonal positions⁴ (Crompton: 2006) but the social and economic conditions during the war years necessitated women’s greater involvement in the public world of paid employment, with women

⁴ In the early twentieth-century under 30 per cent of women were involved in paid employment outside of the domestic sphere (McCloskey: 2001)
performing agricultural and manufacturing roles as well as labour intensive roles in factories and as driver delivery roles for businesses (Lindsay: 2003). Government campaigns encouraged women to view their involvement in paid work as a symbolic gesture of patriotism which prompted new ways of understanding male and female gender roles that were reflective of changing social conditions (see Figure 3.1). These social and economic developments challenged understandings of male and female gender roles, with men and women sharing employment roles that had previously helped to define the genders as distinctly different from each other (Aarseth: 2009, Butler: 2006, Bauman: 2005a, Bradley: 1999). When the Second World War ended in the 1945 there was over 20 per cent more women in paid employment than there had been before the outbreak of war in 1939 (Lindsay: 2003, Walsh and Wrigley: 2001). This figure continued to rise in the post war years with almost 50 per cent of women involved in some form of paid employment by the late 1950s (Philpott: 2012, Duffield: 2002).

It was not only changes in the labour market that facilitated women’s greater involvement in work in the first half of the twentieth-century as a number of social developments and educational reforms also encouraged women’s entry into paid work. A succession of Education Acts in the early twentieth-century ensured the provision of free state regulated primary and secondary education which helped women to enter the labour market in two ways: firstly it allowed women to take up employment whilst their children were in school and secondly it raised women’s level of education so they had sufficient training and knowledge to take up new jobs (Lindsay: 2003). The availability of part-time contracts had steadily increased throughout the first half of the twentieth-century which also contributed to women’s involvement in paid employment as these contracts together with the greater use of labour-saving equipment in the home e.g.
tumble dryers, washing machines, electric ovens and vacuum cleaners made it possible for women to balance their responsibilities to their families with opportunities in paid work (Castells: 2010, Crompton: 2006, Lindsay: 2003). With these social and economic developments in mind the British labour market that emerged after the two World Wars looked considerably different to the labour market that had been in operation before the onset of war. Household economies had changed and gender roles began to blur; household finances were no longer the sole responsibility of a male breadwinner and work was no longer the distinctly male arena it had been at the start of the century (Castells: 2010, Crompton: 2006, Lindsay: 2003, Ruxton: 2002, McCloskey: 2001).

Paid employment in the late-twentieth century: a precarious place for men

The close relationship between paid work and men’s identity was challenged further in the late twentieth-century by a period of economic insecurity in the 1970s that made the employment market increasingly competitive and unstable (Castells: 2010, Crompton: 2006, Lindsay: 2003). The ruling Conservative Government responded to the growing financial concerns the British economy faced with a privatisation of industry that attempted to generate public wealth through the sale of more than 50 state owned businesses including British Rail, British Telecom, British Airways, British Airports Authority, British Gas and regional water companies (Kay and Thompson: 1986). This privatisation led to labour market cutbacks as company owners sought to reduce the financial impact of the economic recession by ‘stream-lining’ their production lines, reducing their manufacturing costs and sending production processes overseas (Kay and Thompson: 1986). Significant numbers of largely male workers in the manufacturing, shipbuilding, steelworks and raw materials industries were made redundant which sent soaring numbers of British households into relative poverty (Crompton: 2006, Lindsay: 2003). The North East of England experienced the highest levels of unemployment during this time as manufacturing roles in this region fell from 410,000 to 241,000 between 1979 and 1993 (Bradley: 1999). By 1982 the unemployment rate had reached three million (Niland: 16/12/2011), more than 750,000

Figure 3.2: Economic recession 1980
people were classed as long-term unemployed and one in every eight adults was unable to secure paid employment (BBC: 26/01/1982). British manufacturing industry had been a source of stable employment for men since the eighteenth-century but by 1984 only 28 per cent of men were employed in manufacturing roles (Office for National Statistics: 22/03/2005: 52) which made the prospect of a job-for-life for men in these industries increasingly unlikely and weakened further men’s role as the dominant breadwinner (Sennett: 2006, Bauman: 2005, McDowell: 2001).

By the mid-1980s the British employment market had changed dramatically – a new, leaner workforce emerged and the dominant industry shifted from manufacturing to service sector\(^5\) employment (Thébaud: 2010, Crompton: 2006, Edwards: 2001, McCloskey: 2001, Millward, Bryson and Forth: 2000). The service sector required fewer natural resources and financial capital, and more human capital than the production of agricultural or manufacturing goods (World Bank: 2012, Castells: 2010). Compared to the physically demanding skills required by manufacturing industry, the service sector favoured interpersonal client-focused skills such as the ability to communicate and listen, skills that had been associated with women and, so whilst the availability of employment opportunities for men in the manufacturing industry shrank during this decade opportunities for women in the service sector grew (Crompton: 2006, Millward, Bryson and Forth: 2000). By the end of the twentieth-century there were over three times as many women in paid employment as there had been in the 1950s (Lindsay: 2003, Walsh and Wrigley: 2001), an increase that made the already stretched employment market increasingly competitive for men (Sennett: 2008, Crompton: 2006, Alcock, Beatty, Fothergill, Macmillan and Yeandle: 2003).

By the end of the twentieth-century the labour market had become deregulated, fragmented and transient; it was no longer a stable life-long source of employment and income associated with manual labour and men’s physical strength (an association that had helped to define and shape the male gender role), but was rather a transient market that necessitated more fluid male identities with men having to retrain or adapt their skills in order to remain in or re-enter the employment market (OECD: 2013, Oakley: 2011, Sennett: 2006,  

\(^5\) A sector associated with business, tourism, leisure, entertainment, communication and information services
Chapter Three


Paid employment in the early twenty-first century: an ‘age of increasing equality’?


It is a market that demonstrates the progression of gender equality in the UK with legislation such as the Equality Act 2010, the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 promoting more equal opportunities and more equal pay scales for men and women (Office for National Statistics: 17/04/2015, OECD: 2012, Akerlof and Kranton: 2000). Whilst these developments may suggest that gender differences are no longer quite as significant in the workplace, occupational segregation and associated forms of inequality still exist (OECD: 2013). The service sector has continued to expand and as the dominant industry it now provides 20 per cent more jobs than it did in the late 1970s (by comparison the availability of employment in the manufacturing and mining industries has fallen by an almost equal figure (Office for National Statistics: 17/04/2015)). The sector continues to attract more women than men whilst manufacturing and construction industries remain male dominated (over six times as many men as women were employed in the construction industry in 2013) (Office for National Statistics: 05/06/2013). Whilst there are growing numbers of women whose managerial and professional roles challenge the ‘glass ceiling’ of pay scales and occupational roles, men continue to be more likely to hold managerial and professional roles that require formal education and training compared to their female contemporaries (Office for National Statistics: 05/06/2013, OECD: 2012, Weyer: 2007, Ruxton: 2002, Akerlof and Kranton: 2000). Despite changes in the ways in which family life operates, with growing evidence of men’s greater involvement in domestic duties and parental responsibilities (Poole, Speight, O’Brien, Connelly and Aldrich: 2013, Aarseth: 2009), there are still almost three times as many women as men balancing working life and family commitments through part-time

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6 The tendency for men and women to be employed in different occupations to each other (OECD: 2013)
employment contracts (Office for National Statistics: 17/04/2015) and so women with dependent children are less likely to achieve career progression at the same speed as their male colleagues (OECD: 2012, Windsor and Auyeung: 2006).

Occupational segregation and the continuing gender pay gap highlight the complexity of the labour market, and indeed gender roles, in the twenty-first century (Crompton: 2006). Although social and economic developments have facilitated and encouraged greater gender equality in paid employment and challenged gender roles predicated on men’s involvement in work and women’s domestic and caring responsibilities, gendered distinctions in employment are still evident (Bauman: 09/01/2014, Office for National Statistics: 05/06/2013, OECD: 2012, Sennett: 2006, Bauman: 2005a, Sennett: 1998). Whilst this overview of the labour market suggests that government legislation, together with economic and social developments throughout the twenty-first century have challenged and weakened men’s relationship with and dominance in paid employment, giving rise to new ways of understanding the male gender role, there are still a number of men whose sense of self remains closely linked to their participation in work and their ability to provide for their family (Thébaud and Pedulla: 2016, Lamont: 2015, Poole, Speight, O'Brien, Connelly, Aldrich: 2013, Murray and Cutcher: 2012, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development: 2011, Marsh, Bradley, Love, Alexander and Norham: 2007, Sennett: 2006, Bauman: 2005a, Hakim: 2000). Despite considerable changes in terms of the way men and women understand their gender, with individuals adopting a proliferation of fluid identities that challenge previous ways ‘doing’ gender or performing gendered roles (Butler: 2006, West and Zimmerman: 1987), young peoples’ understanding of gender roles continue to reflect the social ‘norms’ of previous generations as a number of young men still rely on their relationship with work to inform their sense of self, cultivating aspirations and an identity predicated on their careers compared to young women who express their desires to balance their responsibilities to their families with part-time employment (Chen, Romero, Karver: 2016, Barber: 2016a, Marsh: 24/11/2016, Gino, Wilmuth and Wood Brooks: 2015, Bass: 2015, Office for National Statistics: 17/04/2015, OECD: 2012, Murrrey and Cutcher: 2012, Dyke and Murphy: 2006, Kerpelman and Schvaneldt: 1999, Edley and Wetherell: 1999). Whilst these aspirations indicate that activities related to paid employment and family life still help men and women to understand and perform aspects of their identity there are a growing number of men who are actively challenging these gender identities, roles and aspirations by adapting their behaviours to suit changing family dynamics that require men’s greater
involvement in childcare commitments and domestic tasks (Auspurg, Iacovou, Nicoletti: 2017, Poole, Speight, O'Brien, Connelly, Aldrich: 2013, Henwood and Procter: 2003, Ruxton: 2002). By changing their activities and the tasks associated with their gender these men are re-defining the ways in which male identity is understood and performed in the twenty-first century, with actions that had historically been associated with women’s work as unpaid carers to their families being appropriated by ‘househusbands’ whose wives perform the breadwinner role (Auspurg, Iacovou, Nicoletti: 2017, Meisenbach: 2010, Crompton: 2006, Butler: 2006, Bauman: 2005a).

Concluding comments


A presentation of the labour market in Britain has outlined the ways in which men’s dominance in the world of paid employment and women’s involvement in the domestic sphere significantly shaped gender roles and individuals’ identity throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and early-twentieth century (Sennett: 2008, Butler: 2006, Crompton: 2006, Connell: 2005, Bauman, 2000, Bauman: 1992). But the social and economic factors presented in this chapter have contributed to a fragmented labour market which, in the twenty-first century, is one that reflects the transient fluid nature of liquid modernity, favouring short-term or flexible employment contracts (Harvey: 2010, Sennett: 2006, Crompton: 2006, Bauman: 2005a, Lindsay: 2003, Millward, Bryson and Forth: 2000, Hopkins: 2000, Beck: 2000). This increasingly destabilised economy has impacted on men’s sense of self most significantly as unlike previous generations of men whose identity tended to be shaped by their life-long stable involvement in the labour market, the identity of modern men in one predicated on a range of fluid resources (Bauman and Reid: 2015, Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2001c, Bauman: 1999). It is the resources that modern men draw on to construct, define and manage their sense of self that will be of discussion in the chapters that follow.
Consumer culture: Grooming the male consumer

Analysis in the previous chapter examined men’s dominance in the world of work and explored the ways in which paid employment significantly shaped and defined men’s sense of self throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth-century. A range of social and economic factors including new government legislation and education reform, a shift in industry from manufacturing to service sector, women’s greater involvement in the labour market and men’s increasing contribution to domestic tasks have arguably contributed to greater equality between genders (Legerski and Cornwall: 2010, Aarseth: 2009) as well as more fluid understandings of male and female gender roles (Butler: 2006, Bauman: 2005a, Schroeder: 2003). But the expansion of consumer culture throughout the twentieth-century also affected the ways in which male identity and the male gender role have been defined, managed and expressed, prompting new ways of understanding male identities that in the twenty-first century are increasingly associated with short-lived consumer choices rather than a life-long stable relationship with paid work (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Salzman, Matathia and O'Reilly: 2005, Bauman: 2005a, Alcock, Beatty, Fothergill, MacMillan and Yeandle: 2003, Kacen: 2000, Sennett: 1998). In the following analysis I explore the impact of such a shift, presenting the expansion of consumer culture and addressing how the move from a production-led to a consumer-driven culture has reflected and stimulated significant changes to men’s attitude and behaviours in terms of the commodities, activities and behaviours that are now associated with the consumer-focused identities of modern men (Cao: 01/03/2017, Mintel: January 2016, Simpson: 20/11/2016, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Kimmel: 2009, Tuncay and Otne: 2008, Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell: 2006, Aubrey: 2006, Gray: 28/10/2004, Galilee: 2002, Sturrock and Pioch: 1998). My analysis will focus on the growth of the male grooming product market as it is arguably the relative boom of this market that illustrates most clearly the significant changes in the attitudes and behaviours of modern men.

The expansion of consumer culture: from production to consumption

Individuals’ approach to consuming in the production-led society of the nineteenth and early twentieth-century was largely dependent on consumers’ needs rather than their desires (Bauman: 2005a, Bauman, 2001a, Bauman: 1999). This approach to consuming changed in the early twentieth-century with rising income levels, the expansion of manufacturing industry, the greater availability of ready-made goods and the development of marketing and
advertising industries which contributed to higher levels of personal consumption (Smart: 2010, Featherstone: 2007, Schor: 1999, Breazeale: 1994). Companies manufacturing consumer commodities in the 1920s and 1930s invested considerable financial resources in targeted marketing campaigns which stimulated consumers’ desire for new goods and services, and encouraged a way of life focused on material attainment (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Dunn: 2008, Campbell: 2004). Bauman describes how mundane or ‘regime-neutral’ wants and longings became the: “propelling and operating force of society” (Bauman: 2007: 28) (italics in original); a force that repositioned shopping “from a means towards an end - living - to being an end in its own right” (Gabriel and Lang: 2006: 8) and so whilst consuming remained an activity largely performed by women to meet the needs of their family (Breazeale: 1994) it became recognised (particularly among the middle classes) as an activity associated with pleasure, enjoyment and freedom (Bauman: 2007, Veblen: 1994, Lasch: 1991).

Manufacturing and consuming slowed during World War Two but gathered increasing pace during the 1950s. The growth of consumer culture during this decade was prompted by three significant factors: peer approval, strategic marketing campaigns and the availability of financial credit (Schor: 1999). Peer approval shaped consumer spending as consumers in direct contact with each other tended to mimic each other’s tastes, spending habits and arguably, their identity (expressed through their consumer commodities) (Dunn: 2008, Bauman: 2007, Featherstone: 2007: Schor: 2002, Douglas and Isherwood: 1979). Face-to-face contact with neighbours created the phenomenon of ‘keeping up with the Joneses’ (Schor: 2002) whereby household spending, primarily performed by women but with some involvement from men, tried to ‘keep up’ with their neighbours as “Like compared with like and strove to become even more alike” (Schor: 1999: 8) and so when “Mrs Smith went next door to see Mrs Jones’ new refrigerator, or new Chevy, or backyard grill” (Schor: 2002: 5) she wanted the same (or an even better) consumer commodity. This sense of consumer competition stimulated consumer demand and drove the expansion of consumer culture as “One man’s consumption becomes his neighbour’s wish. This already means that the process by which wants are satisfied is also the process by which wants are created. The more wants that are satisfied, the more new ones are born” (Galbraith: 1998: 126).
Chapter Four

The development of the marketing industry and brand management techniques in the mid-twentieth-century facilitated the further expansion of consumer culture, helping brands competing for consumers’ attention to market their products as distinct from other brands (Klein: 2010, Walker: 2008). An increasing number of brands entered the consumer markets in the post-war years and as consumer spending increased on electrical items such as television sets and radios\(^1\) targeted advertising campaigns were brought directly into consumers’ homes (Walker: 2008). Print, radio and television advertising campaigns were strategically designed to increase consumers’ awareness of products and generate product sales but the marketing industry quickly recognised that advertising campaigns needed to do more than just sell a consumer commodity; campaigns needed to cultivate a relationship between consumers and the commodities they bought, with brands and products infused with an identity of their own that consumers were encouraged to relate to and harness when they consumed the advertised item (Klein: 2010, Walker: 2008, Schor: 1999). These campaigns suggested the ways in which consumer commodities could be used to express not only consumers’ financial status but also their social status, lifestyle preferences, leisure interests and aspects of their identity (Bauman: 2013, Smart: 2010, Klein: 2010, Dunn: 2008, Bauman: 2007, Goffman: 1987, Whiteley: 1987, Belk: 1985, Levy: 1959). Campaigns depicted aspirational lifestyles that symbolised ideals such as wealth, happiness, health and kinship, which were infused into the advertised product (Goffman: 1987, Whiteley: 1987). Textual analysis of a 1950s advertisement for a Butlin’s holiday (see Figure 4.1) reveals the ways in which such aspirational ideals were included in advertising campaigns. In this instance the featured consumer commodity is associated with an image of a family to signify an aspirational ideal and depict qualities associated with wealth, health and happiness (qualities consumers are invited to think they might harness and emulate if they consumed a Butlin’s holiday).

\(^1\) Reflecting the increasing sales of electrical goods throughout the 1950s sound and television licences rose from 1,457,000 in 1953 to 10 million by the end of the century, with homes spending 40 per cent of their evenings watching television (Screen Online: n.d.)
In addition to peer approval and the development of strategic marketing campaigns by the marketing industry the popularisation of personal credit cards was a further propellant for the expansion of consumer culture in the mid-twentieth century. This form of personal finance encouraged households to rethink their attitude to spending as consumers were now able to purchase commodities and services that they had not had to save or plan for (Stephey: 23/04/2009). The 'magic of plastic' (Schor: 1999: 5) method of finance took 'the waiting out of wanting' and encouraged a consumer culture fixated on instant gratification and wish fulfilment or a buy now, pay later mind-set (Kumar: 27/03/2013, Leach:1993).

If the 1950s constituted a period of similarity among consumers the following two decades were marked by a celebration of diversity, with consumer and marketing messages suggesting the ways in which consumer items could be used by consumers to express and project their individuality and personal tastes (Whiteley: 1987, Wolfe: 23/08/1976). There was an increased focus on the self which developed into a culture of narcissism (Lasch: 1979) that emphasised self-fulfilment and encouraged individuality and diversity (Belk: 1986, Wolfe: 23/08/1976). Consumer and marketing industries presented the growing range of consumer commodities and services being manufactured as a means of self-expression and self-fulfilment (Featherstone: 2007, Schor: 2002). Staid consumer commodities were reinvented and offered in a selection of patterns, styles and fabrics and so wardrobe classics such as a man’s business suit were marketed as an expression of taste and individuality that were reflective of male consumers’ identity and their freedom of choice (Mort: 1996). The hedonistic ideals of youth culture were also pivotal to the expansion of consumer culture and in particular to men’s involvement in consumer markets in the 1960s (Frank: 1998), a factor that will be explored further in Chapter Five.

Following a period of economic recession in the 1970s Britain experienced a dramatic growth in income and wealth in the 1980s which consumer and marketing industries used as an opportunity to encourage greater levels of personal spending on luxury goods and services (Frank: 2010, Lewis: 2008, Schor: 1999). During this decade marketing campaigns promoted consumer up-scaling whereby consumers were encouraged to purchase more expensive commodities than they were perhaps able to afford. These campaigns also encouraged consumers to replace consumer commodities at an increasingly faster pace;

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2 A reference to consumers’ ability to consume commodities with a (plastic) credit card despite perhaps not having an income sufficient to pay for their purchases
buying new commodities before existing commodities had worn out or served its purpose, or only using a fraction of the commodity before discarding it and replacing it with an alternative commodity. This approach to consuming created a type of consuming that has been referred to as obsolescent consuming and is regarded as part of the throw-away culture of the consumer-driven society in late modernity (Cooper: 2013, Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Klein: 2010, Walker: 2008, Bauman: 2007, Schor: 1999, Whiteley: 1987). Unlike the influence of direct contact on consumer spending in the 1950s, which had encouraged those in close proximity to compare material success with those in the same or similar income brackets, the development of cable television and the launch of popular culture channels such as MTV in the early 1980s promoted consumer up-scaling and encouraged consumers to compare their lifestyle and their consumer spending with those whose incomes far exceeded their own (Klein: 2010, Schor: 1999). These sources of popular culture exposed media audiences to the lifestyles and spending habits of fictitious characters, celebrity figures and the extremely wealthy with popular television programmes such as Dallas, Dynasty, Miami Vice, LA Law and The Cosby Show dramatising and glamourising the lifestyles of wealthy high-spenders, an approach to spending that was soon reflected in audiences’ own consumer spending as they attempted to emulate the aspirational lifestyles they were increasingly being exposed to (Frank: 2010, Klein: 2010, Schor: 1999).

The development or expansion of consumer markets throughout the 1980s was (and still is) an integral element of the capitalist economy (Harvey: 1989). The identification of new and niche markets and audiences by marketing and consumer industries in the late twentieth-century offered scope for market growth and an increase in company profits (Mansvelt: 2005). The niche markets of male grooming and menswear products were identified as such areas of potential growth with male consumers, who had been regarded as rather reluctant consumers in a relatively small number of consumer markets, becoming the target of strategic marketing campaigns and media messages (Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly: 2005, Swiencicki: 1998, Simpson: 15/11/1994, Breazeale: 1994).

The growth of the male grooming product market

Whilst Swiencicki (1998) suggests that there is evidence that men’s consumer engagement dates back to the late nineteenth-century the data is mainly limited to spending at venues such as bars, salons, variety shows and brothels, and on activities such as gambling. Data
on men’s consumption of consumer goods from the same period is also largely limited to a small range of commodities including tobacco, liquor, fur goods, watches, pocket books and umbrellas (Shannon: 2004, Swiencicki: 1998). Accounts from the early twentieth-century suggest that although men engaged in grooming and were consumers of male grooming products it was largely limited to wealthy middle-class men who could afford indulgent luxury items and treatments performed in men’s salons by barbers (Barber: 2016a, Wilsam: personal communication: 27/04/2015, Brylcreem: personal communication: 13/10/2010, Jones: 2008, Shannon: 2004, Galilee: 2002, Pendergast: 2000, Swiencicki: 1998). Male salons offered a relatively limited number of services\(^3\) including wet shaves, beard trimming, moustache styling and haircuts, and marketed and sold what can be regarded as early forms of male grooming products including hair pomade, moustache wax and aftershave (Jones: 2008, Shannon: 2004, Galilee: 2002, Pendergast: 2000). Three factors – sports sponsorship and sportsman endorsement, the growth of the men’s magazine market, and the focus and objectification of men in media content – cultivated a new approach to grooming and consuming in the course of the twentieth-century. These factors (introduced in the pages that follow and examined in further detail in Chapters Five and Six) stimulated and reflected new ways of understanding men’s sense of self, giving rise to new activities associated with masculine identities.

i) Sports sponsorship and sportsman endorsement

Brands such as Gillette and Brylcreem first launched their small range of affordable accessible male grooming products in the early twentieth-century (see Appendix Three for a brand profile of male grooming product market leaders). These brands quickly identified men’s interest in sport as a powerful marketing tool, sponsoring local and national sports events and paying well-known successful sportsmen such as American baseball player Honus Wagner\(^4\) to be brand ambassadors and endorse the brands’ range of grooming products (McKibben: 1997). The sponsorship of sports events such as World Series (baseball), Kentucky Derby (horse race) and Cotton Bowl (college football) proved to be a lucrative strategy as not only did those attending the events and those listening to commentary on the radio (and later watching the events on television) gain exposure to and become familiar with new male focused grooming brands and products, but the relationship between the grooming brand and the male athletes also served to validate the brands and

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\(^3\) ‘Limited’ in comparison to the extensive number of grooming services and treatments performed in men’s salons in the twenty-first century (Barber: 2016a)

\(^4\) Employed by Gillette in 1910
products as those used by men who displayed characteristics associated with an understanding of masculinity that valued and emphasised men’s dominance, physical strength, competitiveness, virility and heterosexuality (Milligan: 2010, Tungate: 2008, Butler: 2006, Connell: 2005, Yu: 2005, Meenaghan: 1991). Throughout the twentieth-century grooming brands continued to use the endorsement of sportsmen with examples such as cricketer and footballer Denis Compton for *Brylcreem* in the 1950s, Henry Cooper and Kevin Keegan for *Brut* in the 1970s, footballer Eric Cantona for *L’Oreal Paris Men Expert* and footballer David Beckham for *Brylcreem* and *Gillette* in the 1990s encouraging generations of men to become aware of and more inclined to use male grooming products.

In the twenty-first century grooming product endorsement has been used by a growing number of grooming brands that are forging relationships with sportsmen from a range of sports e.g. golfer Tiger Woods, tennis player Roger Federer, baseball player Derek Jeter, **NASCAR** racer Dale Earnhardt Jr. for *Gillette*, cricketer Kevin Pietersen for *Brylcreem*, rugby player Gavin Henson for *Wilkinson Sword*, **Formula One** racing car drivers Jenson Button for *Head & Shoulders* and Lewis Hamilton for *L’Oreal Paris Men Expert*, cricketer Shane Warne for *Advanced Hair Studio*, and polo player Nacho Figueras for *Polo Ralph Lauren*. These professional athletes have contributed to the growth of the male grooming product market by raising men’s awareness of their appearance and the grooming products they can consume to enhance the way they look, as well as validating products that had previously been associated with divergent male groups, homosexual men, female consumers and the female beauty market, as products used by ‘manly’ man (McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Simpson: 10/06/2014). A growing number of consumer brands have recognised the impact that endorsement from sportsmen can have on product sales with marketing and consumer industries regarding sportsmen as a marketing resource or tool that can be used to encourage male consumers’ interest in new and established consumer markets. Athletes’ endorsement of consumer products can now be found in a range of markets related to sport including clothing, equipment and health-supplements as well as a range of markets seemingly unrelated to their professions (Schwartz: 03/02/2010, Milligan: 2010, Yu: 2005) e.g. retired sportsmen boxer George Foreman and footballer Gary Linekar have lent their names to grilling machines and crisps, footballer Cristiano Ronaldo has endorsed car oil, and athlete Usain Bolt and cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni have had endorsement contracts with banks and credit cards.

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5 *National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing (NASCAR)*
ii) Men’s magazines

Men’s greater engagement in consuming and grooming was also affected by the growth of the men’s magazine market in the 1930s, which depicted an indulgent playboy lifestyle associated with men’s personal appearance, style and their consumer choices in editorial content and advertising campaigns, that stimulated men's awareness and use of male grooming products (Lewis: 2008, Pendergast: 2000, Mort: 1996). As the consumer culture gathered pace in the mid-twentieth-century so too did the focus on consumer commodities in men’s magazines, with male readers encouraged to desire and consume the aspirational indulgent clothing, grooming and lifestyle consumables presented in the magazines (O’Hagan: 16/06/2014, Breazeale: 1994). After declining sales figures in the 1970s the men’s magazine market experienced a resurgence in the 1980s with new titles launched and existing titles reformatted for an audience of new money wealthy professional males (Belk: 1986). The editorial content and advertising campaigns included in these titles focused on consumer commodities and much like the men’s magazines of the 1930s emphasised the importance of readers’ appearance and the grooming products they could consume and use to present an appealing appearance (Simpson: 15/11/1994, Belk: 1986).

Towards the end of the twentieth-century two new genres of men’s magazines emerged – the men’s lifestyle magazine and the lad’s mag – both of which made readers more aware of the growing range of consumer commodities aimed at male consumers and emphasised the importance of readers’ appearance and their grooming behaviours (Jones: 2008, Walker: 2008, Edwards: 2003, Benwell: 2003, Swiencicki: 1998, Simpson: 15/11/1994, Breazeale: 1994). The attention on men’s appearance was emphasised further with style events such as 'It's a Man's World' which was organised and sponsored by leading men’s magazines GQ. These events were designed to stimulate men's interest in consumer markets, particularly the male grooming market, introducing event attendees to a range of established and emerging fashion and grooming brands including Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, Paul Smith and Gillette as well as consumer brands such as Dunhill, Jaguar and Hewlett-Packard. The style events (as well as coverage of these events in the men's style press and men's lifestyle magazines) contributed to men's growing awareness of and interest in fashion

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6 The popularity of and sales figures for men's magazines increased significantly throughout the decade e.g. circulation figures of Esquire magazine rose from 180,000 in 1934 to 728,000 in 1938 (Pendergast: 2000: 220)
7 Titles such as Arena, Company for Men and Cosmo Man were launched in the 1980s and included fashion, sport, entertainment and lifestyle features for their target male audience
8 An event first held in London in 1994
and grooming consumer commodities which facilitated the rapid expansion of the male grooming product market in the late twentieth-century (Edwards: 2003, Benwell: 2003, Stevenson, Jackson and Brooks: 2000, Simpson: 15/11/1994). The impact that the men’s magazine market has had on male consumers’ sense of self and their engagement in consuming will be explored further in the following chapter.

iii) Media focus on men’s appearance: the objectification of men in media content

The way sportsmen and male celebrities look and the grooming trends they follow has had a considerable impact on men’s engagement in consumer markets, particularly the male grooming product market, with male consumers attempting to model the styles of those in the media (Mintel: October 2016, Schwartz: 2010, Milligan: 2010, Yu: 2005, Agrawal and Kamakura: 1995, McCracken: 1989). Footballers such as Kevin Keegan and George Best influenced men’s hairstyles in the 1970s with sports and non-sports fans modelling Keegan’s perm and Best’s long hair (Marsh: 2009). In more recent years the celebrity trend for facial hair and styled stubble has impacted on sales of shaving tools and shaving preparations with the grooming market reporting declining sales of razors, razor blades and shaving foam (Mintel: October 2012). In contrast the male celebrity trend for groomed body hair has contributed to rising sales of waxing preparations and male consumers’ use of men’s salon that offer manscaping and hair removal services (Mintel: October 2016, Buchanan: 07/04/2015, Tyrimou: 04/03/2015, Ricciardelli: 2011). The rise in the number of aftershaves and grooming ranges launched by male celebrities and sportsmen in the last ten years has also contributed to growth in the male grooming product market and has shaped the products male consumers are inclined to purchase and use (Mintel: August 2016, Mintel: August 2014).

The increasing media attention on male celebrities and male sports stars has not only shaped men’s interest in grooming and the products they use, with male consumers attempting to emulate the styles of famous men, the attention has also changed the way men look at each other with male audiences’ focus directed on the bodies of male athletes and male celebrities who are often objectified in and scrutinised by men’s magazines and

9 The removal or trimming of hair on a man’s body for cosmetic purposes
10 Television and print advertisements together with celebrity endorsement inform and influence 26 per cent of male fragrance sales (Mintel: August 2016)
advertisements (Simpson: 20/03/2017, Aubrey: 2006, Rohlinger: 2002, Rojek: 2001). This attention has encouraged male audiences to reflect on their own appearance and compare the way they look with those included in media content (McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Leit, Gray and Pope Jr.: 2002). The marketing and consumer industry have stimulated this shift in male audiences’ attention and presented male grooming products as resources consumers can use to improve, adapt, enhance the way they look so that their bodies may become more like the celebrity icons they are exposed to (Mintel: October 2016, Mintel: January 2016, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Aubrey: 2006). The increasing media attention on men’s appearance and the greater objectification of men in media content will be returned to as an area of discussion in Chapters Five and Six as it highlights significant changes in terms of the way male identity is understood and managed in a consumer-driven culture.

Further factors

Whilst the three factors introduced above – sports sponsorship and sportsman endorsement, content in men’s magazines, and the media focus on men’s appearance – have stimulated the growth of the male grooming product market most significantly there are further factors that have contributed to men’s increased engagement in consuming, the growth of male grooming product market, and the types of grooming products and behaviours men use and perform, factors that will be examined in the discussion that follows.

Although men’s relationship with paid employment has become increasingly fluid since the late twentieth-century (Crompton: 2006, Bauman: 2005, Sennett: 1998) work remains a significant influence on men’s appearance, impacting on their attitude to and use of grooming products (Cao: 01/03/2017, Mintel: October 2012). Men employed in customer facing roles or men who work in office environments are more likely to purchase and use shaving preparations and skincare products compared to men who are employed in more physically demanding roles (Mintel: October 2012). Young professional men are more inclined to buy a wide range of skincare and grooming products with 37 per cent of men in the £50,000 and above salary bracket using each day seven or more products with a premium retail price (iProspect: 2012, Mintel: October 2012). Men employed in elementary occupations11 are also engaged in the grooming product market and using grooming

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11 As defined by the Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) elementary occupations include roles in construction, engineering, process-plants and agriculture which require the knowledge and
products but they are more inclined to consume and use brands sold in supermarkets with these men favouring products on price promotion or ‘bulk-buy’ offers (Mintel: March 2007). Unemployed men are the least likely to use deodorants and antiperspirants which may be a reflection of their financial resources and / or an indication that grooming is not as important if unemployed (Mintel: October 2012).

There are developments in consumer culture that in addition to men’s employment status and their financial resources have impacted on men’s engagement in consuming and have therefore contributed to the growth of the male grooming market. These developments concern the ways in which male consumers shop, with marketing and consumer industries recognising the importance of where grooming products are sold or their ‘channels to market’ (Alreck and Settle: 2002). In response to men’s preference for online shopping (70 per cent of men prefer to research and purchase commodities online (iProspect: 2012)) a growing number of dedicated men’s sites have emerged e.g. Mankind, Boots Men’s Zone and Manscape. Not only do these sites offer male consumers the opportunity to shop for a wide range of grooming brands and products whilst at home or at work (and increasingly on mobile devices) they also provide a consuming ‘experience’ that includes product reviews, style and grooming advice, as well as site forums for visitors to pose anonymous questions about products sold on the site, or to discuss their concerns about their appearance and regime with grooming ‘experts’ (iProspect: 2012, Mintel: June 2010). Sites such as these have not only contributed to the growth of the male grooming product market, they have also fuelled the increasing number of blogs and YouTube channels designed by male creators for male audiences with content focused on men’s appearance, male grooming and the application of men’s make-up. Whilst these sources can be regarded as online content for niche audiences the high-volume of readers, viewers and subscribers demonstrates men’s greater interest in their personal appearance and the range of grooming products being manufactured for diverse male audiences and consumers.

experience necessary to perform mostly routine tasks often involving the use of simple hand-held tools and, in some cases, requiring a degree of physical effort (Office for National Statistics: n.d.)

12 A regularly updated website typically run by an individual or small group, that is written in an informal or conversational style.

13 The YouTube channel of British blogger and vlogger Jim Chapman has attracted over 2.5 million subscribers and more than 1.5 million unique views since it was launched in 2009. Chapman offers style, fashion and grooming advice to his predominantly male audience. His blog and YouTube channel have been recognised with industry awards for their contribution to male fashion and grooming by style magazines such as InStyle and GQ.
The growth of male focused online retailers and online content both promotes and indicates men’s increasing engagement in the male grooming product market and men’s greater interest in their appearance, but it may also suggest that not all men are comfortable exploring and discussing male grooming and their appearance in public, preferring to learn about and shop for products on anonymous online sites rather than through face-to-face channels. However there is evidence that men’s interest in grooming extends beyond the virtual world with a revival of ‘traditional’ barber shops as well as an increase in the number of male-focused spas that offer specialised treatments for men such as pedicures, manicures, facials and hair removal services e.g. chest-waxing, eyebrow threading, hair and beard transplants, non-invasion salon treatments e.g. chemical peels, teeth-whitening, lip plumpers, line fillers, laser face-lifts as well as semi-permanent make-up e.g. eyelash and eyebrow tinting. Although some of these services have been rebranded using a masculine nomenclature that emphasises health-oriented procedures and grooming rather than beauty e.g. ‘hand grooming’, ‘foot grooming’, ‘face grooming’, ‘manscaping’ their popularity demonstrates the extent to which male consumers’ attitude to grooming and consuming has changed (Jordan and Nouril: 19/03/2017, Wilscam: personal communication: 27/04/2015, Tyrimou: 04/03/2015, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Ricciardelli: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009). Men’s engagement in these grooming activities suggests new ways of understanding masculinity associated with men’s engagement in consuming and an interest in their appearance (Jordan and Nouril: 19/03/2017, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Ricciardelli: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Tungate: 2008. Tuncay: 2006, Beynon: 2001, Woodruffe-Burton: 1998, Sturrock and Pioch: 1998). Male audiences’ exposure to media figures and celebrities as well as factors such as men’s employment status and income, together with the channels to market has shaped men’s attitude to grooming and the grooming behaviours they are willing to perform. A study of 223 men living in Canada and France has demonstrated further variables that have shaped men’s interest in their appearance and contributed to the growth of the male grooming product market (Souiden and Diagne: 2009). This study revealed that whilst participants’ beliefs and lifestyles (which referred to participants’ employment and relationship status) influenced their consumer behaviour, participants’ consumption of grooming products was also influenced by factors such as self-image and physical attractiveness, which contributed to their sense of self and general well-being (see Figure 4.2).
Similar motivations for using grooming products were found among male consumers in the UK with 48 per cent of men confirming that ‘what I want most is to look attractive and well groomed’ (Mintel: October 2011). A study conducted in New Zealand with 20 heterosexual men aged 18 - 22 years old revealed that participants’ grooming product use was also prompted by participants’ awareness of and concern with their appearance and how this contributed to their sense of self (McNeill and Douglas: 2011). Studies such as these suggest that men’s motivations for using grooming products have become increasingly similar to those felt by female consumers using beauty and make-up products, with men’s sense of self increasingly being bound up in the way they look and the consumer commodities they can use to manage and enhance their appearance (Jordan and Nouril: 19/03/2017, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Lewis: 2008, Jones: 2008, Simpson: 22/07/2002, Sturrock and Pioch: 1998, Wolf: 1991). Research concerning men’s engagement in the male grooming product market and their motivations for using these products highlights significant changes in respect of the way men think about their identity and their appearance, and the behaviours in which they are willing to engage in in order to manage and enhance the way they look; a shift in attitude that has facilitated the rapid expansion of the male grooming product market over the last thirty years.
Chapter Four

The size and scope of the male grooming product market in the twenty-first century

The male grooming product market demonstrates the most significant area of growth\(^{14}\) of all male consumer markets and suggests new ways of understanding, constructing and managing male identity associated with activities that had once been more closely associated with women (Jordan and Nouril: 19/03/2017, Raconteur: 2017, Mintel: October 2013, Ricciardelli: 2011, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Jones: 2008, Shannon: 2004, Simpson: 15/11/1994). As an extension of the ‘essential’ or core male grooming products, for example razors, shampoo, deodorant, the male grooming product market now offers male consumers a vast range of products that had previously been designed for predominantly female consumers, including skin care, body care, tanning, hair removal, make-up and tools and gadgets (e.g. hair trimmers, hair straighteners, tweezers, nail files, electric exfoliators). Male skin care products are now regarded by the grooming market, as well as by a growing number of male consumers, to be mainstream grooming products with men of all ages showing a greater use of daily moisturisers and skin protectors (Jordan and Nouril: 19/03/2017, Raconteur: 2017, Mintel: May 2016). There is also growing interest in and use of men’s make-up products with 20 per cent of men in the UK using some form of make-up product each day (Mintel: May 2016).

The profile of the male grooming product consumer in the twenty-first century is as diverse as the growing product range. Consumers are both young and old, single and in couple relationships, employed, unemployed and / or in education (Raconteur: 2017, Mintel: May 2016). With lifestyle and relationship status considered to be significant influences on men’s interest in their appearance and their use of grooming products (see previous discussion) the target audience for male grooming products has been identified as unattached males without children who are higher than average earners aged 20 – 44 years (Mintel: May 2016). Those aged under 35 are more aware of advertising messages for grooming products and brands, and are more likely to use a greater number of grooming products with almost half of all UK men aged 25 - 34 years using seven or more products each day (Mintel: October 2012, Mintel: March 2007). Men aged under 35 years also account for the largest group of single men in the UK, a factor that makes them more responsive to advertising campaigns that include images and texts that attempt to associate grooming with social and

\(^{14}\) The UK male grooming product market amassed a market value of £590 million in 2013 (Mintel: October 2014). The worldwide male grooming product market had an estimated value of £14.8 billion in 2016 (Fury: 14/01/2016). The UK male skincare market, which included products such as facial moisturisers and facial cleaners, was valued at £119.3 in 2017 (Raconteur: 2017)
sexuality attractiveness i.e. campaigns that suggest the ways in which the advertised grooming products will enhance users’ sexual appeal or improve their looks (Mintel: October 2016, Mintel: January 2016, Mintel: July 2010) (an area of further discussion in Chapters Five and Six). The trend for grooming and attention to personal appearance is felt by younger males too as boys as young as 10 years old are becoming more aware of their appearance and their sexual attractiveness, responding to increasing peer influence and social pressures by using a growing number of grooming products that are being developed for and marketed at adolescent male consumers (Mintel: October 2014, Lawler and Nixon: 2011, Mintel: June 2009, Mintel: December 2004, Grogan and Richards: 2002, Jones 2001).

Whilst a slower growth in sales is predicted in the coming years the male grooming product market continues to achieve strong financial gains (Raconteur: 2017, Mintel: February 2017, Mintel: October 2016). Market expansion such as this suggests the ways in which grooming products and grooming behaviours (once regarded as niche commodities and activities indulged in largely by wealthy middle-class men in the nineteenth and early-twentieth century (Shannon: 2004, Swiencicki: 1998, Breward: 1998)) have been commodified and successfully marketed by consumer and marketing industries. Strategic marketing campaigns and product developments by these industries have helped to expand the niche market of grooming and grooming products by offering male consumers a diverse range of widely available grooming products which has transformed grooming and the use of grooming products into a daily activity (or series of activities) performed by a range of men in their own homes (Jordan and Nouril: 19/03/2017, Mintel: February 2017, Cao: 2017, Cosmetic Business: 06/12/2012, McNeill and Douglas: 2011). Developments such as this indicate the extent to which male consumers’ attitude to and engagement in grooming has changed with products and services that had once been considered niche or specialist now consumed by an increasingly broad range of male consumers (Jordan and Nouril: 19/03/2017, Mintel: February 2017).

The significance of men’s engagement in consumer markets

Although men were present in consumer markets before the late twentieth-century (Jones: 2008, Swiencicki: 1998, Breazeale: 1994) it is the extent to which male consumer markets have expanded since the 1980s that is central for this study. Men’s greater involvement in consuming and evidence of their increasing recognition of consumer commodities as
resources that help them to construct, manage and express their sense of self (McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Dunn: 2008, Tuncay: 2006, Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly: 2005, Dodd, Linaker and Greg: 2005, Sturrock and Pioch: 1998, Mort: 1996) marks a departure from a male identity that was once more securely predicated on men’s relationship with paid employment and their ability to provide for their family (Sennett: 2008, Crompton: 2006, Bauman: 2005a, Alcock, Beatty, Macmillan, Fothergill and Yeandle: 2003, Mangan: 1991). Whilst previous generations of men may have achieved their sense of self and their social standing through their relationship with paid employment men in the twenty-first century are increasingly finding fulfilment and constructing fluid identities founded on the attainment of a proliferation of consumer commodities. Modern men are now more likely to define themselves by what they buy rather than what they produce as “pride once sought in … professional prowess may be now derived (at the right price) from shopping excellence” (Bauman: 2005a: 66). In contrast to men’s involvement in paid employment which cultivated shared biographies (Giddens: 1991) based on a life-long relationship with work (Sennett: 2008), the consumer culture of late modernity cultivates fluid short-lived identities, or self-projects that can be continually worked on and adapted to respond to liquid social conditions and changing social expectations (Bauman and Raud: 2015, Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 1999). With this in mind, men’s engagement in the male grooming product market and their interest in grooming signifies far more than men’s rising income and greater levels of personal consumption, indicating the ways in which male consumers use their consumption and use of grooming products as symbolic gestures that contribute to and reflect fluid identities in a constantly changing liquid society (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 1999).

The value of consuming

Consumer and marketing industries in the 1950s used advertising campaigns to infuse consumer commodities with aspirational qualities or a code of beliefs that consumers could harness when they purchased the advertised item (see Figure 4.1) (Klein: 2010, Goffman: 1987, Baudrillard: 1981, Barthes and Lavers: 1972, Goffman: 1951). This marketing strategy ascribed consumer commodities with a value that reflected not only consumers’ financial status but also a value related to the type of lifestyle, identities and qualities consumers wanted to project to their peers (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Mansvelt: 2005, Crewe: 2003, Schor: 1999, Featherstone: 1987, Douglas and Isherwood: 1979).
In his consideration of the value of a consumer commodity Jean Baudrillard differentiates between the functional-value of a commodity and its sign-value (Baudrillard: 1981). The functional-value of an electric drill for example reflects the use for which the drill was designed, namely making holes, fixing screws and such forth but for Baudrillard a drill also has a sign-value which can be used by consumers to reflect aspects of their identity or the nature of the identity consumers have cultivated and wish to display to their peers (Baudrillard: 1981). The sign-value of an electric drill may be regarded as one associated with a particular understanding of masculinity, with the consumer commodity reflecting and making reference to men's physical strength and power, and signifying aspects of the male consumers' identity, their gender and their differences from female consumers (Walker: 2008, Bakewell and Mitchell: 2006).

The values ascribed to consumer commodities are particularly relevant to discussion concerning the male grooming product market as despite some grooming brands achieving financial success with a generic range of products designed to have broad market appeal, male consumers are more receptive to brands that offer products in a separate, clearly distinguishable men's range using marketing messages that emphasise the ways in which the grooming range or grooming product can contribute to male consumers' male identity, and cultivate a sign-value associated with a particular understanding or representation of masculinity (Mintel: January 2016, Simpson: 21/03/2013, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Jones: 2008, Kacen: 2000). Although men's grooming and women's beauty products are often the same commodity manufactured from the same base ingredients (which reduces manufacturing costs and increases company profits) marketing and consumer industries market and package the products using different colours, scents and language that help to indicate which gender the product has been designed for (Simpson: 21/03/2013, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Jones: 2008, Bakewell and Mitchell: 2006). Grooming and beauty products marketed at men and women are also priced differently with products aimed at female consumers costing as much as 50 per cent more than similar products designed for male consumers (Ward: 19/01/2016).

These gendered differences are observable among several consumer brands and markets including clothing brand Levi's, technology brand Apple, confectionary brand Nestle, drinks brand Coca-Cola and stationery brand Bic but are of particular importance in the grooming and beauty market where distinctions between the genders and the commodities developed
are essential for product sales and success (Mintel: February 2017, Mintel: October 2016, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Bakewell and Mitchell: 2006) (see Figure 4.3 – the women’s range of products are packaged in white bottles and the men’s products in dark grey bottles). These differences suggest that male consumers are aware of the sign-value of consumer commodities selecting male grooming brands or grooming products which may help to indicate their gender and reflect a particular understanding of masculinity that rejects vanity and self-obsession (Simpson: 21/03/2013, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Tuncay and Otnes: 2008, Jones: 2008, Bakewell and Mitchell: 2006, Tuncay: 2006, Gill, Henwood and McClean 2005, Connell: 2005). Further discussion of the sign-value of consumer commodities is included in Chapter Nine with a presentation of data collected from the research elements designed for this study.

![Figure 4.3: Dove product range](image)

Whilst the male grooming product market provides examples of significant differences between male and females’ attitudes to consuming, as well as differences in the commodities they consume, the way they consume, their motivations to consume and their willingness to admit to consuming, the grooming market also provides examples of the ways in which the behaviours and attitudes of men and women are becoming increasingly similar with men more interested in their appearance and the consumer commodities they can use to manage and enhance the way they look (Jordan and Nouril: 19/03/2017, Simpson: 21/03/2013, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Bakewell and Mitchell: 2006,
Chapter Four

Bakewell: 2004, Otnes and McGrath: 2001, Woodruffe-Burton: 1997). The differences and similarities between the genders highlight the complexity of male identity in an interregnum in which “old structures, so to speak, are falling apart” and new structures have not yet emerged (Bauman: 09/01/2014). During this fluid period old and new ways of understanding or ways of living co-exist until new understandings that are more relevant to the social form are established (Bauman: 09/01/2014, Bauman and Yakimova: 08/11/2002). The male grooming product market illustrates one such area of co-existence as men’s engagement with grooming suggests significant changes in terms of the resources men draw on to define and manage their sense of self and the increasing similarities between the activities performed by men and women, and yet differences between the genders still exist with men consuming and using grooming brands and products that indicate their gender and distance them from female consumers and the characteristics associated with femininity such as vanity and indulgence (Cao: 01/03/2017, Mintel: January 2016, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Kimmel: 2009, Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell: 2006, Otnes and Tuncay: 2006, Gray: 2004, Galilee: 2002, Kacen: 2000, Sturrock and Pioch: 1998, Simpson: 11/15/1994).

Concluding comments

Consumer commodities have been increasingly presented by marketing and consumer industries as resources associated with the cultivation and expression of identity with consumers increasingly using consumer commodities to reflect their financial status, class, leisure interests, tastes, lifestyle choices, sexual orientation as well as their gender. With this in mind the relationship between consumer commodities and male consumers’ sense of self is a particularly rich area of research in a culture driven by the attainment of material possessions.

The growth of the men’s grooming product market is an area of consumer development that indicates significant differences in terms of the way male identity is understood, managed and expressed, with the behaviours and attitudes of modern men indicating new ways of performing and managing their identity and their appearance. Sharing increasing similarities with female consumers men now demonstrate a greater interest in their appearance and the grooming products available to them that will enhance (or that promise to enhance) the way they look. Lifestyle factors such as employment and financial status have been recognised
as significant influences on men’s engagement in the male grooming product market but the market’s growth has largely been attributed to the men’s magazine market and the increasing objectification of men’s bodies in media content. With this in mind the following chapters further examine the impact that media content aimed at male audiences has had on men’s sense of self, stimulating and reflecting new male identities that have emphasised the role of consuming for modern men and have placed greater importance on the way men look and the grooming products they consume.
Chapter Five

Men’s media: Selling new identities to new men

Introduction

My discussion in the previous chapter outlined the growth of consumer culture and men’s increasing engagement and interest in consumer markets focusing particularly on the market of male grooming. The growth of this market and men’s greater interest in their appearance and commodities marketed for their express purpose to enhance users’ appearance marks a significant change in terms of the ways in which masculinity is understood and performed with a growing number of modern men using consumer commodities, goods and services that had previously been associated with women. In this chapter I will focus my attention on the ways in which male consumers have been enticed into consumer markets by media content with the increasingly diverse representations or versions of masculinities included in men’s magazines and media content aimed at male audiences, which male audiences have been encouraged to identify with and emulate, stimulating new understandings of male identity and new ways of being a man that are increasingly associated with consumer commodities and the way men look (Mintel: January 2015, Mintel: June 2013, Ervin: 2011, Lewis: 2008, Butler: 2006, Connell: 2005, Edwards: 2005, Schroder and Zwick: 2004, Benwell: 2003, Crewe: 2002, Schroeder and Borgerson: 1998, Simpson: 15/11/1994). My analysis of media content aimed at men is presented in two parts - firstly providing an outline of the growth of the men's magazine market and its emphasis on consumer commodities which helped to stimulate men’s engagement in consuming, and cultivated and reflected new male identities predicated on a relationship with consuming, and secondly an examination of the representations of men included in men's magazines and male-focused advertising campaigns which have placed greater attention on men's appearance and the consumer commodities men use to enhance and manage the way they look, with these sources increasingly presenting men as objectified, sexualised consumers.
Chapter Five

Stimulating male audiences

The growth of the men’s magazine market is relevant to this study as editorial content together with direct and indirect advertisements\(^1\) featured in men’s magazines have encouraged and stimulated men’s greater interest in consuming and men’s greater awareness of their appearance throughout the twentieth and twenty-first century (Attwood: 2005, Benwell: 2003, Edwards: 2003, Stevenson, Jackson and Brooks: 2000). Whilst this change in men’s behaviour could be regarded simply as an economic development with rising income levels and the availability of financial credit contributing to greater personal consumption (Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly: 2005), it highlights significant social changes related to men’s identity and the resources associated with modern masculinities. Although monthly publications of essays, stories, poems and political comment included in titles such as *The Gentleman’s Journal* and *The Gentleman’s Magazine* were printed as early as the seventeenth-century, it was not until the 1930s that men’s magazines, similar in style and format to those published today, prompted readers to consider themselves as active consumers, impressing on their readers the importance of consuming, style and appearance (O’Hagan: 16/06/2014, Pendergast: 2000, Breward: 1998). Emphasising the shifting class structures taking place in the early twentieth-century these magazines rejected the Victorian notion that masculinity should be associated with hard work and suggested instead that their lower-middle class readers should be concerned with upper-middle class manners, tastes and personal style which could be reflected in readers’ consumption of relevant clothing, lifestyle goods, leisure goods and literature (Pendergast: 2000, Breazeale: 1994).

Men’s magazines during the 1950s cultivated further the relationship between male identity and consuming by encouraging their readers to think of themselves as active informed consumers (Breazeale: 1994). Men’s magazines such as *Men Only*, *Razzle*, *Esquire* and *Playboy* featured editorial photographs, non-fiction articles, humorous cartoons, consumer product reviews and ‘girlie visuals’ as well as aspirational ideals and a presentation of celebrity lifestyles that readers were encouraged to emulate through their own consumer choices (O’Hagan: 16/06/2004, Breazeale: 1994). The emphasis on consuming in these magazines aimed to stimulate readers’ interest in a range of consumer markets and

\(^1\) Direct advertisements include information about a brand or product and are identifiable by layout of copy and text. Indirect advertisements include product placement, in-store promotions, sample stands, social media messages and product reviews (Kotler and Keller: 2011)

During the 1960s, marketing campaigns and editorial content in men’s magazines used ideas and representations associated with the non-conformist attitude of youth culture to stimulate young male audiences' interest in consumer commodities (Hebdige: 1979). These sources included imagery, symbols and language associated with youth culture that evoked hedonistic, individualistic values and ‘transitory whims’ which, according to these sources could be best expressed through the consumption of a growing range of consumer commodities (Frank: 1998, Hebdige: 1979). Diverse images of young men emphasised the importance of personal style and encouraged male audiences to consider how consumer commodities would contribute to the ways in which they expressed their sense of self and were perceived by their peers (Frank: 1998, Mort and Thompson: 1994, Hebdige: 1979) (see Figure 5.1). This generation of young people had a “desire for immediate gratification, [a] craving for the new, intolerance for the slow-moving, the penurious, the thrift [that] made them ideal consumers” (Frank: 1998: 121) and marketing and consumer industries were keen to develop these qualities among male audiences who, until the late twentieth-century, had not been the target of strategic marketing campaigns (Lewis: 2008, Frank: 1998, Mort: 1996).

Strategic marketing campaigns in the latter part of the twentieth-century had been successful in raising audiences’ awareness of the growing number of consumer commodities being manufactured (Schor: 1999, Mort: 1996). Marketing, consumer and media industries were keen to expand consumer markets and drive company profits further, and turned their attention to homosexual men who, compared to their heterosexual counterparts had higher levels of disposable income, a greater interest in their personal appearance and demonstrated more awareness of how consumer commodities could be used to manage their sexual identity and sexual appeal (Saucier and Caron: 2008, Sender: 2001). The success of lifestyle magazines aimed at homosexual audiences affected mainstream
consumer culture in two ways. Firstly, brands were able to ‘try out’ new clothing styles and grooming products on a captive audience, piloting products and honing their marketing campaigns. Secondly, these magazines helped to gradually expose heterosexual male consumers to the new consumer commodities that were infiltrating mainstream shopping channels (Mosse: 1998, Simpson: 15/11/1994). An example of how the consumer and marketing industries used these publications as a test-ground can be seen in the American publication The Advocate, which was first published in California in the 1960s as a newsletter for homosexual readers with articles on issues affecting the gay community in Los Angeles, letters from readers and ‘classified’ advertisements. The newsletter became a newspaper in the late 1960s which was then reformatted as a magazine focused on homosexual politics, lifestyle features and consumer advertising in the 1970s. These editorial changes made The Advocate an attractive publication for the marketing industry which encouraged national advertisers to use the magazine as a way of selling their consumer commodities to captive male readers who understood how their identity could be managed and expressed through consumer commodities (Saucier and Caron: 2008, Sender: 2001). The Advocate grew in popularity with readers and consumer brands throughout the 1980s with the content of the magazine reflecting the style and content of more traditional consumer magazines that focused on lifestyle consumables (Sender: 2001). By the mid-1980s The Advocate resembled a style magazine for a diverse target audience who were interested in fashion, grooming and home consumables as well as lifestyle articles such as restaurant reviews, celebrity interviews and holiday features (Sender: 2001). The style and format of The Advocate remains the same in the twenty-first century with readers presented with editorial features on relationships, politics, parenting, arts and entertainment, celebrity interviews and business together with direct advertisements for a range of consumer commodities, goods and services.

The popularity of men’s magazines declined in the 1970s when titles were grouped in to two distinct categories – single focus titles for special interests (e.g. sports, fishing, photography) and pornography (Jackson, Brooks and Stevenson: 1999). But the market was reinvigorated in the early 1980s by the spirit of the entrepreneur and the boom of city workers referred to as ‘Sloane rangers’ in Britain, ‘yuppies’2 in the USA and the ‘bon chic bon genre’ in France (Childs and Storry: 1999, Belk: 1986). These young professionals were not confined to a single ethnicity, marital status or religion, they were grouped together instead by age,

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2 Term introduced in the 1980s to refer to Young Urban or Upwardly-mobile Professional People working in cities (Childs and Storry: 1999)
income and employment position, identified by an informal consumer uniform unique to each country (Belk: 1988, Belk: 1986). Yuppies, who were predominantly men, were willing to work long hours and dedicate themselves to their careers, using consumer commodities as a form of compensation for the sacrifices they had made in their personal lives that had facilitated achievements in their careers (Sullivan and Gershuny: 2004, Childs and Storry: 1999, Belk: 1986). The culture of consuming valued by these young professionals was reflected in magazines, marketing campaigns and media content throughout the decade with imagery and text emphasising the importance of material attainment and the display of relevant consumer brands which fostered an attitude of materialism among young male consumer audiences (Klein: 2010, Walker: 2008, Belk: 1986). By the late 1980s the yuppies’ interest in consuming was shared by social groups from other backgrounds, classes, income brackets who were trying to emulate the lifestyles of their more affluent peers (Belk: 1986).

As well as stimulating, reflecting and emphasising the young professionals’ appreciation of consumer commodities, the magazine market and marketing campaigns in the 1980s returned to the spirit of 1960s hedonistic indulgent youth culture as a way of engaging male audiences and reinforcing the relationship between identity, indulgence, freedom and consuming (Crewe: 2003). Magazines such as Face and i-D (the self-proclaimed ‘worldwide manual of style’) can be regarded as the first general interest or ‘lifestyle’ magazines that included youth focused content on a range of topics such as leisure attractions, fashion, music, politics, arts, culture, and relationship, career and money advice (Benwell: 2004, Jackson, Brooks and Stevenson: 1999) (see Figure 5.2). These lifestyle magazines did more than just expose male audiences to new consumer commodities though, and became pivotal to the cultivation of new understandings of male identity that were closely linked to men’s consumer engagement and their physical appearance, presenting “Dress, grooming and discerning consumption . . . as the primary identifiers of masculinity” (Crewe: 2003: 45). These new ways of understanding masculinity were reflected in the magazines’ editorial
content and advertising campaigns that introduced the concept of the new man\textsuperscript{3} to describe
the growing number of men who had “disavowed the dominant breadwinner ethic of the
post-war years in favour of a more irresponsible, self-indulgent and emotionally labile
masculinity” (Crewe: 2003: 45). This new man challenged previous ways of understanding
and expressing masculinity by embracing feminism and egalitarianism whilst at the same
time reflecting narcissistic and consumerist ideals that were being realised through the
consumption of a growing number of goods and services aimed at style conscious young

In the following decade an alternative new male emerged in a new genre of men’s
magazines dubbed lad’s mags. These new lads as they became known were characterised
as "a man’s man, all bulging muscles and raging testosterone" (Patterson and Elliot: 2002:
235). Benwell (2003) describes new lads to be “hedonistic, post - (if not anti) feminist\textsuperscript{4}, and
pre-eminently concerned with beer, football and ‘shagging’ women” adding that
constructions of the new lad emphasised his “knowing and ironic relationship to the world of
serious adult concerns” (Benwell: 2003: 37). New lads were overtly heterosexual, puerile in
their humour, and took a (dis)interested approach to their appearance and consumer
reflected characteristics associated with an understanding of masculinity shared by previous
generation of men (evidenced by lad’s mag focus on women, cars, sports, gaming,
technology and gadgets (Edwards: 2005, Gill: 2005)) he also demonstrated an
understanding of masculinity that was more self-aware and albeit with some degree of irony
and humour, more interested in consumption as a form of identity management (Cortese and
Loaded, Front and Maxim targeted men aged 16 - 24 years old with graphic content of
topless women, reviews of consumer goods and lifestyle features (music, fashion, social
events and ironic or tongue-in-cheek relationship advise) (Adams: 04/03/2009, Attwood:
2005). These titles used the theme of sex to entice male readers to buy their publications
with graphic front covers and explicit content that led to several retailers banning the sale of
lad’s mags in their outlets (Travis: 25/02/2010). The editorial content and advertising

\textsuperscript{3} The term new man became popular in the UK in the late 1980s and referred to men who rejected
sexist attitudes and demonstrated caring, sensitive and non-aggressive qualities. These men showed
greater involvement in domestic and child-caring responsibilities (Crewe: 2003)

\textsuperscript{4} Whilst social campaigns and government legislation have helped to achieve greater gender equality
there is continuing debate regarding the existence of a ‘post-feminist’ society (McRobbie: 2007)

Compared to the singular prescriptive representations of men included in men’s magazines in the mid-twentieth century e.g. the breadwinner, the athlete, the suave hero, the men’s magazines in the 1990s demonstrated a fracturing of representation of masculinity with editorial content and advertising campaigns encouraging and reflecting a plurality of diverse male identities that helped to introduce the mass-market to what had been regarded as niche consumer commodities (O’Hagan: 16/06/2014, Costa: 16/09/2010, Martin and Gnoth: 2009, Edwards: 2005, Benwell: 2003, Kacen: 2000) (these identities will be explored further in Chapter Six). The *new lad* represented a return to some of the more normatively male characteristics e.g. an interest in sport, a display of aggression and chauvinism (Ricciardelli, Clow and White: 2010, Martin and Gnoth: 2009, Edwards: 2005, Connell: 2005, Kaminer and Dixon: 1995). In contrast to the *new lad*, the *metrosexual* male, who also emerged in the 1990s, was defined by characteristics such as an active interest in his appearance and consumer commodities, narcissism and vanity (Simpson: 15/11/1994). Journalist Mark Simpson, who coined the term *metrosexual* in the early 1990s, considered that the “stoic, self-denying modest straight man didn’t shop enough (his role was to earn money for his wife to spend), and so he had to be replaced by a new kind of man, one less certain of his identity and much more interested in his image” (Simpson: 22/07/2002). The *metrosexual* was described as a heterosexual man who demonstrated feminine traits such as an interest in shopping, appearance and grooming services (Ervin: 2011, Ricciardelli, Clow and White: 2010, Simpson: 15/11/1994). Like the *new man* and the *new lad* consuming was central to the *metrosexual* identity (Edwards: 2005) but unlike the *new lad* the *metrosexual* was a proud consumer, and in this regard, further challenged an understanding of masculinity that had been characterised by a disinterest in consuming and personal appearance (Ervin: 2011, Connell: 2005, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005, Simpson: 15/11/1994). These new ways of understanding and representing masculinity co-existed throughout the 1990s

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5 E.g. men’s skin care products which had been marketed and sold as niche consumer commodities for a relatively small consumer audience until the early 1990s, but became increasingly visible in mainstream media channels and high-street shops and chemists by the end of the decade (Simpson: 22/07/2002)
although magazines reflected clear distinctions between the male types with publications such as *GQ* and *Esquire* presenting their *metrosexual* readers with lifestyle content and high-end consumer commodities that inferred an indulgent *playboy* identity reminiscent of men’s magazines in the early to mid-twentieth century (O’Hagan: 16/06/2014, Pendergast: 2000) and *lad’s mag* titles such as *Nuts* and *Zoo* targeting *new lads* with reviews of more affordable commodities and images that objectified and sexualised women (Edwards: 2003).

**New men signifying new masculinities**

These *new* male identities can be considered as nothing more than marketing and consumer industries’ attempt to stimulate men’s interest in consumer markets as the identities’ emphasis on consuming only reflects consumers’ financial resources and not men’s political interests, class background, moral beliefs, ethnicity or sexual orientation which may be regarded as more significant determinates of an individual’s identity (Gabriel and Lang: 2008, Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly: 2005, Edwards: 2005, Kacen: 2000, Sennett: 1998). However, the identities’ emphasis on consuming highlights significant social changes in terms of the ways in which identity is constructed and understood in a consumer-driven culture (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Ervin: 2011, Kimmel: 2009, Bauman: 2007, Gill: 2003). Unlike the more rigid social boundaries such as class or employment that contributed more significantly to the identity of previous generations of men, men’s sense of self in the twenty-first century is increasingly fluid and transient, and bound up much more in a succession of consumer choices that reflect an identity (and a society) in a constant state of change (Bauman and Raud: 2015, Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2005a, Cashmore and Parker: 2003, Giddens: 1991). The men’s magazine market together with marketing and consumer industries have presented consumer commodities as resources that facilitate these fluid identities, enabling men to change their identity to fit in to a liquid social form and to adapt their sense of self to reflect their changing life path, career, relationship status or family life (Featherstone: 2007, Bauman: 2005a, Galilee: 2002, Beck: 1992, Giddens: 1991) and so depending on the consumer commodities consumed and displayed, modern men can now move fluidly between a *metrosexual*, a *new lad*, or a *new man* identity all in the course of one day (Simpson: 29/08/2015).

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6 A social concept that has become increasingly fluid in liquid modernity with new understandings and characteristics reflective of consumer culture (Bauman: 2004)
The increasing focus on men's appearance

The growth of the men's magazine market in the twentieth-century contributed to men's engagement in consumer markets by placing importance on and stimulating men's awareness of the growing number of consumer commodities designed and manufactured for male consumers. These publications introduced and reflected diverse representations of new male identities such as the new man, the new lad and the metrosexual, as well as the more recent übersexual\(^7\), lumbersexual\(^8\) and the spornosexual (a male type that will be given further attention later in this chapter). Representations of men such as these share an appreciation for consumer commodities, albeit to varying extents, and indicate the prominence and value of consuming in present-day society. The second part of this chapter focuses on examples from media content aimed at male audiences to illustrate how the increasing attention devoted to men's physical appearance and the grooming products men can use to enhance their appearance has cultivated and reflected new ways of understanding masculinity in the twenty-first century. This relatively recent focus on men's appearance is significant as it indicates considerable changes in terms of the way men look at their bodies and the bodies of other men, and the behaviours men are willing to engage in to manage their identity and enhance the way they look.

Men's magazines aimed at homosexual readers in the 1980s provided a test-ground for marketing and consumer industries to pilot new brands and products, and helped to raise an awareness of consumer commodities among their readers that, by the latter part of the twentieth-century, was shared by heterosexual male consumers (Salzman, Matathia and O'Reilley: 2005, Sender: 2001). These sources proved to be more than just an innovative marketing tool used to encourage male readers to buy new consumer commodities and services as the imagery, text, signs and symbols included in the editorial content and advertising campaigns featured in the magazines cultivated and reflected new ways of understanding male identity that placed increasing importance on men's physical appearance and the ways in which men managed and displayed their bodies (Saucier and Caron: 2008, Branchik: 2007, Salzman, Matathia and O'Reilley: 2005, Sender: 2001). Much

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\(^7\) Men who have similar interests to a metrosexual e.g. an interest in appearance and grooming but who also display a passion for global causes and physical strength which contributes to their overtly heterosexual identity (Salzman, Matathia and O'Reilley: 2005)

\(^8\) Men who demonstrate an interest in the outdoors, or the pseudo-outdoors. Identified by their consumption of clothes worn in industry such as RedWing 875 work boots, Jansport hiking backpacks, their styled facial hair, tattoos and facial piercings as well as their use of high-tech gadgets such as Apple MacBook Air (Puzak: 30/10/2014)
like the images of ‘ideal’ families included in advertising campaigns in the 1950s (see discussion in Chapter Four) these magazines used images of male bodies that were considered to be an ‘ideal’ physical form. These ideal images were accompanied by advertising copy that suggested the ways in which the advertised items could contribute to consumers’ own appearance, the ways consumers managed their bodies and the way consumers were perceived by their peers (Simpson: 17/04/2010, Saucier and Caron: 2008, Sender: 2001).

Whilst this new attention on men’s bodies was initiated by men’s magazines aimed at homosexual readers it was a theme borrowed by the growing number of men’s lifestyle magazines that emerged in the 1990s and can still be observed in men’s lifestyle magazines aimed at heterosexual readers in the twenty-first century (Edwards: 2005, Benwell: 2003). The men’s monthly lifestyle magazine GQ provides an example of the increasing focus on men’s appearance - in 2016 nine front covers of the UK edition featured male celebrities, sportsmen or models compared to four of the 2012 front covers (the other eight front covers in 2012 displayed exposed female celebrities or models) (Conde Naste: n.d). Men’s magazines such as GQ include on their front covers and in their editorial content images of male celebrities, sportsmen and models who, whilst display characteristics or symbols associated with normative masculinity⁹ such as a hard muscular physique, tattoos, facial hair and heterosexuality, are presented in such a way that their exposed bodies have become objects for audiences’ attention (see Figure 5.3). This increasing focus on men’s physical appearance may be regarded as a reflection of the new ways in which men look at each other and their greater recognition of the importance of their

Figure 5.3: Men’s Health front cover April 2015 issue

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⁹ What is regarded as ‘normal’, what men ‘ought’ to be, or the acceptable and appropriate way of being a man (Connell: 2005). Often characterised by male heterosexuality, men’s physical strength and dominance as well as men’s interest and engagement in activities and leisure pursuits such as sport, drinking and gambling (Connell: 2005, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005, Kaminer and Dixon: 1995)
Groomed body projects and fluid identities

Marketing and consumer industries have prompted the increasing focus on men’s appearance as a way to encourage men to regard their bodies as sites that require constant maintenance or as an evolving self-project that can be worked on, developed and improved through the consumption of commodities, particularly male grooming products, that have been designed to enhance men’s appearance (McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Bauman: 2007, Shilling: 2004, Giddens: 1991). This change to the way men look at each other and the way men appraise their own appearance reflects the fluid, liquid nature of the present-day society. Unlike the more stable or fixed identities cultivated through a life-long relationship with work, or an identity based on class, ethnicity or political principles, the body, regarded as a project that can be managed through the consumption, use and display of consumer commodities, facilitates changing identities that can be tried on and adapted to suit fluid social conditions (Bauman and Bauman: 2011). In short, the recent focus on men’s appearance and the objectification of their bodies in men’s magazines has impacted on men’s sense of self as it has encouraged men to become more aware of their appearance and the consumer commodities they can use to enhance the way they look, a shift in focus that has cultivated and facilitated fluid male identities (matters that will be explored further in Chapter Six).

Marketing, consumer and media industries’ increasing focus on and objectification of men’s appearance is of further significance to my analysis of male identity as it has contributed to growing insecurities among men about the way they look. This development can be regarded as an indication of increasingly blurred gendered identities concerning the way men relate to and manage their bodies, as their use of consumer commodities is becoming increasingly similar to that of their female contemporaries (McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Kimmel: 2009, Saucier and Caron: 2008, Bakewell and Mitchell: 2006, Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly: 2005, Kacen: 2000, Wolf: 1991). Marketing and consumer industries have both stimulated and responded to these insecurities among men, presenting male grooming products as ‘solutions’ to physical ‘imperfections’ such as baldness and age ing (McNeill and Douglas: 2011). The increased focus on men’s

The following section focuses specifically on the ways in which marketers of male grooming products have contributed to the increasing attention on men’s appearance in two ways – creating grooming product advertisements that emphasise the ways in which the advertised grooming product can improve users’ appearance and their (hetero)sexual appeal with women, or focusing exclusively on the body of the male model, celebrity or athlete featured in the advertisement in order to cultivate an association between the advertised grooming product and what is regarded as a physically attractive man and an aspirational lifestyle.

**Sex sells: a focus on male grooming product advertisements**

Marketing and consumer industries have used endorsement from sportsmen in advertisements for male grooming products as a means to stimulate male consumers’ interest in the male grooming product market (see Chapter Four for further discussion). These famous figures embody and display characteristics associated with a particular understanding of masculinity e.g. one that values men’s physical strength and competitiveness, and have helped to validate male grooming products as those used by ‘manly’ men (Simpson: 20/11/2016, O’Hagan: 16/06/2016, Connell: 2005, Bush, Martin and Bush: 2004, Rohlinger: 2002, Nixon: 1997). But sports star and celebrity endorsement of male grooming products has also contributed to the increasing focus on men’s appearance

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\(^{10}\) Terms given to describe muscle dysmorphia whereby men are concerned with looking too ‘small’ or ‘weak’ even though they are of a muscular build (Osborne: 22/09/2015)

\(^{11}\) A procedure to reduce the size of a man’s ‘boobs’ referred to in popular culture as ‘moobs’

\(^{12}\) A procedure once used for physical abnormalities and cancer patients in which excess skin is removed from the scrotum so it appears less wrinkled or ‘baggy’
with campaigns signifying to audiences that the endorsed grooming product has contributed to the way the endorser looks and their (hetero)sexual appeal with women.

Campaigns such as the 1970s Brut aftershave television advertisement which included British boxer Henry Cooper and British World Champion Grand Prix motorcycle racer Barry Sheene made reference to the athletes’ sporting achievements as well as their physical appearance and their sexual appeal with women. In these campaigns the athletes’ muscular bodies were admired by sexually submissive women who, according to the subtext of the advertisement, were unable to resist the sexual advances of Cooper and Sheene who both used Brut aftershave. Like the Brut campaigns of the 1970s, the 2006 Lynx Click campaign used the celebrity endorsement of American actor Ben Affleck to suggest the ways in which Affleck’s physical appearance and sexual appeal with women had been enhanced by the actor’s use of the Click body spray (see Lynx: 2006: Click television advertisement\textsuperscript{13}). More recently, a television advertisement for the Hydra Energetic range of grooming products from the L’Oreal Men Expert brand featured several women dancing with and looking admiringly at Formula One racing driver Lewis Hamilton (see L’Oreal: 2016: Men Expert Hydra Energetic television advertisement\textsuperscript{14}). The images, text, signs, symbols and commentary used in this advertisement (e.g. Hamilton’s endorsement of the range and the positive response Hamilton receives from the women included in the campaign) may have encouraged male audiences to reflect on their own bodies and consider how their appearance could be improved and their lifestyle enhanced if, like Hamilton, they used products from the Hydra Energetic range (Saucier and Caron: 2008).

There are further examples included in Figure 5.4 that demonstrate the respects in which recent advertisements for male grooming products are designed to encourage men to focus on their appearance by including images of women, who may be considered to be stereotypically attractive, admiring or responding positively to men who use the advertised product. Whilst the style and content of some of these examples reflects the sexual innuendo and derisive humour used by lad’s mags in the 1990s, and depicts characteristics associated with an understanding of masculinity and gender roles held by previous generations, the examples illustrate the increasing attention on men’s appearance and the

\textsuperscript{13} https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tomg9UmYGNs
\textsuperscript{14} https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJFhUC7ipc

The sexually explicit content and sexist subtext of grooming product campaigns similar to those included in Figure 5.4 has led to a growing number of advertisements for male grooming products being censored or banned by the Advertising Standards Agency (The Telegraph: n.d.). The examples included in Figure 5.4 suggest that whilst more diverse representations of men have been introduced into media content aimed at male audiences e.g. the new man or the metrosexual, heterosexual prowess and male virility remain a common theme by which to stimulate men’s interest in their appearance and grooming (Simpson: 20/11/2016, O’Hagan: 16/06/2016, Connell: 2005, Bush, Martin and Bush: 2004, Rohlinger: 2002 Nixon: 1997). In one respect these advertisements reflect new ways of understanding male identities which are closely linked to how men look and the grooming products they consume, but they do this by sexualising women; using imagery, symbols, themes, characteristics and activities that refer to heterosexuality, sexual virility and men’s dominance over sexually submissive women (Feasey: 2009). These diverse or contrasting identities and symbols of masculinity may be regarded as a reflection of ‘masculinity in crisis’ whereby modern men experience pressure from social influences and media sources to balance identities that refer to previous ways of understanding and performing masculinity with more modern egalitarian expectations and values (Abbott: 16/05/2013, Kimmel: 2009, Butler: 2006, Connell: 2005, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005, Edwards: 2005, Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly: 2005, Schroder and Zwick: 2004, Clare: 2001).
Figure 5.4: Examples of male grooming product advertisements that focus audiences’ attention on men’s appearance by making reference to men’s heterosexual appeal with women (from clockwise top right) Davidoff Cool Water, Gucci Guilty, Lynx Billions, Axe, Nivea Men, Gillette ProGlide Styler
In contrast to the examples included in Figure 5.4, that depict characteristics associated with an understanding of masculinity that values and emphasises heterosexuality, sexually submissive women and male virility, the examples included in Figure 5.5 highlight the ways in which some male grooming product advertisements contain little reference to or description of the male grooming product being advertised, and instead focus exclusively on the male body, objectifying or sexualising the men included in the campaign. Whilst the composition of these advertisements contains imagery and symbols associated with male dominance, physical strength, virility, heterosexuality and power e.g. the models’ professional work shirt and tie, tattoos, a muscular body, a construction site, sport, and reflect a male identity associated with a ‘hard man’ sense of masculinity, the men included in the campaigns are reduced to silent sexualised subjects, objectified by marketing and consumer industries to sell a grooming product to male consumers (Saucier and Caron: 2008, Walker: 2008, Elliot and Elliot: 2005, Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly: 2005, Connell: 2005, Patterson and Elliot: 2002, Jefferson: 1998). The ways in which the greater focus on men’s appearance and the increasing objectification of men in media content has impacted on male identity will be explored further in the discussion that follows.

Figure 5.5: Examples of male grooming product advertisements that focus exclusively on men’s appearance (from left to right Joop! Wild, Gillette Cool Wave, Biotherm Homme)
Objectified men: the sporno

The increasing sexualisation or objectification of men in media content\textsuperscript{15} has been somewhat ironically prompted by the male dominated pastime of professional sport, which has cultivated the new sporno identity that focuses on men’s appearance and sexualises men to an extent previously unseen in media content and popular culture (Simpson: 19/06/2006). Whilst marketing and consumer industries cultivated the relationship between sport and grooming products throughout the twentieth-century, using references to sport and athletes’ professional achievements as a way of validating grooming products as consumer commodities used by ‘manly’ men (see discussion in Chapter Four), the presentation of the sporno star in the twenty-first century has contributed to the fetishisation, sexualisation and objectification of men with advertising campaigns focusing on the sporno’s exposed body rather than the advertised product (Simpson: 17/04/2010, Nixon: 1997).

Described as “the post-metrosexual aesthetic that sports and advertising are using to sell us the male body” (Simpson: 17/04/2010) the sporno shares some similarities with the metrosexual demonstrating a keen interest in grooming and the way he looks (Simpson: 19/06/2006). Images of the sporno are explicit in their content, reducing professional athletes to sexualised objects to be looked at and scrutinised and so “Where metrosexual imagery stole slyly from soft gay porn, sporno blatantly references hard gay porn” (Simpson:

\textsuperscript{15} Media content aimed at male audiences had historically positioned women in submissive roles for male audiences to sexualise and objectify but since the late twentieth-century male models and male celebrities have been increasingly presented as subjects for men and women to objectify (O’Hagan: 16/06/2014, Simpson: 25/04/2013, Aubrey: 2006, Rohlinger: 2002, Breazeale: 1994)
17/04/2010). Whilst Simpson refers to the ‘blatantly’ pornographic nature of images such as that of *Figure 5.6* the *sporno* and his worked-on physique have been used and referred to more subtly in popular media content and advertising campaigns to sell consumer commodities such as grooming products, clothing and accessories, televisions, mobile phones, food and drink, and household utilities (Kolowich: 23/08/2016). The body of the sportsman and the importance of his physical appearance is emphasised in these sources with imagery and text suggesting or alluding to the ways in which the advertised product has contributed to or enhanced the sportsman’s body or his management of his body (Kolowich: 23/08/2016). The *spornos’* endorsement of the advertised product and the advertising copy used in these campaigns encourages audiences to consider how the advertised commodity could contribute to and allow consumers to effectively manage their own body or sense of self (Kolowich: 23/08/2016).

The attention on professional athletes’ physical form has impacted on men in the mainstream consumer culture, shaping the bodies, aesthetics, consumer engagement and activities of young men who aspire to have the worked-on physique and consumer commodities of a professional *sporno* (Libby: 29/07/2015, Simpson: 15/04/2015, Simpson: 19/06/2006). These young men are exposed to the *sporno* ideal in men’s magazine and advertising campaigns as well as through social media channels such as *Instagram* and *Snapchat* with professional *spornos* posting images of themselves training and competing, or posing for their social media followers (Libby: 29/07/2015, Simpson: 15/04/2015, Simpson: 19/06/2006). Much like the *new* male identities that have been introduced and discussed previously in this chapter, the *sporno* has been used by marketing and consumer industries to encourage men’s interest and engagement in a range of consumer markets but particularly in the sports and health supplement, and the male grooming product market where a *spornos’* endorsement can significantly impact on consumers’ interest, market growth and product sales (Simpson: 04/08/2016, Simpson: 15/04/2015).

16 Image and video based mobile applications
Chapter Five

Concluding comments

Media content aimed at men has encouraged men’s interest and engagement in a range of consumer markets with men’s magazines and advertising campaigns for male grooming products reflecting and stimulating new ways of understanding and being a man in a consumer-driven culture. These new ways of understanding and being a man signify the nature of identity in a liquid modern society with consumer and marketing industries presenting consumer commodities as resources that facilitate individuals’ fluid movement between short-lived transient identities and lifestyles. I have presented several new male identities in this chapter, one of which being the sporno identity whose image-focused consumer-driven identity illustrates several themes relevant to my thesis: the relationship between consumer commodities and men’s sense of self; the increasing attention given to men’s bodies and the ways in which men manage their appearance; and the fluidity of male identity in consumer culture. The following chapter explores the increasing fluidity of men’s identity in liquid modernity, examining the ways in which media representations of men such as the sporno reflect the plurality of masculinities modern men can inhabit.
Identities in liquid modernity: The fluidity of modern masculinities

In the previous chapters I have outlined the ways in which changes in society have impacted on men’s sense of self in the present-day. I return to Bauman’s body of work in this chapter in order to explore the nature of men’s identity in liquid modernity. I consider the representations of men included in media content as they highlight the ways in which the construction, performance and management of identity in contemporary society has become ever more fluid and diverse (Bauman and Raud: 2015, Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2005b, Bauman: 2001c, Bauman: 1999). The diversity of representations of masculinity signify a shift away from a singular understanding of male identity (Connell: 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt: 2005, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005) towards a plurality of fluid male identities that through the consumption of relevant consumer commodities can be inhabited and performed simultaneously (Bauman and Raud: 2015, Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2005b, Bauman: 1999). Inclusion of a case study profile of the iconic *sporno*, professional footballer, David Beckham, whose public identity reflects the fluidity of male identities in liquid modernity, draws together central themes examined in this chapter.

Identity in liquid modernity

In the text *Practices of Selfhood* (2015) Bauman describes the four seminal alterations or new qualities ascribed to identity in liquid modernity; starting with the recognition of identity as an object of attention, scrutiny and contemplation (which has been illustrated with examples from relevant media content in the previous chapter). Bauman then argues that identity has been set apart as a subject from other entities, with the ‘self’ becoming an active subject that “transforms the rest of the world” (Bauman and Raud: 2015: 2). Further to this Bauman considers that identity has been promoted to the primary, privileged object and finally that modern identity operates under a new timeframe no longer set against an eternal background but rather a somewhat faster ‘shutter speed’ of time (Bauman and Raud: 2015). This revised timeframe refers to the fast-paced nature and liquid conditions of the present-day with individuals increasingly likely to change their occupation, where they live, their relationships, family structure, diets, politics, religion, leisure interests, personal style, appearance several times throughout their lifetime (Bauman: 2000). These changing life
courses are reflected in and facilitated by the mass-produced ‘identity kits’ that individuals are able to choose from and consume (Bauman and Raud: 2015: 69).

The alterations or new qualities ascribed to identity in liquid modernity have impacted on the ways in which men construct and relate to their sense of self with identity being increasingly understood and managed as an object that requires constant attention and (re)development in order to fit-in to the changing social form (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2005a, Bauman: 2005b, Bauman: 2001c, Bauman: 2000, Bauman: 1999). This new more transient way of understanding men’s identity marks a shift away from the relatively stable life-long identity of previous generations whose sense of self was guided by ethical principles, value hierarchies, strategic principles, and expectations and experience of full-time employment (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2005a, Sennett: 1998). Emancipated from the more rigid structures of solid modernity discussed in Chapters Two and Three e.g. heavy capitalism and social class, Bauman considers the liquid modern identity to be a project ‘broken down’ into a series of tasks which, guided by flexibility and change, should be kept “unfinished, forever pliable, leaving plenty of room for experimenting with its alternatives” (Bauman and Raud: 2015: 60). The body or the management of the body has come to be regarded as one aspect of this ‘unfinished’ self-project with male consumers increasingly using body-related consumer commodities e.g. clothes, male grooming products or grooming services as well as body modification practices e.g. tattoos and piercings, together with gym attendance, health programmes or cosmetic surgery procedures to contribute to their changeable physical appearance and reflect their fluid malleable identities (Be Real Campaign: 2017, Simpson: 04/08/2016, Bauman and Bauman: 2011, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Dewing and Foster: 2007, Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell: 2006, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005, Shilling: 2003, Bauman: 1999, Jefferson: 1998, Giddens: 1991).

The increasing focus on men’s appearance and the growing recognition of the body as a project that is managed, realised and displayed using the consumption of relevant consumer commodities suggests the ways in which identity can be performed by individuals in modern times (Bauman and Raud: 2015, Featherstone: 2007, Butler: 2006, Connell: 2005, Shilling: 2003) with individuals reflecting on how they are perceived in social situations and modifying their behaviour, their speech, their body-project (the way they look) so that they may fit with the expectations of their peers or, perform an identity or manage an appearance that they
consider to be appropriate for the social situations they find themselves in (Giddens: 1991, Goffman: 1990) (see Chapter Three for further discussion). Recognising this process of reflexivity and observing individuals’ awareness of the ways in which they perform their identity and the ways in which this performance is received by others Bauman notes that when two people – A and B – talk to each other six people participate in the conversation; in addition to A and B there is A’s image of B, B’s image of A, A’s image of B’s image of A and B’s image of A’s image of B (Bauman and Reid: 2015: 40). Bauman argues that unlike previous generations who, in their engagement in consumer culture, were concerned with the consumer commodities and services that would contribute to their identity or the performance of their ‘image’ (Bauman and Raud: 2015, Bauman: 2007), the “quandary tormenting men and women at the turn of the century is not so much how to obtain the identities of their choice and how to have them recognised by others, but which identity to choose, and how best to keep alert and vigilant so that another choice can be made in case the previously chosen identity is withdrawn from the market or stripped of its seductive powers” (Bauman: 2001c: 126) (italics authors’ own). These short-lived, self-selected, performed identities may not be reflective of aspects of an individual’s life e.g. their occupational position, their social standing, their personal characteristics but are instead considered or contrived identities that individuals choose to inhabit and perform (Bauman and Raud: 2015, Bauman and Bauman: 2011). The representations of men included in popular culture are therefore important to consider when examining the nature of masculinity in the twenty-first century as these representations both reflect and stimulate the fluid male identities that modern men can choose to inhabit and perform (Bauman and Raud: 2015, Schroeder and Zwick: 2004).

**Fluid male identities and consumer-culture**

in Western societies by examining men as a social category, men as a gender class and perhaps most importantly for this study, men as a collective of individuals who, whilst demonstrating significant differences in terms of the identities they inhabit, share a growing commonality in the resources they draw on (e.g. consumer commodities) that help them to construct, manage and perform their unique sense of self. (The ways in which media content has stimulated the relationship that has developed between consumer commodities and men’s identity, and the performance of men’s identities has been discussed in Chapters Four and Five and is explored further in Chapter Ten).

Those examining gender relations have borrowed from the Gramscian term *hegemony*¹ to refer to the complex power relations that exist between men and women, as well as the relations that exist between groups of men, with men who display particular characteristics embodying hegemonic masculinity and imposing their cultural dominance over women as well as their male peers who diversify from this understanding (Connell: 2005, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005, Hearn: 2004, Donaldson: 1993, Carrigan, Connell and Lee: 1985). Whilst not embodied by all men within a society, hegemonic masculinity is facilitated by social relations that have been organised in such a way so that they reinforce patriarchal dominance and power, keeping men in positions of power and women in subordinate roles (Butler: 2006, Connell: 2005, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005, Carrigan, Connell and Lee: 1985). Hegemonic masculinity reflects a way of understanding and performing what it means to be a man in a specific time period or an understanding held by a culture, country or social group and it is therefore subject to change, being redefined or updated to reflect changing social conditions and cultural differences (Connell: 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt: 2005, Williams: 1977). Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth-century hegemonic masculinity in the Western world had been characterised by men’s physical strength, aggression, wealth, competitiveness, their dominance in paid employment, their interest in sport and their heterosexuality (Butler: 2006, Connell: 2005). This understanding or representation of men dominated media content until the late-twentieth century when the changing social conditions of liquid modernity facilitated and stimulated new forms of expression of masculinity performed by men who were appropriating what were once considered to be niche, divergent or alternative activities, characteristics, qualities, symbols, and

¹ The term *hegemony* was used by sociologist Antonio Gramsci to describe the ways in which particular groups (referring fundamentally but not exclusively to the ruling class) organised and imposed their definitions, attitudes, behaviours and dominance over others (Stewart: 2010, Connell and Messerschmidt: 2005, Donaldson: 1993, Williams: 1977)
Consumer and marketing industries have used the increasingly fluid nature of male identity in liquid modernity to their advantage, including in their content a plurality of male identities or a growing number of representations of men that seemingly challenge the ways in which masculinity had been represented in media content throughout the twentieth-century e.g. sporty professional men or rugged men disinterested in their appearance and grooming (see discussion and examples in Chapters Four and Five) (McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly: 2005, Schroeder and Zwick: 2004, Goffman: 1987, Wolheter and Lammers: 1980). These new or more diverse representations of men have appealed to and helped to entice a greater number of male consumers into new or developing markets e.g. the male grooming product market, with male audiences indicating a greater sense of identification to the new or alternative representations of men included in men’s magazines and advertising campaigns (McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Costa: 16/09/2010, Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly: 2005). The 2016 Find Your Magic campaign designed to promote the new packaging of items in the Lynx range of male grooming products provides an example of the ways in which advertising campaigns increasingly present male audiences with diverse, fluid representations of men that are reflective of new ways of understanding and performing male identities in liquid modernity. Breaking away from the sexist stereotypes and new lad banter that had become a theme in marketing material for Lynx grooming products (Feasey: 2009) the Find Your Magic television advertisement focused on the appearance of the men in the campaign and the ways in which these men embraced their physical differences and displayed or performed their unique sense of self or identities; identities that were depicted in the range of male body types, ethnicities, ages, styles of dress, sexual orientations and leisure interests included in the advertisement (Watt:
17/01/2016). The campaign presented, among other representations\(^2\), a bearded cat lover, a man with a large nose and a male dancer performing in high heeled shoes to reflect diverse male identities that had previously been seen in advertisements for male grooming products e.g. the suave heterosexual, the grown-up adolescent, the professional athlete (Libby: 29/07/2015, Costa: 16/09/2010, Feasey: 2009, Simpson: 19/06/2006).

Figure 6.1: Still images from Lynx Find Your Magic television campaign 2016

In comparison to other advertisements for male grooming products which have encouraged, through the imagery, symbols, signs, text and language deployed, a homogenous understanding or representation of masculinity, the text and language used in the Find Your Magic advertisement encouraged male audiences to reflect on their identity and identify the physical qualities, interests, attitudes that made them different to other men, suggesting that male audiences should embrace and celebrate their differences rather than attempt to conform or cover them up\(^3\) (see Figure 6.1 for still images from the campaign). This

\(^2\) Other representations or identities featured in the advertisement included a ginger-haired teenager shadow boxing in an empty changing room, a black man on a treadmill in a crowded gym dancing flamboyantly to the music he was listening to on his headphones, a young homosexual male couple, a man in a wheelchair ballroom dancing with an able-bodied female partner, two teenage demonstrators clothed only in their protest banners running from armed officers.

\(^3\) The Find Your Magic campaign is part of the ‘Men in Progress’ series of short videos available on the Lynx YouTube channel (Lynx: 2017a: https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGUh2PEjFCoFstabDRLVLJT0kOq5l7ky). This series explores different aspects of being a man in the twenty-first century with Lynx consumers and male celebrities and sportsmen including boxer Anthony Joshua, musician Josh Franceschi, rapper Wiley and actor Will Poulter discussing topics such as sexual orientation, ethnicity, becoming a father, body image and relationships. The most recent video in this online series titled ‘Is it OK for guys . . .’ has also been broadcast as a television advertisement, referencing gender stereotypes and normative masculinity by posing questions such as ‘Is it OK for guys . . . to not like sport, wear pink, have long hair, be depressed, be scared, shave their chests?’ (Lynx: 2017b: https://youtu.be/nx5oYrMuc1M). The ‘Men in Progress’ series illustrates the increasingly diverse representations of men included in
sentiment was perhaps most clearly expressed in the televised advertisements’ concluding statement: "Who needs some other thing, when you’ve got your thing? Now work on it" (see *Lynx*: 2016: *Find Your Magic* television advertisement⁴).

The *Find Your Magic* campaign is particularly relevant to discussion in this chapter as it illustrates marketing and consumer industries move away from a prescriptive or singular representation of hegemonic masculinity e.g. the *Marlborough Man⁵*, the breadwinner model, the professional athlete towards diverse representations that modern men are able to choose from and inhabit and perform (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Costa: 16/09/2010, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Connell: 2005, Butler: 2004, Simpson: 22/07/2002, Bauman: 2000, West and Fenstermaker: 1995, Simpson: 15/11/1994, West and Zimmerman: 1987, Goffman: 1987). This shift in marketing style can be regarded as both a reflection of and a stimulant for the greater fluidity of male identity in the present-day with modern men constructing and performing identities that, facilitated by the appropriation and display of consumer commodities and the changes made to their physical appearance, are increasingly transient and fast-lived (Bauman and Raud: 2015, Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Kimmel, Hearn and Connell: 2004, Schroeder and Zwick: 2004, Rohlinger: 2002). The discussion that follows draws on further examples from media content to illustrate the ways in which advertisements have increasingly presented media audiences with a plurality of male identities or representations of men that diversify from and challenge previous ways of understanding, representing and performing masculinity, and thereby highlight the fluidity of identity in liquid modernity.

**Representations of fluid male identities**

An analysis of men’s magazines and advertising campaigns aimed at male audiences illustrates the significant social and economic changes (discussed in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five) that have impacted on the ways in which men understand, construct, manage and perform their sense of self (Schroeder and Zwick: 2004). These changes include new

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⁴ [https://youtu.be/3wB-yrcH02o](https://youtu.be/3wB-yrcH02o)

⁵ A lone, independent figure used in advertising campaigns for *Marlboro* cigarettes in the late twentieth-century
Chapter Six

gender politics (Kimmel and Aronson: 2004), a movement towards greater gender equality (Lamont: 2015, Scambor, Bergmann and Wojnicka et al: 2014), the more fluid relationship men have with paid employment (Sennett: 2006, Bauman: 2005a, Alcock, Beatty, Fothergill, Macmillan and Yeandle: 2003), men's increased participation in domestic tasks (Aarseth: 2009), men's greater involvement in childcare responsibilities (Gregory and Milner: 2011), men's increased consumer activity (McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell: 2006) as well as men's recognition of the body as a worked-on life-long project (Wright, Halse and Levy: 2016, Butler: 2004, Shilling: 2003, West and Zimmerman: 1987). Changes such as these are reflected in the plurality of male types or new male identities represented in men's magazines and advertising campaigns (Schroeder and Zwick: 2004, Rohlinger: 2002). Whilst these sources include symbols, signs, imagery, text and language associated with previous ways of understanding and representing masculinity e.g. sport, heterosexuality, paid employment they have increasingly presented media audiences with representations of men that combine or inhabit several seemingly diverse male identities simultaneously, melding together different representations of men in the same advertisement (Costa: 16/09/2010, Schroeder and Zwick: 2004, Hebdige: 1987). These new representations of masculinity highlight the increasing number of roles men are expected to perform, with modern men inhabiting and displaying characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity e.g. men as a dominant breadwinner together with more modern understandings, attitudes and behaviours e.g. an involvement in domestic duties, an interest in appearance, an engagement and interest in consumer markets.

Much like the Find Your Magic campaign discussed previously the examples included in Figure 6.2 depict representations of men that, through the activities, characteristics, signs, symbols, language and text included in the advertisements, reflect previous ways of understanding and representing masculinity together with new more diverse understandings, behaviours and attitudes. The advertisements for Huggies and Tide included in Figure 6.2 illustrate this with the representations of men in each advertisement indicating the ways in which modern men can inhabit and perform a plurality of identities or roles simultaneously. In these advertisements the male actors' clothing (shirt and tie) provides symbols of the breadwinner representation of masculinity associated with paid employment and male power whilst their involvement in child-care and domestic duties reflects a hands-on father or the 'Mr Mom' representation of modern men (Costa: 16/09/2010, Vavrus: 2002, Goffman: 1987). These activities had once helped to define gender identities (throughout the nineteenth and
early twentieth-century men’s involvement in paid employment and women’s responsibilities to their families contributed to distinct gender roles) and so the representations of male identities included in the Huggies and Tide advertisements may be regarded as reflections of the blurred or more fluid gender roles in liquid modernity (Poole, Speight, O’Brien, Connelly and Aldrich: 2013, Aarseth: 2009, Sennett: 2006, Crompton: 2006, Butler: 2006, Bauman: 2005a, Connell: 2005, Henwood and Proctor: 2003, Edley and Wetherell: 1999). A similar fusion of representations or identities that challenge hegemonic masculinity and suggest the fluidity of men’s identity can be seen in the 2013 campaign for Diet Coke which used imagery, signs and symbols associated with male dominance, power and strength e.g. a muscular male body and an involvement in physical labour in an advertisement that arguably objectified the male model featured in the campaign, highlighting the importance of the model’s appearance by focusing on his worked-on body (Sweney: 28/01/2013) (see Figure 6.2). The examples included in Figure 6.2, and other advertising campaigns like them, highlight how representations of men included in media content have become increasingly complex with the advertisements drawing on a range of symbols, signs, imagery, qualities to reflect previous ways of understanding, performing and representing masculinity as well as new or alternative ways of understanding fluid male identities that are indicative of changing social conditions, family structures, domestic responsibilities, occupational positions and sexual politics (Simpson: 20/03/2017, Sweney: 28/01/2013, Klein: 2010, Walker: 2008, Bakewell: Mitchell and Rothwell: 2006, Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly: 2005, Connell: 2005, Butler: 2004, Bauman: 2005a, Schroeder and Zwick: 2004, Rohlinger: 2002, Pendergast: 2000, Sennett: 1998, Simpson: 15/10/1994, Breazeale: 1994, Goffman: 1987).
Further examples of the ways in which media content includes fluid representations of male identities that fuse several representations of men together and challenge previous ways of understanding and representing masculinity can be found in Figure 6.3 and Figure 6.4. Whilst the Real Men Wear Pink advertising campaign for the aftershave Joop! Homme included symbols, signs and imagery associated with hegemonic masculinity e.g. male dominance, a muscular male body and heterosexual virility (Goffman: 1987) it challenged normative colour associations linked to gender and focused on the appearance of the male model in such a way that he became the sexualised object of the audiences’ gaze (see Figure 6.3). In a similar presentation of symbols, signs, imagery, text and language the Hugo Boss campaign for the Just Different aftershave combined several representations of masculinity. The television advertisement followed the American singer and actor Jared Leto dressed in a formal black business suit (which can be regarded as a symbol associated with male dominance, conformity, paid-employment and corporate industry (Sennett: 2006, Sennett: 2001, Frank: 1998, Mort, 1996, Goffman: 1987)) through cityscape locations but these symbols (the suit and cityscape) were juxtaposed by Leto’s androgynous physique, his
Chapter Six

metrosexual eye make-up or guy-liner\(^6\) and his encouragement for male audiences to be unconventional or, as Leto stated in the advertisement to “seek the unexpected, seek the difference” (see Hugo Boss: 2011: Just Different television advertisement\(^7\) and Figure 6.4 for a print advertisement from the Just Different campaign).

![Figure 6.3: Joop! Homme](image)

![Figure 6.4: Hugo Boss](image)

The signs, symbols, imagery, text and language used in the examples discussed above represent consumer and marketing industries’ attempts to attract audiences’ attention and to appeal to a broad range of male audiences but they may also be considered a reflection of the complexity of male identity in liquid modernity with the advertisements signifying a reassessment of masculinity and providing an illustration of the diverse identities modern men can choose to inhabit and perform (Simpson: 29/08/2015, Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly: 2005, Edwards: 2005, Kacen: 2000). These advertisements also highlight the attention given to men’s appearance and the focus on the resources men can consume and use to manage and enhance the way they look. Whilst these campaigns suggest the fluidity and diversity of male identity in liquid modernity, with the men included in the advertisements

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\(^6\) Eye-liner make-up worn by men (Newling: 28/07/2008)

\(^7\) [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPI4bZeYZQM](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPI4bZeYZQM)
inhabiting and encouraging unique identities that embrace and celebrate individuals’ differences, they share a commonality as the representations of men featured in the advertisements are predicated on and expressed or performed using consumer commodities (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Klein: 2010, Walker: 2008, Featherstone: 2007, Bauman: 2007, Campbell: 2004, Schor: 2002). Advertising campaigns as well as editorial content in men’s magazines have stimulated men’s growing awareness of and greater engagement in a range of consumer markets, particularly in the male grooming product market (Mintel: June 2015, Lennard: 2009, Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell: 2006, Benwell: 2003, Simpson: 15/11/1994) but the increasing globalised media visibility of celebrity figures, politicians, professional athletes, media personalities since the mid twentieth-century has also significantly shaped men’s involvement in consuming as well as their sense of self (Turner: 2014, Radnedge: 16/05/2013, Rojek: 2012, Klein: 2010, Milligan: 2010, Walker: 2008, Yu: 2005). These media figures (with direction from their management teams) have constructed a public identity that whilst related to their profession is increasingly associated with and expressed or performed using the consumer commodities they appropriate and display, establishing publicised relationships or endorsement contracts with consumer brands, goods or services that contribute to their public identity (Turner: 2014, Radnedge: 16/05/2013, Rojek: 2012, Milligan: 2010, Walker: 2008, Yu: 2005). The following discussion focuses on the former professional footballer David Beckham whose engagement in consuming, relationship with consumer brands, goods and services, and constantly changing appearance have received significant media attention, and have arguably stimulated men’s growing awareness of and interest in consumer markets, as well as men’s increasingly critical appraisal of their appearance and the bodies of other men (Milligan: 2010, Yu: 2005, Simpson: 28/06/2003). As a recognised metrosexual and spornoosexual David Beckham exemplifies the fluid nature of identity in liquid modernity, inhabiting and performing a range of identities that diversify from previous ways of understanding and representing masculinity (Milligan: 2010, Gill, McClean and Henwood: 2005, Simpson: 28/06/2003).

Team Beckham: the likeable brand, the model metrosexual, the iconic consumer, the fluid spornoosexual

The relationship between professional sport and the male grooming product market has been addressed in Chapters Four and Five with discussion outlining the ways in which the marketing and consumer industries have used sport sponsorship and sports star endorsement to increase sales in the male grooming product market by raising men’s
awareness of grooming brands, products and services, and validating these consumer commodities as those used by men who embody characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity (Connell: 2005, Simpson: 19/06/2006). Men’s increasing awareness and use of male grooming products has also been shaped by the relatively new male identity of the sporno whose involvement in sport, worked-on muscular physique, interest in his appearance and engagement in a range of consumer markets has helped to define an identity that fuses symbols, signs, activities and characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity together with those associated with new or alternative male identities such as the new man and the metrosexual as well as homosexual men (Olesker: 12/10/2015, Libby: 29/07/2015, Simpson: 19/06/2006, Connell: 2005).

The sporno identity is of particular relevance to this study as it reflects several of the themes that I have explored in this and the previous chapters, namely the importance of consumer commodities in relation to male identities and the ways in which male identities are defined, constructed and performed; the greater attention on men’s appearance and the resources men draw on to manage and enhance the way they look; and the reassessment of masculinity and the increasingly fluid ways of understanding and representing male identities. Whilst the world of professional sport includes several examples of well-known spornosexuals e.g. footballers Cristiano Ronaldo and Freddie Ljungberg, swimmer Tom Daley, tennis player Rafael Nadal, or rugby players Frédérik Michalak and Josh Lewsey, former professional footballer David Beckham has perhaps received the most media attention for his sporno identity, using his consumption of consumer commodities and the modifications he makes to his worked-on body to cultivate and reflect a range of fluid identities that suggest new ways of being a man (Braddock: 06/08/2015, Milligan: 2010, Simpson: 19/06/2006, Cashmore and Parker: 2003, Simpson: 28/06/2003).

**Brand Beckham**

David Beckham became famous in the early 1990s for his professional footballing achievements but he is equally well-known for his life away from the football pitch; featuring regularly in celebrity and entertainment news for his high-profile marriage to Victoria ‘Posh

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8 Beckham was signed as a trainee to Manchester United in 1991, he made his premier league debut in 1995 and played his first match for the England national team in the 1996 football World Cup
Chapter Six

'Spice' Adams (a former *Spice Girl* and now successful clothing designer) as well as his consumer activities, sartorial choices and constantly changing physical appearance (Milligan: 2010, Yu: 2005, Simpson: 08/06/2003, Simpson: 15/11/1994). Beckham has become a style icon for sports and non-sports fans combining "glamour and marketing savvy [which] has built a unique brand that is admired around the world by young and old, male and female fans" (Milligan: 2010: 11). His mass-market popularity, admirable qualities, enviable looks and aspirational lifestyle have helped Beckham to become one of the highest paid sports stars in the twenty-first century, banking £42 million from commercial endorsements in 2013¹⁰ (Forbes: n.d). He has amassed significant earnings from lucrative advertising campaigns with several well-known fashion brands including *Adidas, Emporio Armani, Breitling, Kent & Curwen* and *Police*, grooming brands *Biotherm Homme, Gillette* and *Brylcreem* as well as lifestyle brands *Sainsbury’s, Disneyland Parks, Sharpie, Samsung* and *Pepsi*. Beckham has also released his own range of aftershaves sold in high-street chemists and supermarkets as well as a range of men’s underwear designed in partnership and sold by international clothing retailer *H&M*. Using Beckham as a brand ambassador these consumer brands have attempted to infuse their brand, products and services with Beckham’s likable qualities and mass-market appeal (Milligan: 2010, Yu: 2005, Cashmore and Parker: 2003).

Beckham’s endorsement of consumer brands, goods and services together with his well-documented consumer spending have become significant aspects of his identity, with Beckham carefully selecting, consuming, endorsing and displaying brands, goods and services that will contribute positively to the likeable public personality or celebrity brand he and his marketing team have cultivated (Braddock: 06/08/2015, Radnedge: 16/05/2013, Milligan: 2010, Yu: 2005, Cashmore and Parker: 2003, Simpson: 28/06/2003). As a celebrity *metrosexual, spornosexual*, consumer icon Beckham should not be considered a model example of the behaviours and attitudes of all men in the present-day society but he does however highlight the significance of consumer commodities in liquid modernity (Milligan: 2010, Yu: 2005, Cashmore and Parker: 2003). He demonstrates the ways in which consumer commodities can be used as resources that facilitate the construction, management and performance of an identity which, never fixed or formed symbolises a passing ideal, a consumer trend, a momentary experience, a modern way of living or an

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⁹ One of the most successful British pop groups of the 1990s
¹⁰ Beckham was ranked as the 8th highest paid athlete in the world in 2013 (Forbes n.d.)
aspirational concept with Beckham inhabiting, displaying and performing several male identities, lifestyles and roles simultaneously, casting-off identities as they become unappealing, out-dated, unfashionable or no longer relevant (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Milligan: 2010, Cashmore and Parker: 2003, Simpson: 28/06/2003, Bauman: 1999) (see Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.5: Images of David Beckham’s changing appearance

The range of identities that Beckham inhabits can at times appear to be in conflict with each other though. Beckham’s identity as a former professional football star\(^{11}\), which is reflective of characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity e.g. male dominance, financial power, physical strength, can be regarded as somewhat oppositional to his new man or metrosexual identity, which is observable through media coverage of Beckham’s role as a hands-on father, doting husband, avid consumer and meticulous groomer (Aarseth: 2009, Crompton: 2006, Connell: 2005, Cashmore and Parker: 2003). Similarly Beckham’s role as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador\(^ {12}\) could be considered to be at odds with his prolific consumer spending and indulgent lifestyle (Milligan: 2010, Dolan: 04/04/2006, Simpson: 28/06/2003). Beckham’s appropriation and display of consumer commodities together with the changes he makes to his appearance could represent the resources that Beckham uses to move with relative ease between his seemingly distinct identities, selecting clothing, hairstyles, grooming behaviours and products to reflect which of his identities he is

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\(^{11}\) Beckham retired from professional football in 2013 having captained the England football team for six years. He won the BBC Sports Personality of the Year in 2001 (a publically judged award that has recognised sporting achievements since 1954) and achieved runner-up position for the award in 1999 and 2002

\(^{12}\) In 2005 Beckham became a UNICEF Ambassador to protect children experiencing abuse, poverty and global disasters
performing, and helping him to draw his identities together into one meaningful celebrity brand (Milligan: 2010, Yu: 2005).

**Body Beckham**

Known for his constantly changing physical appearance Beckham exemplifies the understanding of the body as an on-going project or a site of continual development related to individuals’ sense of self (Be Real Campaign: 2017, Wright, Halse and Levy: 2016, Simpson: 15/04/2015, Atkinson: 2008, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005, Shilling: 2003). Beckham’s body has been shaped by his professional involvement in sport but he has made several modifications to his appearance (through his hairstyles, piercings, tattoos and fashion choices) to reflect or perform a series of new fluid identities that are short-lived and easily replaced by the next consumer trend or way of living (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 1999) (see Figure 6.5). Whilst male consumers may not be able to replicate Beckham’s excessive consumer spending habits they are able to copy his body-project13, adopting hairstyles, fashions or tattoos that are similar to Beckham’s as well as use appearance-related consumer products endorsed by him such as male grooming brands *Gillette* and *Biotherm Homme*. More recently men’s body-projects have extended beyond the appropriation of consumer commodities and the use of male grooming products with a growing number of young men now using weight-management aids, anabolic steroids, health supplements, extreme fitness regimes and diets as a way of managing their bodies, which they increasingly associate with their self-worth and sense of self (Be Real Campaign: 2017, Wright, Halse and Levy: 2016, Simpson: 04/08/2016, Walker: 19/06/2015, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Ricciardelli: 2010, Dodson: 2006, Choi, Pope Jr. and Olivardia: 2002, Sturrock and Pioch: 1998). Whilst Beckham alone cannot be held accountable for these more extreme cases of body-projects the *spornosexual* identity that Beckham inhabits has certainly contributed to the increasing objectification of men in media content and popular culture which has stimulated men’s greater interest in and awareness of their appearance (Simpson: 20/03/2017, Braddock: 06/08/2015, Jones: 03/04/2015, Simpson, 19/06/2006, Aubrey: 2006).

13 The ways in which men construct and express their identity by managing their body as a constantly evolving, worked-on project, engaging in tasks and activities that contribute to the maintenance and appearance of the physical self (Shilling: 2003, Giddens: 1991).
The presentation of Beckham’s worked-on body in media content highlights the increasing objectification of men in popular culture with Beckham’s body objectified in advertising campaigns and editorial content in magazines that place him in exposed tableaux, positioning his body as the most important element of the frame for audiences to direct their attention on (see Figure 6.6). These sources arguably reduce Beckham to a silent object\textsuperscript{14}, a body-project that is used to sell a brand, product or service (Walker: 2010, Yu: 2005, Simpson: 28/06/2003). Whilst Beckham’s muscular physique reflects his physical strength and professional involvement in competitive sport (characteristics that are suggestive of hegemonic masculinity), the objectification and fetishisation of his body in advertising campaigns and men’s magazines infers subordination, decoration and vanity (characteristics once more closely associated with women and homosexual men) (Daniel and Bridges: 2010, Tiggemann and Kirkbride: 2007, Aubrey: 2006, Schroeder and Zwick: 2004, Simpson: 15/11/1994, Wolheter and Lammers: 1980).

The ways in which Beckham is presented in media content is significant as it illustrates not only the fluidity of male identity in the twenty-first century, with Beckham inhabiting and reflecting characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity together with new ways of understanding and displaying masculinity, but it also indicates the new ways of looking at or

\textsuperscript{14} Beckham’s voice has been ridiculed by his teammates, the press, football fans and media audiences (Davies: 08/04/2014)
objectifying the male body (together with the objectification of other spornos and media figures) which has made men increasingly aware of the bodies of men in media content and how their own physical appearance compares to those they are exposed to (Wright, Halse and Levy: 2016, Daniel and Bridges: 2010, Martins, Tiggemann and Kirkbride: 2007, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005, Rohlinger: 2002) (see discussion in Chapter Five). This greater attention on men’s bodies has arguably stimulated men’s engagement in consuming and grooming, and has contributed to the rising sales figures of male grooming products and other consumer commodities related to men’s appearance with male consumers increasingly recognising the ways in which consumer commodities, particularly grooming products, can be used to modify or enhance the way they look (Mintel: March 2016, Braddock: 06/08/2015, Cosslett: 13/09/2013, Mintel: 11/06/2011, Strutton: 01/08/2010, Mintel: 19/09/2008, Aubrey: 2006, Simpson: 19/06/2006, Rohlinger: 2002). Such changes signify new ways of understanding and performing masculinity with a greater number of men in the mainstream culture participating in markets and engaging in activities that had once more closely been associated with women or niche audiences such as homosexual men (Mintel: March 2016, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell: 2006, Pendergast: 2000, Simpson: 15/10/1994, Breazeale: 1994).

Beckham - the new ‘norm’?

Beckham’s engagement in consuming, his awareness of his appearance and his interest in grooming suggests the significance of consuming in relation to his public identity, but it also indicates new ways of understanding masculinity in a consumer-driven culture (Bauman: 2007, Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell: 2006, Connell: 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt: 2005, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005). His well-documented consumer spending, the attention he gives to his appearance and the amount of time he has admitted to spending on his groomed looks has arguably influenced the behaviours and attitudes of modern men, shaping the ways in which men relate to and manage their own appearance (Fury: 14/01/2016, Mintel: May 2016, Mintel: March 2016, Braddock: 06/08/5015, Walker: 21/02/2014, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Atkinson: 2008, Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell: 2006, Yu: 2005, Simpson: 28/06/2003). Men’s increased consumer engagement and their growing interest in their appearance suggests new or alternative ways of understanding and performing masculinities (a contrast to previous ways of understanding and performing masculinity which have eschewed vanity and indulgence), and perhaps indicate the ways in which socially constructed concepts such as gender identities are being redefined or
updated to reflect changing social and economic conditions (Bauman and Raud: 2015, Sennett: 2006, Butler: 2006, Crompton: 2006, Connell: 2005, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005, Cashmore and Parker: 2003, Bauman: 2000). Despite these changes to the ways in which gender identities and gender roles are understood and performed Beckham must still negotiate a careful balance of identities to fit-in with social expectations as he has received significant criticism from the media and public for some of his more flamboyant consumer and fashion choices and indulgent grooming regimes\(^{15}\) (Tong: 16/01/2017, Chan: 09/05/2016, Spence: 02/05/2015). Some critics have found Beckham’s clothing, grooming and hairstyles to be divergent, feminine or overly indulgent for a man to perform, regarding him disapprovingly as a \textit{metrosexual}, and even dubbing him a ‘virus’ or ‘gender-bender’\(^{16}\) (Tong: 16/01/2017, Paine: 28/04/2005, Simpson, 28/06/2003, Simpson: 15/11/1994). Such criticisms indicate that whilst consuming and grooming may have become activities associated with new normative masculinities there are still distinctions made between the activities, characteristics, trends that are deemed appropriate for men and women to perform (McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diange: 2009, Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell: 2006, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005, Simpson: 28/06/2003). As a case study Beckham illustrates masculinity in interregnum; masculinity in a period in which previously held definitions or concepts co-exist with new more relevant ways of understanding and performing gender (Bauman: 09/01/2014, Butler: 2006).

\textbf{Concluding comments}

New ways of understanding and performing masculinity have emerged in the twenty-first century. Using Bauman’s thesis as a framework I have considered the nature of identity in liquid modernity, and analysed the fluid identities that men are now able to choose from and perform, and the ways in which these identities have been represented in men’s magazines and advertising campaigns. Whilst the fluid identities and representations of men could be regarded simply as consumer and marketing industries’ attempt to appeal to a broad range of consumers and thereby increase consumer spending, the plurality of representations in such sources can also be understood as a reflection of the changing social form and the liquid conditions of the twenty-first century with modern men inhabiting and performing a

\(^{15}\) Beckham has received considerable media attention for wearing pink nail polish, a sarong, a ‘man bag’ and for outfits that matched his wife’s

\(^{16}\) A person who dresses and behaves in a manner characteristic of the opposite sex, or who combines attributes of both sexes; something which challenges or defies traditional notions of gender (Oxford English Dictionary: 2017)
range of identities to keep-up with their changing social roles. The examples considered in this chapter demonstrate the relationship between fluid identities and consumer commodities explored in Bauman's analysis of a consumer-driven liquid society. These examples have illustrated the greater significance of consuming and grooming in the lives of modern men with the subtext of the advertising campaigns signifying that the identities depicted are realised and enhanced by the consumption and display of theadvertised consumer commodity.

Whilst men’s greater engagement in consuming and their greater awareness of their appearance has been influenced by the growth of the men’s magazine market and targeted advertising campaigns it has also been significantly shaped by their greater exposure to celebrity figures whose identities are closely linked to their appearance and the consumer commodities they appropriate and display. With this in mind the celebrity David Beckham has been discussed as a case study as he highlights the increasing significance of consumer commodities in relation to men’s identity. As a modern day *sporno, metrosexual, übersexual* and breadwinner Beckham uses consumer commodities to facilitate his seamless move between the range of fluid identities that he inhabits. He also demonstrates the growing attention given to men’s appearance and the ways in which consumer commodities and male grooming products can be used to contribute to men’s sense of self and the ways in which men are received or perceived by others. Beckham’s approach to consuming and grooming signify new or alternative ways of understanding fluid masculinities with activities that had once been closely associated with women and divergent male groups fast becoming part of the mainstream culture.

The following chapter focuses on the methodological approach I designed to contribute to discussion concerning male identity in a consumer-driven culture. The research aims and objectives of the research elements conducted with four samples of men are discussed and an evaluation of the research design and the research methods selected to gather qualitative and quantitative data on the themes that have emerged from the literature discussed in these early chapters provided. The subsequent chapters present an analysis of this data.
Methods and data

An exploration of the economic and social shift away from a production-led culture in Britain, and the impact that this shift has had on the ways in which men understand, manage and express their sense has been considered in the previous chapters. Developments in consumption are central to my analysis of men’s identity in the twenty-first century because, in tandem with increasing evidence of a blurring of gender roles, due to changes in the British labour market and men’s greater involvement in childcare and domestic responsibilities, a growing number of consumer brands, commodities and services are being aimed at male consumers which has contributed to new ways of understanding and performing masculinity. Whilst consumer and marketing industries have helped to cultivate men’s interest in a range of consumer markets it is the expansion of the male grooming product market that is of particular interest for my study as it signifies significant changes in terms of the consumer commodities associated with male consumers, with a growing number of men consuming and using products from a market that had, until the late twentieth-century, been directed at female consumers (the women’s beauty market) or regarded as a consumer market for niche consumers (see discussion in Chapters Four and Five). Having conducted a review of relevant literature I designed four research elements to further my understanding of the growing relationship between men’s self of self and consumer culture. My aims and objectives for this research as well as a critical evaluation of the research design and methodological approach are presented in this chapter.

Research aims

I identified the following research aims in order to explore the central question of my thesis: Why has men’s grooming become a growing sector in the beauty industry? I aimed to:

1. consider the recent proliferation of men’s grooming through the lens of Bauman’s thesis concerning the transition from a society of producers to a society of consumers;
2. investigate the consumption of male grooming products in terms of social integration, social stratification and the formation of identity;
3. examine the growth in the number and types of grooming products available to male consumers and advertisements that are used to market these products;
4. explore men’s perspectives on and engagement with grooming, the promotion of grooming, and the consumption of grooming products.

**Research design**

I was aware that being a female researcher in a male focused subject area could affect recruitment, participation and data analysis (Yassour-Borochowitz: 2012, Arendell: 1997, Williams and Heikes: 1993, Gurney: 1985). As a result I had to give additional consideration to the research design, over and above that which relates more generally to empirical research and data analysis. I considered that grounded theory, which utilises a systematic approach to the generation of conceptual ideas or theories through the analysis of data, would be most appropriate as it would allow me to develop the research design as I furthered my understanding of the subject through the collection of data (Bryman: 2016, Charmaz: 2014, Glaser and Strauss: 2009, Walker and Myrick: 2006, Thomas: 2003). However I used a *modified* approach to grounded theory as my research design was informed by my theoretical background research, in the subject area of identity, as well as by secondary quantitative data on male consumer spending and the male grooming product market (my use of secondary data will be discussed shortly). My decision to use a modified grounded theory approach and the methods I employed was informed by my wish to:

1. provide data from different aspects of the subject area (e.g. market data, male participants’ perspectives);
2. immerse myself as a female researcher in a subject area focused on men;
3. use research methods that would appeal to male participants;
4. give male participants the opportunity to discuss the subject area using their own words.

With these considerations in mind I was able to critically assess potential research methods and determine the suitability of each method for this study. A quantitative approach seemed most appropriate for an examination of the extent to which male participants were engaged in consumer markets. I decided to complement this with a methodological approach that would gather qualitative data and provide a greater insight into the subject area from participants’ perspectives (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie and Turner: 2007, Thomas: 2003). Whilst
the use of qualitative and quantitative methods helped me to compare the different types of data I did not use qualitative and quantitative methods for purposes of triangulation (with one method of research verifying the results of another (Bryman: 2016)) rather, I utilised different approaches in order to explore separate but interrelated themes and thus provide a more holistic understanding (Glasser and Strauss: 2009).

Research approaches

My research design included the following research approaches:

1. documentary analysis of a sample of men’s magazines and advertising campaigns aimed at male audiences to explore representations of masculinity in media content;
2. a face-to-face focus group of male participants to explore their responses to media representations, social expectations and their relationship with grooming and male grooming products;
3. an online questionnaire to build a profile of a sample of male consumers and assess the impact of lifestyle factors on male grooming product expenditure and use;
4. an online discussion forum to explore the ways in which participants used male grooming products in their everyday lives.

These approaches addressed the two overarching quantitative and qualitative questions (Figure 7.1)

Each research element gave rise to areas for further investigation and helped me to identify relevant participants and suitable questions for the following element (Charmaz: 2014, Glaser and Strauss: 2009). In addition to the four research elements used in this study I conducted three pilot studies to assess the delivery of the online questionnaire and online discussion forum. These pilot studies allowed me to evaluate the approaches I had chosen, assessing participants’ access to and the reliability of each delivery method. I anticipated that these pilot studies would enhance my understanding of conducting research with male participants, and would help me to design and conduct research elements that would appeal
to male participants using research questions or areas of focus that would be meaningful
and relevant to the samples of men involved, and would thus help to minimise the impact of
my gender on the collection and analysis of data.
All research elements were reviewed by and received approval from the FHSS Ethics Committee (see Appendix Four). This ethical approval ensured that all research elements adhered to the University’s Ethical Guidelines and the British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association (2002).
Chapter Seven

Secondary quantitative data

I supplemented the four research elements outlined above with quantitative secondary data collected by the market research group *Mintel*. Relevant consumer reports from *Mintel* provided a profile of the male consumer market as well as an insight into male consumers’ attitudes to and spending on grooming products. As the *Mintel* reports I used included quantitative data from large probability samples that were representative of a wider population (Bryman: 2016) they were an effective way for me to study the size and scope of the grooming product market and the extent to which men are involved in consuming. But there are many limitations of secondary data (Bryman: 2016, May: 2011, Vartanian: 2010). The data were gathered in response to the needs of the consumer industry so I had no influence over the questions asked, the methods used or the participants who were included.

Methodological approaches

My methodological approaches provided me, as a female researcher, with male perspectives on the subject area (May: 2011). In order to examine representations of masculinity in media aimed at men my empirical research began with an analysis of men’s magazines and advertisements aimed at male audiences. I used qualitative and quantitative approaches which facilitated an in-depth examination of the media content included in the sample.

I wanted to explore my findings from this documentary analysis with a relevant sample of men and selected qualitative research methods for their "express commitment to viewing events, actions, norms, values etc. from the perspective of the people who are being studied" (Bryman: 1988: 61). I evaluated the range of qualitative research methods available to me. I was aware that interviews would “yield rich insights into people’s biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings” (May: 2011: 132) but I wanted to explore alternative methods that would allow me to engage with participants and facilitate interaction between the participants. I reviewed the four types of interviews used in the social sciences: structured, semi-structured, unstructured and group interviews or focus groups (May: 2011). I decided that a group interview or focus group would be most suitable.

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2 A privately-owned market research company used by the consumer industry to gather consumer and market data from over 30,000 consumers and more than 5,000 businesses worldwide
for my research as this type of interview would yield qualitative data from participants who would use their own terms of reference and indicate discussion areas that they were interested in or willing to respond to, as well as facilitate group interaction which would provide me with examples of male participants ‘doing’ gender or performing their sense of masculine identity in front of their peers (Allen: 2005, Lloyd: 2005, Butler: 2004, Grogan and Richards: 2002, Krueger: 2002, Gurney: 1985).

I selected the online research elements for their relevance and suitability for this study and the participants involved. Virtual interaction allowed me to invite larger samples of men to take part in the online questionnaire and online discussion forum, and as men are active digital users and show a keen engagement in online content (Lefever, Dal and Matthiasdottir: 2007, Ono and Zavodny: 2003) I considered virtual interaction to be an approach that would appeal to those invited to take part in my research. I was also interested to observe what male users would reveal about their identity in an online environment in which visual indicators such as age, gender and ethnicity were removed and communication relied on text-based discussions (Kendall: 2000). A final reason for including online research tools in my research design is their position as a still relatively new research method in the social sciences (Bryman: 2016, Xun and Reynolds: 2010, Lefever, Dal and Matthiasdottir: 2007). I was keen to evaluate the potential and suitability of online research tools for collecting data for social research studies.

**Data analysis**

Computer Assisted Qualitative Data AnalysisS (CAQDAS) techniques have been developed by social scientists to facilitate data management, assist with the coding of data and reduce the risk of misinformed interpretations made by the researcher (Fielding: 2002, Fielding and Lee: 1991). For these reasons I used data analysis software to assist with and contribute to the coding and analysis of data collected from the online questionnaire and online discussion forum. Quantitative data gathered from the online questionnaire was analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). I used NVivo, a software package designed for assisting with the analysis of qualitative data from text-based sources such as transcriptions of interviews, focus groups, forums or media content from magazines, printed press, websites or leaflets. (ReStore: n.d), to manage and analyse the qualitative data collected in the online discussion forum. I considered that the functional tools and visual
presentation provided by NVivo e.g. the colour coding of words and phrases would help me to identify patterns of speech and recurring themes that may have been overlooked or not as apparent to a researcher with my experience (ReStore: n.d). I also regarded the use of SPSS and NVivo as an opportunity for me to develop my research skills and gain experience of software used for sociological research projects on a larger scale (ReStore: n.d). This opportunity would further the skills I had developed from hand-coding the qualitative data gathered from the focus group research element I had previously conducted for this study.

As the sample of media content for my documentary analysis was relatively small (the sample of men’s magazines included 312 advertisements in total) I used an electronic spreadsheet and thematic analysis by noting re-occurring words, phrases and observations (Bryman: 2016). I considered the data gathered from the focus group session to be manageable without the use of CAQDAS or SPSS.

The factors I considered in my design and delivery of each research element as well as information about the samples involved in each element will be presented in the pages that follow.

1. Documentary analysis of media content

My study of media aimed at male audiences involved a content analysis - the systematic and replicable recording of the number of times a keyword, phrase, image, logo or symbol appeared in a sample (Bryman: 2016, Riffe, Lacy and Fico: 2005, Weber: 1990, Schroeder and Borgerson: 1998) as well as a textual analysis whereby I focused on the meaning of symbols, signs and imagery rather than the number of times they appeared in the content (Bryman: 2016, Fairclough: 2003).

I used two samples of media content aimed at male audiences. One consisted of three men’s magazines on sale in the UK in September 2010 and the second sample comprised of direct advertising campaigns for three men’s grooming brands (see Figure 7.1). The analysis of these documents allowed me to examine the representations of men included in
magazine content and indirect advertisements (product placement, in-store promotions, social media messages and product reviews) aimed at male audiences as well as the representations of men included in direct advertisements (information about a brand or product identifiable by layout of copy and text) (Kotler and Keller: 2011). I was able to explore the data gathered and my observations from these sources with the focus group and online discussion forum participants.

Analysis of direct and indirect advertisements and editorial content in men's magazines

Sample of men's magazines

The men’s magazines selected for media analysis reflected the three main categories of the men’s magazines on sale in the UK: weekly titles, monthly titles and single focused titles (Mintel: February 2010). The brief descriptions of each magazine below demonstrate the title’s relevance and suitability for this study. For a more detailed profile and history of each magazine please see Appendix Two.

GQ

GQ is a men’s monthly lifestyle magazine. In 2010 each issue cost £3.99. The content in GQ focuses on fashion and lifestyle features but the magazine also includes content on food and travel as well as reviews of gadgets, music, films, art, books, cars and sport. The September 2010 issue featured a style supplement GQ Essentials which was included in my analysis of the magazine. The magazine has been available in digital format as well as accessible through the GQ app\(^3\) since 2011 which is reflective of readers’ use of technology and their active leisure interests (Conde Naste Publication Ltd.: 2015).

\(^3\) Software or programme designed to fulfil a particular purpose, to be downloaded by a user for use on a mobile device
Chapter Seven

Nuts

The weekly magazine Nuts was representative of the weekly lad’s mag category of men’s magazines designed to appeal to younger male readers aged 18 to 30 years old (IPC Inspire: 2009). Nuts readers were considered to have an interest in their appearance and enjoyed spending money on grooming products and fashion (IPC Inspire: 2009). The magazine’s editorial and advertising content focused on audio equipment, high-street clothing brands (e.g. Topman and H&M), games consoles and gaming culture which reflected the readers' leisure interests (IPC Inspire: 2009). The price of a weekly issue of the magazine was £1.70 in 2010. After 10 years of publication Nuts’ publisher IPC Media announced the magazine’s closure in 2014.

FourFourTwo

The single focus magazine FourFourTwo has a readership of adult football fans from upper-middle, middle and lower-middle class backgrounds (Haymarket: 2010). The title includes content on international football fixtures together with journalists’ reviews of matches and questions from predominantly male readers as well as interviews with sportsmen and non-sporting personalities. The monthly magazine was priced at £4.50 an issue in 2010.

Analysis of direct advertisements for male grooming products

An analysis of direct advertisements for men’s grooming brands provided additional insights into representations of men in the media and highlighted an increasing focus on men’s physical appearance and the significance of their grooming behaviours. I focused on the following brands as they are the three leaders in the UK male grooming product market: Gillette, L’Oreal Paris Men Expert and Lynx (Mintel: May 2015, Mintel: June 2010). Direct advertisements for these three grooming brands featured in the sample of men’s magazines analysed. The following brief descriptions of each grooming brand demonstrate the brand’s relevance and suitability for this study. Please see Appendix Three for a more detailed profile and history of each brand.
Sample of male grooming product brands

*Gillette*

The *Gillette* brand is recognised as the market leader in the male grooming product market with a 31 per cent share of all shaving preparations and depilatories sold in the UK (Mintel: October 2016). Whilst the *Gillette* brand has diversified into the women's shaving market the target audience and the majority of consumers of *Gillette*’s products are men aged 18 to 24 years (although the brand is popular with men of all ages) (Mintel: October 2016, Soccio: 02/01/2012).

*L’Oreal Paris Men Expert*

The *Men Expert* range of skin, body and hair care products is an example of a personal care range that has been developed by a brand (*L’Oreal*) that had achieved market success in the women’s beauty market before diversifying into the male grooming market (Mintel: May 2015). Unlike other male grooming ranges sold at the time of its launch in 2005, the *Men Expert* range included more than just shaving products by offering its male consumers a range of grooming products such as skin serums and eye creams. The *Men Expert* grooming range has achieved market success with men of all ages but it is most popular with men aged over 35 years who respond positively to campaigns that focus on the advertised products' ability to reduce the signs of ageing (Mintel: May 2016, *L’Oreal*: n.d).

*Lynx*

The *Lynx* brand was included in this sample as it is regarded as a successful male grooming brand that has been designed for and specifically targets the teen market and young male consumers (Ghosh: 14/01/2016, Oakes: 13/01/2016). In 2012 *Lynx* introduced *Attract*, their first unisex body spray, as well as a range of haircare and hairstyling products for male users (Chesters: 05/03/2012).

The quantitative and qualitative data gathered from the documentary analysis of media content aimed at male audiences is explored further in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten with a
presentation of the diverse representations of men included in the sample and an examination of the ways in which these representations have stimulated men's engagement in consuming and their growing interest in their appearance.

2. Focus group

Focus groups have been used to gather market data since the 1920s with small groups of participants asked to ‘focus’ on the same discussion topic or stimulus activity such as watching a film or looking at a sample of advertisements (Kitzinger: 1994). As well as being used in social research, focus groups are utilised in market research (Sheppard and Jones: 2013). They are common in the research and development phase of a product or brand, being used to assess consumers’ response to prototypes, and they are also used by the marketing industry as a forum to meet with a sample of people from a target audience who are willing to discuss their ideas and attitudes towards consumer products, brands, promotions, products (Sheppard and Jones: 2013). Social scientists may use a focus group as a way of meeting with and observing a sample of participants who are willing to discuss a subject area (Bryman: 2016, May: 2011) and this made the methodological approach suitable for my research.

The focus group gave me the opportunity to gather informative examples of group interaction, ‘norms’ and dynamics as well as qualitative data from the participants’ discussion (May: 2011) (key considerations in my research aims outlined above). The approach was more appropriate than one-to-one for the following two reasons.

Firstly, the research method provided me with the opportunity to observe how participants interacted and managed their identities with their peers. I was aware that environments such as work, home, the gym, a pub or a sports events can affect how men conduct themselves and may produce different presentations of masculinity which will shape different patterns of speech, attitudes, humour and terminologies used (Butler: 2006, Lloyd: 2005, Allen: 2005, Shilling: 2004). With this in mind, the context of where identity ‘work’ is performed was an important factor for me to consider in the research design. Although a focus group is not a ‘natural’ environment as strangers are brought together to discuss a chosen topic in a venue
often not known to them, I hoped that my organisation of the session and my anticipation of the groups’ needs would facilitate open dialogue and interaction between the group members. I recognised that whilst it was important for me to guide the focus group session, participants needed to have the freedom to discuss topics that were of interest and importance to them (May: 2011). I sought to create an environment that facilitated discussion and interaction; one in which I prompted and asked questions of participants but also which allowed the group to explore discussion threads I had not considered (Krueger: 2002). I encouraged the participants to ask each other questions and to respond to each other’s comments as a way of stimulating group interaction, hoping that participants would ‘spark off’ each other and engage in discussion that would not have been possible had I conducted one-to-one interviews (Hague, Hague and Morgan: 2004, Krueger: 2002, Sturrock and Pioch: 1998, Williams and Heikes: 1993). Throughout the session I endeavoured to encourage more reticent members of the group to engage in discussion and manage the more vocal participants so discussion was not dominated by the more extrovert participants (Sheppard and Jones: 2013, Hague et al: 2004).

The second interconnected reason for selecting a focus group session was that I was able to observe the male participants talking specifically about grooming products and media content using their own terms of reference, speech, dialogue, categories as, in a focus group, “priority is given to the respondents' hierarchy of importance', their language and concepts, their frameworks for understanding the world” (Kitzinger: 1994: 108) (italics in original). I felt that the group interaction, their bantering and their jokes, together with the words, references or colloquial expressions participants used to describe grooming products, celebrities and advertising campaigns as well as my observations about participants’ non-verbal communication (e.g. their body language) would all contribute to my understanding of the subject area, providing me with rich quantitative data that may not have generated from a one-to-one interview (Hague, Hague and Morgan: 2004, Krueger: 2002, Sturrock and Pioch: 1998, Williams and Heikes: 1993).

Considerations

I identified two considerations that could impact on my design and delivery of the focus group – the gender of the sample and my gender. In the initial stages of the research design I considered including female participants in the focus group session as I anticipated that a
mixed gender group may provide different perspectives on the subject area (Sheppard and Jones: 2013) but I concluded that an all-male focus group would respond to my research aims most effectively, focusing on the experiences and perspectives of male participants.

I was aware that my being a female researcher might affect participants' responses, perhaps making them reluctant to engage in discussion or keen to 'show off'. In response to this I designed an icebreaker exercise\(^4\) as a way of initiating group interaction, stimulating communication and ‘warming up’ the participants (Kitzinger: 1994). I anticipated that this exercise would make my presence less obvious as the session would begin with a focus on group interaction and a discussion that was led by the participants. This exercise proved to be a useful reference tool throughout the session as participants returned to the examples included in the exercise in later discussion to explain their descriptions or attitudes. Whilst some of the participants were more vocal than others all members of the group contributed to the discussion and interacted with each other and so I do not consider that my gender impacted on participants’ engagement in the discussion or the responses they provided.

Further to these considerations I was aware of several administrative issues such as participants’ availability and their ability to travel to the venue as well as technical considerations such as sourcing and testing suitable recording equipment prior to the session.

The sample

I decided that a group of between five to ten participants who would be willing to discuss the subject area for up to two and half hours would be suitable and manageable for a researcher conducting a focus group session without assistance (Sheppard and Jones: 2013, May: 2011, Hague, Hague and Morgan: 2004). I aimed to recruit “a group of respondents who [were] strategically located to shed light on the larger forces and process under investigation” (Gerson and Horowitz: 2002: 204). I recruited six men aged between 18 and 32 years old. Five participants in the sample reflected the age group of the target audience

\(^4\) Participants were asked to look at and comment on print advertisements for male grooming products that I had sourced from men’s magazines before the session
for male grooming product campaigns and those considered most likely to use grooming products (identified as men aged 16 to 24 years (Mintel: May 2016)).

Demographic information about the sample is summarised in *table 7.1*. Pseudonyms have been assigned to each participant to protect his identity.

*Table 7.1: focus group sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Relationship status</th>
<th>Employment status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Full-time student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Full-time student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Full-time student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edward</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fred</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>Full-time employment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Focus group session**

Before the session began I gave the participants time to introduce themselves to each other, chat informally and to ask any questions they might have about my research. I reminded the participants that their involvement in the discussion was crucial as I was most interested in hearing about their experiences, thoughts and attitudes. We established some ground rules which included trying to avoid talking over each other and being tolerant of other participants’ experiences and opinions (Krueger: 2002). I also made participants aware that the session would be recorded using an audio device and that I would make hand-written notes during the session.
Chapter Seven

Analysis of data

Following the focus group session I transcribed and analysed the audio recording of the discussion for recurring themes, cross-referencing my transcription of the focus group discussion with observations I had made during the session about non-verbal indicators such as participants’ body language and their gesturing.

The face-to-face focus group session was a valuable opportunity for me to observe a sample of men engaged in identity work with group dynamics and participants’ banter and body language providing evidence of how the sample of men performed their male identity in a group environment (Allen: 2005, Grogan and Richards: 2002, Gill: 2001). Participants’ discussion provided examples of the ways in which the sample of men were aware of and talked about grooming in front of other men and a female researcher, using terms of reference and language that was relevant to them. My analysis of the audio file from the session, my transcription of this file and my hand-written notes from the session highlighted areas of interest that I had not considered before conducting the research element such as participants' attitude and response to product endorsement, and their justifications for product use. An analysis and discussion of the data collected from this research element is presented in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten, focusing on the participants' responses to marketing campaigns for male grooming products, their engagement in the male grooming product market and their awareness of their personal appearance.

3. Online questionnaire

The grounded theory approach enabled me to develop and modify my research design as the research progressed. As a result of analysing the focus group discussion I decided that it would be useful to garner information from a larger sample of men in order to investigate their engagement in male grooming. I selected a questionnaire for my third research element as this research method would allow me to collect data from a larger sample and would respond to my initial research aims (outlined above).
Considerations for the questionnaire

I decided that online access would be most suitable for the delivery of the questionnaire as it would allow me to reach a larger sample of men in comparison to that which could be reached with a paper-based questionnaire (Lefever, Dal and Matthiasdottir: 2007, Wellington and Szczerbinski: 2007). Delivering the questionnaire online also addressed my concerns regarding respondents’ anonymity and the sensitivity of the subject area as I anticipated that the respondents might be more willing to share information about their consumer engagement and grooming behaviours in an anonymous online environment (Brace: 2008). There were further factors that made online delivery a suitable option, namely that respondents would be able to fill in the questionnaire at their own pace, save their responses as they progressed through the questions and submit their completed questionnaire at a time that was convenient to them; factors that I anticipated might appeal to male respondents and encourage them to take part in the research (Brace: 2008, Ono and Zavodny: 2003).

Questionnaire design and delivery

In the early stages of the questionnaire design in addition to substantive content I decided on appropriate language, effective question types (e.g. open or closed\(^5\)), the delivery process and accessibility of the questionnaire, and analytical approaches I might take. Although open questions would have generated qualitative data which can be more informative (Bryman: 2016) I decided to use only closed questions as I wanted to gather quantitative data from a sample of men on consumer engagement and grooming behaviour in this element of the research (see Figure 7.1).

I grouped the 28 questions into four sections that covered:

1. shopping habits;
2. personal care routine;
3. leisure activities;

\(^5\) Open questions allow for longer responses than closed questions which require a short focused response often selected from a limited list of options (Bryman: 2016)
At the end of the questionnaire I asked for the contact details of those who were willing to take part in further research (see Appendix Seven for the full list of questions included in the online questionnaire).

In contrast to respondents to paper-based questionnaires that are administered in the presence of a researcher the respondents in my study would not be able to ask for clarification or assistance when completing the online questionnaire (Brace: 2008). Thus I gave additional attention to the language and terms of reference I used in the questions and questionnaire instructions as well as the way respondents would navigate the sections of the questionnaire. I included explanations for any words or phrases that might be unclear or unfamiliar to respondents and, to aid navigation, questions for which a response was mandatory were marked with an asterisk (Brace: 2008). I programmed an error message to appear onscreen if a respondent failed to complete a mandatory question and the respondent could not continue until the response was included.

As part of the development of the online questionnaire I undertook a pilot to assess the online delivery method and evaluate the questions I intended to ask (see Figure 7.1). Whilst the pilot would not guarantee the success of the final questionnaire I anticipated that it would indicate any areas of the questionnaire design and delivery method that needed to be improved such as problematic questions, unclear terms of reference or technical issues (Simon and Goes: 2011, Brace: 2008, Van Teijlingen and Hundley: 2001). For the pilot I recruited four male colleagues who shared similarities with the final sample and reflected 10 per cent of the proposed final sample (Simon and Goes: 2011). The pilot sample provided valuable feedback about all elements of the online questionnaire including the assumptions I had made about respondents’ information technology literacy, the language I had used, the order of questions, the time required to complete the questionnaire, and the assumptions I had made about respondents’ engagement with consuming and grooming. In response I revised the questionnaire before releasing it to the final sample of male respondents. The respondents in the pilot sample were very positive about online questionnaires considering them to be easier and more convenient to complete than those that are paper-based.
A welcome page provided details of the research, a link to the participation sheet, a statement about ethical review, an estimate of how long the questionnaire would take to complete and information about how the collected data would be used.

**Questionnaire sample**

In order to explore a range of factors that might affect consumer engagement and grooming behaviours I was aware that the final sample would need to reflect a range of ages, relationship statuses, occupations, educational backgrounds, lifestyles, and leisure interests. With this in mind, I aimed to recruit a sample of 40 male volunteer respondents aged over 18-years, using convenience\(^6\) and snowball\(^7\) sampling.

An e-mail invitation was sent to each of the 40 respondents the day before the questionnaire was to be released online for completion. This invitation included an overview of my research and a hyperlink to the questionnaire. The e-mail invitation outlined recipients' voluntary participation in my research and encouraged recipients to forward the hyperlink to the questionnaire to their male friends, colleagues and family members aged over 18-years old which helped to increase the number of men who were invited to take part in the questionnaire\(^6\). The sample of men that received the initial e-mail invitation also received a follow up e-mail one week before the online questionnaire closed for completion which encouraged recipients to complete the questionnaire. The online questionnaire was available for 24-hours a day for three consecutive weeks. At the end of this period 64 completed questionnaire were submitted.

**Data analysis**

I created a secure database using SPSS into which I entered the questionnaire responses. This package facilitated multivariate analysis whereby a system of cross-tabulated

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\(^6\) A sample available to a researcher by virtue of its accessibility (Bryman: 2016)

\(^7\) A sample recruited by a researcher who “makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others” (Bryman: 2016: 188)

\(^8\) I was aware that not all those invited to take part would complete the questionnaire (Lefever, Dal and Matthiasdottir: 2007) and so I wanted to increase the number of men invited in order to reach my target sample of 40 male respondents
responses from several questions was used to explore causal relationships between the variables (Bryman: 2016).

I present the data collected from the online questionnaire in Chapters Eight and Nine, using the quantitative data to demonstrate the extent to which the sample of men were engaged in consumer markets, and examine the ways in which the samples' lifestyles (factors such as employment and relationship status) effected their consumer engagement and interest in their personal appearance and grooming.

4. Online discussion forum

The intention of the online discussion forum was to explore the themes that had emerged from the analysis of the data collected in the three research elements conducted previously (see Figure 7.1). From the online discussion forum I wanted to obtain the perspectives of a small sample of men on male grooming, assessing the relationship between their use or not of grooming products and consumer commodities in terms of how the participants managed their identities in their everyday lives. Whilst online discussion forums are used in educational environments to stimulate student engagement (Kim: 2013) and in consumer marketing research to bring together a diverse community to discuss a product or campaign (O'Keefe: 2008) they are still a relatively new way of conducting social research compared to other research methods used by social scientists (Bryman: 2016, Xun and Reynolds: 2010). The online discussion forum proved to be a very successful approach for my research though of course there were a number of considerations.

Online delivery considerations

Although the focus group research element conducted previously (see Figure 7.1) was valuable in that it had facilitated group interaction and an exchange of ideas I was aware that participants' availability to attend the session had determined who could take part (Sheppard and Jones: 2013). I felt that the online forum would address such limitations as it would facilitate asynchronous group discussion at a time that was convenient for the participants (Bryman: 2016, Dale: 2006, Reid and Reid: 2005).
Delivering this research element online also responded to concerns I had about participants’ willingness to share their attitudes to and experiences of a somewhat private or sensitive subject area as participants involved in online discussion forums can feel less inhibited than participants involved in a face-to-face setting (Xun and Reynolds: 2010, Reid and Reid: 2005). I anticipated that the anonymity of an online environment would encourage participants’ engagement in open discussions about the significance of grooming products, grooming behaviours and their appearance in their daily life. Further to this, the online delivery meant that I was able to remain somewhat anonymous as unlike the face-to-face focus group where my gender was visible to participants the online discussion forum made my position as a female researcher less apparent.

Forum design considerations

The design of the online discussion forum was shaped by considerations such as the factors that would help to engage participants in the forum and the period of time participants would be willing to contribute to the forum discussions (O’Keefe: 2008). To respond to these considerations I reviewed online discussion forums that had achieved participant engagement and group interaction (Kim: 2013, O’Keefe: 2008, Dale: 2006, Reid and Reid: 2005).

I also considered the platforms available to host the online discussion forum, reviewing how participants would access and navigate the online discussion forum as well as the reliability of the platform. I recognised that any technological failures during the availability period would impact significantly on the amount of data I collected as well as participants’ willingness to contribute to my research and their confidence in the technology (Dale: 2006). With these considerations in mind I decided to use the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) used by the University where I am registered as a student as it was capable of hosting online discussion forums in a free non-commercial password protected domain which was supported and maintained by a dedicated Information Services (IS) team should any issues with the technology arise.

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9 This information was made known to participants in the participant information sheet provided on the welcome page of the online discussion forum
Process of delivery

The online discussion forum research element involved a process of thorough testing to ensure the delivery method was reliable (see Figure 7.1). Whilst each forum was conducted separately I was able to use the participants’ feedback and my experience of conducting online discussion forums to inform and shape the design and delivery of the following forum.

1. Pilot forum to evaluate using online forums

A pilot forum was designed and tested with a sample of three participants. This pilot was a valuable opportunity for me to learn about designing, delivering and managing Moodle forums and conducting qualitative research using online tools. I amended the instructional text and navigation used in the second pilot and final online forum after reviewing the feedback from the initial pilot sample.

2. Pilot forum to evaluate the design of the final forum

Having delivered and evaluated the pilot online forum, a further pilot with three male members of University staff was conducted. This pilot was an opportunity to test the profiling questionnaire and forum questions that would be used in the final online discussion forum concerning men’s use of grooming products. I wanted to gather feedback from a relevant sample of men about the terms of reference I intended to use in the discussion threads and assess participants’ navigation of the online discussion forum. In response to feedback from this pilot sample I added an optional question to the profiling questionnaire which would gather data about participants’ sexual orientation.

3. Forum with a sample of men to explore the ways in which participants used grooming products in their everyday lives

The online discussion forum was available to participants for 24-hours-a-day for two consecutive weeks. Based on a review of similar studies and feedback gathered from participants involved in the pilots I considered this to be a reasonable period of time to ask volunteers to participate in my research (O’Keefe: 2008, Dale: 2006, Reid and Reid: 2005).
Profiling questionnaire design

The online discussion forum included a profiling questionnaire with 13 closed questions that I designed to collect quantitative data about participants’ age, employment status, sexual orientation, relationship status, engagement in grooming (see Appendices Eight and Nine). I anticipated that this quantitative data would contextualise the participants’ posts\(^\text{10}\) e.g. a 25-year old single student posted . . . or a 42-year old married participant posted . . . and would enable me to gain a greater insight into the perspectives and behaviours of the male participants.

Forum design and delivery

I organised the online discussion forum into five discussion threads. Each discussion thread included several questions to which participants could respond to directly with a post of their own or indirectly by commenting on the posts made by other participants. I reviewed the list of discussion areas that I had compiled for the face-to-face focus group and decided to ask the online forum participants more direct questions about their attitude to grooming and their appearance. I anticipated that unlike the face-to-face session in which participants may have experienced greater pressure to answer a question posed by the researcher participants in the online forum could chose to ignore a question(s) if they did not feel comfortable posting a response (Xun and Reynolds: 2010, Reid and Reid: 2005). The five discussion threads and objective for each thread are listed below with the full list of online discussion forum questions included in Appendix Ten:

- **Day one thread – use of grooming products**
  - Explore participants’ use of grooming products and motivations for product use
- **Day two thread – personal appearance and perception**
  - Explore the importance of grooming, influence of public perception, attitude to grooming
- **Day three thread – representations of men in media content**
  - Explore participants’ response to celebrity endorsement / media content / marketing messages

\(^{10}\) A message or comment users ‘post’ or add to an online discussion forum (Kim: 2013)
Chapter Seven

- Day four thread – influencing factors
  - Explore the factors that influence participants’ use of grooming products
- Day five thread – grooming behaviours
  - Explore participants’ grooming behaviours / routine

Sample size, recruitment and administration

I was aware that the amount of rich qualitative data I was able to gather from the online discussion forum would be determined by participant engagement and group interaction (Reid and Reid: 2005). Whilst it may be assumed that large numbers of participants generate a higher number of posts on an online discussion forum participant activity and group interaction is more likely to occur in smaller groups (Kim: 2013). Participants involved in online discussion forums with fewer numbers can feel less inhibited than participants interacting in a larger groups, with participants in smaller groups more inclined to contribute to the discussion (Kim: 2013). With this in mind I considered that a smaller sample of men would be more likely to engage in the discussion forum and contribute to my research.

I recruited the sample of men by contacting participants who had taken part in the focus group and online questionnaire research elements and had indicated that they would be willing to contribute to further research. I asked this sample if they would like to take part in the online discussion forum and to forward an invitation to the forum to their male friends or colleagues. I also invited male University staff, their male family members and male friends to take part in the online discussion forum. From these convenience and snowball samples (Bryman: 2016) seventeen men expressed an interest in taking part in the online discussion forum. I hoped that each participant would post at least one comment and so I considered the sample size to be manageable as it balanced my research objectives with my ability to process and analyse comments posted on the five discussion threads. After learning more about my research and the participation requirements two of the volunteers chose not take part in the online discussion forum and so my final sample involved 15 participants.

Data collected from the profiling questionnaire illustrated that the sample of men reflected a range of ages, relationship status, employment status, ethnicities and sexual orientation.
Participants were aged between 18 and 54 years which was a wider age range than the samples involved in my two previous research elements. This wider age range may have been reflective of a wider sample invited to take part in the research and / or the greater appeal of the online research tool with older men. Six of the participants identified themselves as single in their relationship status, five were married or in a civil partnership, two participants were living with their partner, one participant was in a relationship but not living with his partner and one participant was separated. Nine participants were in full-time employment with the remaining participants in either full-time education (five participants) or part-time education (one participant). Eleven participants identified themselves to be White British with the remaining four participants identifying themselves to be from other ethnic groups\textsuperscript{11}. All of the participants completed the optional question concerning their sexual orientation. A summary of the biographical data gathered from the profiling questionnaire has been provided in \textit{Appendix Eleven}.

I recruited a colleague to issue the participants with a unique Moodle username that did not identify them by name. This information was recorded should any participants need to be blocked from the forum for posting comments that contravened the \textit{Code of Student Behaviour}\textsuperscript{12}. Participants were e-mailed their log-in details and forum instructions two days before the online forum opened for contribution. Participants received e-mail reminders throughout the availability period which I hoped would prompt participants to contribute to the discussion without being intrusive (Lefever, Dal and Matthiasdottir: 2007).

\textbf{Data analysis}

The quantitative data from the profiling questionnaire was recorded on an Excel spreadsheet and exported to SPSS. I transferred the participants' discussion from the online forum to an Excel spreadsheet and exported this qualitative data to the data analysis package NVivo which I used to code the participants' posts for repeated words or phrases and identify trends in participants' attitudes, behaviours and terms of reference.

\textsuperscript{11} Classifications devised by the Office of National Statistics and used in the 2001 census to record ethnic groups (Office for National Statistics: n.d.: Ethnic Group)

\textsuperscript{12} Moodle users are asked to read and adhere to the \textit{Code of Student Behaviour} (University of Portsmouth: 2016)
The qualitative data collected from the online discussion forum is presented in Chapter Eight focusing on the participants’ engagement in consuming and their interest in their appearance, Chapter Nine examining participants' recognition of the signs and symbols used in marketing materials, and Chapter Ten exploring the ways in which participants used grooming products to modify their appearance to reflect their daily activities.

Reflections on the research design

Considerations as a female researcher

My critical assessment of the research methods available and my design and delivery of the three pilot studies and the four research elements was prompted by my awareness of how my gender could impact on recruitment, participation and data analysis. With this in mind I designed the research in a way that would minimise the impact of my gender as much as possible; provide data from different aspects of the subject area; immerse me as a female researcher in a male focused subject area; use research methods that would appeal to male participants; and give male participants the opportunity to discuss the subject area using their own words.

Having reflected on the research elements used my position as a female researcher in a male subject area seems to have been a strength in my research. Participants involved in the face-to-face focus group and online discussion forum offered descriptive responses perhaps as they were aware that as a female researcher I would not have had the same experiences as them (Williams and Heikes: 1993). I felt that my gender encouraged honest responses from participants involved in these elements as “men are more comfortable talking about intimate topics with women than they are with other men” (Williams and Heikes: 1993: 281), with men suggesting that they feel less pressure to “frame their responses” with female researchers than they do with male researchers (Williams and Heikes: 1993: 280). In terms of the online questionnaire, my gender prompted me to give considerable attention to the language and terms of reference I used in the questions as I hoped to design a questionnaire that would be meaningful and relevant to the male respondents.
Chapter Seven


Summary of the research elements

Each research element provided me with the opportunity to collect new data that would contribute to the discussion concerning men’s identity in the twenty-first century consumer-driven culture, and thus responded to my initial research aims and objectives. On reflection, I would revise the research design - amending the questions in the online questionnaire so they focused more on respondents’ consumption of grooming products rather than their general consumer behaviour which would make this quantitative data more comparable with the qualitative data gathered from the focus group and online discussion forum. I would also review the size of the sample involved in the online discussion forum as, having conducted an online forum I now have greater confidence in my ability to manage and stimulate online discussion with a larger sample of men who would generate more qualitative data for me to analyse.
Chapter Seven

Size and scope of the research

Similar studies that have focused on the subject area of male grooming have recruited samples that involved between four and three-hundred male participants (McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005, Sturrock and Ploch: 1998). Whilst the size of the samples involved in my study were smaller than other similar studies the research design enables me to offer a wider understanding of the subject area because of the range of research methods used. The research tools also allowed me to collect rich qualitative data which provided a deeper understanding of the issues and perspectives raised by the participants in my study.

Concluding comments

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the research design and delivery process of the four research elements I used to achieve my research objectives. This empirical research yielded a considerable amount of quantitative and qualitative data concerning the contribution that consuming, and in particular grooming and grooming products, play in the constitution, expression and representation of men’s identity in the twenty-first century. Drawing on the analysis of the data in the three chapters that follow I explore themes associated with the ways in which media content aimed at men has represented and stimulated men’s growing interest in consuming, grooming and their appearance (Chapter Eight), the complex imagery – the signs and symbols – associated with male grooming consumer commodities (Chapter Nine), and the increasing fluidity of male identities reflected in and stimulated by media content aimed at male audiences (Chapter Ten).
Chapter Eight

Marketing, consuming, and grooming male consumers

Introduction

A growing number of sociologists have discussed the ways in which an increasingly changing or fluid consumer culture has contributed to and impacted on representations, understandings, and expressions of male identity and the range of resources men may employ to construct their identity and express their sense of self (Kimmel: 2009, Sennett: 2008, Crompton: 2006, Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly: 2005, Edwards: 2005, Bauman: 2005a, Connell: 2005, Benwell: 2003, Crew: 2002a, Beynon: 2001). With this in mind consideration in this chapter will be given to the ways in which media sources, aimed at male audiences, have provided articles on and images of consumer products designed for men, representations of goods and services designed to promote interest in consuming and a relationship between consumer commodities, masculinity and identity (Shields and Heinecken: 2014, Ervin: 2011, Bakewell and Mitchell: 2006, Benwell: 2003, Crewe: 2002, Fine: 2002, Simpson: 22/07/2002). Drawing on data from men’s magazines I analyse the advertising and marketing of a range of consumer commodities and services designed to stimulate men’s interest in consuming and draw on responses from the two samples of men who participated in the focus group and online discussion forum. I explore how the participants described aspects of their relationship to consumer activities and in particular the significance and use of male grooming products in their lives and indicate the extent to which media content had influenced the aspects of everyday life that participants used to inform, construct and define their identities, in particular their interest and engagement in consumer commodities.

Men’s magazines and the representation of consumer commodities

The analysis of media content I conducted allowed me to explore some questions concerning the ways in which men’s magazines and product marketing messages and images represent forms of consumption and versions of masculinity and, in turn, cultivate a relationship between the purchase and consuming of goods and services and the construction and expression of male identities. The sample of men’s magazines included in this research element reflect three categories of men’s magazines on sale in the UK, namely weekly lads’ mags, men’s monthly lifestyle magazines and men’s special interest magazines. These categories are popular with men aged 18 – 35 and are read by audiences
from a range of lifestyles and backgrounds (Mintel: June 2015). At the time I conducted this research the magazine titles selected to represent each category of magazine had high circulation figures (which confirmed their popularity with male audiences) and were widely available in a range of commercial outlets e.g. supermarkets, convenience stores, newsagents, petrol stations, train stations. Further information about each of the magazines included in this sample has been provided in Chapter Seven and Appendix Two.

One indicator of GQ magazine’s emphasis on consuming is the high volume of direct advertisements (information about a brand or product identifiable by layout of copy and text) which are to be found throughout the magazine. Advertisements for designer fashion commodities and premium grooming brands, as well as cars, alcohol and department stores, are featured on 82 of the 340 pages, in a single and double page format. In addition to direct advertising campaigns the September 2010 issue featured 156 instances of indirect advertising (product placement, promotions and reviews) for commodities with varying price points. With featured items ranging from £310 (for a silk tie) to £10,000 (for a designer watch) to ‘price on application’ for a suit, the composition and content of the direct and indirect advertisements in the magazine represent exclusivity and aspiration rather than affordability and accessibility. The exclusive consumer goods and services featured are an indicator of the niche market the magazine is directed at which the magazine’s publisher identify as middle-class high-income earners with an interest in fashion and consuming (Conde Naste Publications Ltd.: 2016). Another indicator of the market niche and income exclusivity of the publication is that the September issue was accompanied by a free 40-page GQ Essentials supplement produced in association with the high-end department store Selfridges to promote seasonal fashion trends from established and new designers.

GQ’s editorial content, together with the high-volume of direct and indirect advertisements, and the Essentials supplement signify that personal appearance, fashion and grooming are assumed to be matters of interest for readers and that an interest in consumer commodities is either already a part of the typical readers’ lifestyle and identity or that the magazine’s mission is to create in readers a materially acquisitive narcissistic interest in commodities and services that will lead to consuming products and brands featured in advertising and marketing copy. I used data gathered by GQ’s publisher to verify this assessment and further explore the GQ’s readers’ relationship with consuming and their appearance. This secondary data confirmed that a high number of GQ readers considered fashion and
grooming to be an integral part of their lifestyle (87 per cent) with 92 per cent of readers owning fashion items designed by exclusive brands, and readers amassing a collective spend over £800 million on fashion related commodities in 2015 (Conde Naste Publications Ltd.: 2016). A further indication of readers’ awareness of and interest in consumer commodities related to their appearance was found in the popularity of the magazine’s GQ Grooming Awards¹. These awards not only influence the grooming brands and grooming products male readers purchase they also shape the ways in which readers modify their appearance so that they might emulate a similar aesthetic to the men who attend the Grooming Awards ceremony as well as those they see featured in GQ magazine (Conde Naste Publications Ltd.: 2016).

A relationship between consuming and identity is also evident in the content of weekly men’s lifestyle magazine Nuts which in the 6th - 12th August 2010 included 33 counts of indirect advertising for high-street priced clothes, grooming products, DVDs and computer games, in advertising copy that represented a different male consumer target market, one which reflected the lower income of the magazine’s younger male readers (IPC Inspire: 2009). Nuts emphasised the affordability and mass market availability of the consumer commodities featured rather than the exclusivity and aspiration inferred in the GQ magazine advertising and marketing content. Textual analysis of the indirect advertising material included in Nuts magazine revealed a range of ways in which the editorial copy employed text, symbols and imagery to stimulate readers’ interest in consuming and promote the idea that readers’ identity would be improved or enhanced if they consumed the featured commodities. The implication being that featured clothes would make readers more stylish, skin care products would make readers more attractive, sports equipment would improve readers’ sporting performance, and gadgets would make readers’ leisure pursuits and lifestyles more enjoyable.

The content in football magazine FourFourTwo focused more on sport than shopping (even shopping for sports related commodities such as trainers, sports equipment, and athletic wear). The emphasis on sport suggests, unsurprisingly, that consumer commodities were

¹ Annual awards judged by a panel of ‘experts’ (male models, celebrities, hairstylists, bloggers, beauty therapists) who review a range of male grooming products and accessories (shaving preparations, fragrances, self-tanning lotions, anti-ageing creams, tweezers, shavers)
not considered to be as important to readers of this single-focus magazine as they were for readers of the lifestyle magazines *GQ* or *Nuts*. Compared to *GQ* and *Nuts* magazine *FourFourTwo* had relatively low counts of direct and indirect advertising. There were 20 direct advertisements for sports brands, sports drinks and sports television channels, and seven indirect advertisements, presented in the format of product reviews, for sports related commodities such as footballs, games and books. *FourFourTwo* did however reference consumption in their featured interview with an Arsenal footballer, Jay Emmanuel-Thomas. This interview provided readers with commentary about Emmanuel-Thomas’s footballing performance as well as more marginal insights into his hobbies and his reported indulgent consumer lifestyle. The interview with Emmanuel-Thomas included an image of him wearing his team’s football strip on the pitch which was positioned alongside a single quote from the interview that was highlighted in large bold font to perhaps emphasise the importance of consuming in the footballer’s life: "I'm addicted to shopping. I head to the West End at least twice a week." In drawing attention to Emmanuel-Thomas’s interest in and enjoyment of shopping the interview in *FourFourTwo* suggests the role consumption has in terms of shaping and expressing the footballer’s identity. Whilst the interviewer’s questions referenced an understanding of masculinity that was characterised by an interest in sport and sporting figures the focus on Emmanuel-Thomas’ spending habits and his celebrity consumer lifestyle suggested a new understanding of masculinity that includes an active interest in and enjoyment of shopping and image-related activities such as grooming (Connell: 2005, Simpson: 15/11/1994).

**Direct advertisements and celebrity endorsement of male grooming products**

Corporations promoting male consumer brands have become increasingly aware of the power of endorsement from male sports stars and celebrities (see discussion in Chapters Five and Six). A growing number of corporations have signed high-profile and successful sportsmen to lucrative endorsement contracts in order to develop effective consumer product marketing strategies that will attract interest, help to promote positive views of a brand and / or product line, and, in turn, influence how and where male consumers spend their money (Milligan: 2010, Mintel: January 2005, Agrawal and Kamakura: 1995, McCraken: 1989). *GQ, Nuts* and *FourFourTwo* each included direct advertisements that employed endorsement from celebrities and sports stars, but *GQ* featured the highest number of celebrity endorsed advertising campaigns.
Notwithstanding significant differences between the three magazines selected for inclusion in the analysis of men’s magazines I conducted, direct advertisements for Gillette, a brand whose grooming products are well-known for their endorsement by high-profile male sports stars (see discussion and examples in Chapter Five and a profile of the brand in Appendix Three), featured in each of the titles. Textual analysis of the advertisements in question illustrated the ways in which Gillette employed endorsement from sportsmen and included references to sport to cultivate a relationship between a normative notion of male identity, personal appearance, and particular consumer commodities. The Gillette advertisements included male sports stars who are frequently represented in media reports as exemplifying characteristics and qualities conventionally ascribed to men, for example competitiveness, aggression, sexual prowess, determination, and physical strength (Kimmel: 2009, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005, Connell: 2005). Gillette advertisements featuring successful high-profile male sports stars using the brand’s products, trade on common, if not stereotypical, cultural conceptions of masculinity, which serve to validate the brand’s range of products and ensure its grooming range is regarded as appropriate for ‘manly’ men (observations such as this were explored further with the participants involved in the focus group and online discussion forum research elements). These campaigns tend to focus as much, if not more so, on the bodies of the featured sports stars as they have on the grooming products being advertised (see Figure 8.1) which has contributed to the increasing objectification of male sports stars and celebrities in media content, making male viewers and readers of the advertising copy more ‘self’ aware of their appearance (Vandenbosch and Eggermont: 2013, Martins, Tiggemann and Kirkbride: 2007, Aubrey: 2006, Rohlinger: 2002) (the impact of which will be explored further in Chapter Ten).

Figure 8.1: Tiger Woods Gillette
The advertisements in men’s magazines indicated the ways in which media content attempted to stimulate male audiences’ interest in consumer markets and commodities, cultivating a relationship between male identities and consumer commodities. This data also highlighted the significance of product endorsement from sportsmen and male celebrities who have been used by the marketing and consumer industries to stimulate male audiences’ interest in consuming and develop an association between the advertised consumer commodity e.g. an aftershave, and attributes and symbols that are regarded to be conventionally masculine e.g. physical strength (an association that will be explored further in the following chapter).

Consuming men: on engagement in consumer markets

The online questionnaire provided an opportunity to explore the extent to which a sample of men were engaged in consumer markets, as well as the potential influence exercised by direct and indirect media messages. The data gathered from the online questionnaire revealed that although 12 per cent of the 64 respondents didn’t enjoy shopping at all, 28 per cent of the sample did enjoy shopping and almost 60 per cent ‘sometimes’ enjoyed it. Respondents were active consumers who were willing to shop for a range of commodities including clothes, grooming products, electronics and household commodities. Only 1.6 per cent of the sample (one respondent) said that they never went shopping (online or in person) compared to 27 per cent of the sample (17 respondents) who went weekly. Just over half of the sample (52 per cent) shopped on their own, whilst 32 per cent shopped with their partners and 12 per cent with friends. Three per cent of the respondents considered shopping to be a leisure activity that they enjoyed with their family. Respondents said they mainly bought commodities for themselves (81 per cent) although some also shopped for their partners (eight per cent).
Table 8.1 Respondents’ main motivation for shopping

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation for going on holiday</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of season</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Replace worn-out items</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoying looking for new items</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyable way to spend time</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy latest or newly released items</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Browse online more than make purchases</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Almost a third of respondents confirmed that an enjoyment in looking for new consumer commodities motivated their consumer activity (see table 8.1 – *Respondents’ main motivation for shopping*). The most frequent purchases made by respondents were clothes and hobby related items, with music and grooming products being the third and fourth most purchased commodities. A third of the respondents shopped during their lunch breaks from work, 56 per cent of the sample of men spent between one and three hours shopping with the remaining 14 per cent spending over three hours shopping. Online shopping was favoured by 52 per cent of the respondents with the remaining 48 per cent happy to browse for commodities or shop for planned purchases on the high-street and in shopping centres. Respondents indicated that they also enjoyed ‘researching’ consumer commodities with 20 per cent of the sample browsing online in a virtual version of window shopping (an activity that in its pre-digital form had been associated with the consumer behavior of women (Mintel: January 2015, Rowley: 2002, Woodruffe-Burton: 1997)).
When asked to estimate their monthly expenditure on all consumer commodities e.g. clothes, gaming, accessories and magazines 23 per cent of the sample suggested that they spent between £50 and £99, 18 per cent spent between £100 and £299 and 1.6 per cent spent over £300. The sample indicated relatively low levels of spending on grooming products with 51 per cent of respondents indicating an expenditure of less than £10 a month. In contrast, women spend more than twice this amount on facial skin care and make-up products alone each month (Waterlow: 01/09/2013). None of the male respondents said they spent more than £50 on personal care products each month and only eight per cent of the sample spent between £30 and £49 (three respondents chose not to answer this question) (see Table 8.2 - Respondents’ estimated monthly expenditure on personal care products).

The online questionnaire included thirty images of brand logos and grooming products which were used to assess the extent to which respondents were aware of popular grooming products and grooming brands (see Appendix Seven). Respondents recognised an average of 16 logos from the sample which may have been a result of targeted marketing campaigns and a greater exposure to media content. The mean number of brands recognised by each

### Table 8.2 Respondents’ estimated monthly expenditure on personal care products

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Per Cent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than £10</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£10 - £29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£30 - £49</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over £50</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When asked to estimate their monthly expenditure on all consumer commodities e.g. clothes, gaming, accessories and magazines 23 per cent of the sample suggested that they spent between £50 and £99, 18 per cent spent between £100 and £299 and 1.6 per cent spent over £300. The sample indicated relatively low levels of spending on grooming products with 51 per cent of respondents indicating an expenditure of less than £10 a month. In contrast, women spend more than twice this amount on facial skin care and make-up products alone each month (Waterlow: 01/09/2013). None of the male respondents said they spent more than £50 on personal care products each month and only eight per cent of the sample spent between £30 and £49 (three respondents chose not to answer this question) (see Table 8.2 - Respondents’ estimated monthly expenditure on personal care products).
respondent was 17 however one respondent only recognised four brands and another participant recognised 27 brands. The most recognised brands were Head & Shoulders (59 participants), Lynx (57 participants) and Gillette and Nivea (both recognised by 56 participants). The higher recognition and use of these brands may be attributed to the brand’s significant investment in television and online advertisements as well as print advertisements in men’s magazines and advertising magazine’s produced by supermarkets.

The logos included in the questionnaire also provided a visual aid with which to explore respondents’ ‘personal care routine’ and their use of ‘personal care products’ which were explained to the sample with a list of examples, including shaving products, moisturising products, hair care products and deodorants. Half of the respondents indicated that they had a personal care routine but the other half of the sample said they did not have one. As only one respondent did not use any grooming products the data may suggest that all respondents had some form of a personal care routine but that they did not consider their grooming activities to be a personal care routine. This data reflects the opinion of the focus group participants who, expressing a similar understanding to that of the online questionnaire respondents did not consider their routine or repetitive use of grooming products to signify a regime or routine (this discussion will be presented in the following section). Younger respondents were more inclined to perform a series of daily tasks or a routine than older respondents with 61 per cent of the respondents aged 18 – 24 using personal care or grooming products on a daily basis. A third of the sample indicated that they did not spend much time or money on their appearance, but over a quarter of the sample (26 per cent) said that they took pride in how they looked. Only two per cent of the respondents did not consider their personal appearance to be of importance. The mean average of grooming products used was eight, although one participant used 22 products from the listed examples of grooming products. To put this data into context, in the female beauty market 50 per cent of women use more than six skin care products on their face alone with additional make-up products used as well as hair and body care products (Mintel: May 2014).

Respondents aged 25 – 34 recognised and used the highest number of grooming products which may have been a result of their increased exposure to media content and marketing messages designed to make the target audience of men aged 18 – 25 more aware of the consumer commodities available and more inclined to modify and enhance their appearance through the use of these commodities (Mintel: August 2015, Mintel: June 2015). The higher use and recognition of grooming products and brands among the younger members of the
sample may be regarded as an indication of the significance of grooming in the lives of the young men in the sample, suggesting that an interest in and time spent on appearance was more important for the younger generation (Simpson: 04/08/2016, Mintel: August 2015, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Martins, Tiggemann and Kirkbride: 2007). Higher usage among this age group may also have been a reflection of the younger respondents' finances with less financial responsibilities or family commitments than their older peers. The younger respondents may have had more disposable income to spend on consumer commodities such as grooming products. Further to this, the younger respondents' greater use of and expenditure on grooming products may have reflected their single relationship status, a status that may have prompted them to pay greater attention to their appearance and the consumer commodities that might enhance their appearance and help them to attract a partner. Observations such as this about the quantitative data are explored further in the following chapters.

Responses and reactions to direct advertisements for male grooming products


The focus group participants looked at a selection of print advertisements in an icebreaker activity that I designed to encourage discussion of media advertising and marketing content and celebrity endorsement. The sample of advertisements used in this activity included what would be considered to be stereotypically attractive male models and celebrities who were positioned in glamorous locations, wearing fashionable clothes, and posing with what would be considered to be stereotypically attractive women. The focus group participants displayed a quicker recognition of brands endorsed by celebrities or sportsmen, identifying the famous figure endorsing the product and naming the grooming brand the advertisement was for. Participants commented that endorsement had made them more aware of consumer commodities and brands and that they tended to pay greater attention to advertisements that
featured celebrity or sport star endorsement, particularly if they were personally interested in the band, film, television programme, sport with which the celebrity or sports star was associated.

The participants discussed the endorsement of male grooming products by sportsmen and male celebrities which highlighted the ways in which endorsement reflects complex and contrasting understandings of modern-day masculinities. The participants described how sportsmen and male celebrities reflected characteristics such as strength, money, virility, heterosexuality, power and dominance which they associated with a normative understanding of masculinity but they also considered that these famous men and the advertisements they were associated with demonstrated more modern male characteristics such as an interest in personal appearance and grooming. Participants agreed with each other that commodity endorsement from sportsmen reassured male audiences that the advertised grooming product was for male consumers and not something a female consumer would use. They regarded endorsement to be a strategy the marketing industry used to present grooming and an interest in appearance as an acceptable activity for men, with advertisements featuring ‘manly’ sportsmen using the grooming product and suggesting that grooming and grooming products are activities and consumer commodities men should do and use. The quote below highlights this observation with the participant’s comment describing that some men use grooming products as a way to demonstrate their masculinity and model the behaviour of the celebrities who endorse male grooming products and the ideals presented in the advertisements:

“they use it ‘cos they think that’s what men should use if they wanna be [pause] like [pause] a real man” [FRED, working, single, 24]

This participant’s comment indicate that he regarded the sportsmen and the male celebrities in the grooming product advertisements to be examples of ‘real men’, an understanding that was not shared by all members of the group as several participants joked that sportsmen, particularly footballers were too image-conscious and vain to be like ‘normal men’ who were not as interested in their appearance.
The groups’ response to celebrity endorsement in campaigns for the Gillette grooming brand was generally positive by which I mean that they spoke with an appreciation and enthusiasm about the sportsmen in the advertisements and the products the sportsmen endorsed. However, the group was not as receptive to other examples of celebrity endorsement and in some instances made disapproving and disparaging remarks about the figures involved. All of the participants in this phase of the research commented on an advertisement for the male fragrance ‘The One’ by fashion, beauty and grooming brand Dolce & Gabbana that had been included as an example advertisement for male grooming products in the icebreaker activity (see Figure 8.2).

The participants were particularly critical of the celebrity lifestyle and attributes such as excess, vanity and hedonism which they felt the American actor Matthew McConaughey, who featured in ‘The One’ campaign represented. Participants commented that in the print advertisement McConaughey appeared to be extremely vain and image-conscious, and that the values they believed he represented were not aligned with their own. Two members of the group considered that McConaughey’s confident exposed pose on an over-stuffed chair and his crisp white formal shirt unbuttoned to the waist to reveal his toned hair-free chest (perhaps hair-free from grooming) were symbols that had been included in the print advertisement to reflect the actor’s image-focused celebrity lifestyle that centred on how McConaughey looked rather than on what he did, said or believed in. Another two members of the group talked about the television advertisement for The One with the participants describing what they regarded to be further symbols of the celebrity lifestyle which they identified in McConaughey’s designer-looking tuxedo suit, his sports car and the opulent furnishings in his apartment.

Figure 8.2: ‘The One’ Dolce & Gabbana
One participant became very animated in his description and assessment of the print and television advertisements, with the participant rising from his chair, picking up the print advertisement, pointing at the image of McConaughey and critiquing, in a louder voice than other participants, the actor’s looks and the lifestyle the participant perceived McConaughey represented. The participant described that his girlfriend had told him that she liked the advertisement, referring to McConaughey’s looks and suggesting that he was a ‘massive dish’, an appreciation that had perhaps influenced the participant’s reaction to the actor, making him insecure in his own looks and lifestyle. This participant commented that he would not buy any products from the **Dolce & Gabbana** range as a result of McConaughey’s endorsement for **The One** fragrance. His dislike for McConaughey is clear from the quote below, following which the participant described that he wanted to put his foot through the television when he saw the advertisement but instead chose to either turn the television off or watch another channel until the advertisement was over:

“Eurgh! I just wanna punch him [Matthew McConaughey] in the face when I see this advert” [ADAM, student, relationship, 19]

This response to celebrity endorsement provided an interesting insight into how representations of men in media content are received by male audiences. It demonstrated the significance of marketing messages in terms of shaping male audiences’ perception of and interest in a brand, commodity or service. It also provided a very physical and verbal display of a powerful, arguably aggressive masculinity performed in front of the male participant’s peers.

The focus group discussion revealed several complex or contradictory attitudes to consuming, endorsement and grooming and, in addition, the various ways in which men display masculinity while avoiding any explicit address of or reflection on its complex and diverse forms. Whilst the group agreed that exposure to advertising campaigns featuring celebrities and sports stars had encouraged their participation in consumer culture and promoted greater awareness of grooming products, all six participants stressed that their product preferences were predominantly determined by the ready availability and accessibility of products, affordability, and habit. The focus group participants suggested that
their awareness of the strategic marketing tools employed to stimulate consumers’ interest made them ‘different’ to other male consumers who were considered not to be as astute or ‘consumer savvy’. The tenor and substance of the group discussion indicated a critical distance from the advertising campaigns under consideration and a refusal to ‘buy-in’ to the images presented (Dewing and Foster: 2007). Participants stated their belief that their consumer choices were not determined by advertising or marketing campaigns, that their consumer choices were made independently of the array of images displayed in the various media carrying product promotions and endorsements. As one innocent participant confidently commented:

“If I like something then I like it and no amount of them telling me I like it is really going to make a difference” [FRED, working, single, 24]

What factors, processes, and influences might have led to the individual in question liking something, for example a particular grooming product, was not addressed. The comment offered above displays a complete lack of awareness of the range of images to which consumers are routinely exposed in everyday life and the respects in which consumer tastes and choices are subject to influence through advertising and marketing campaigns (Libby: 29/07/2015, Simpson: 10/06/2015, Ricciardelli, Clow and White: 2010, Klein: 2010, Walker: 2008, Aubrey: 2006, Stevenson, Jackson and Brooks: 2003). The participants’ seeming refusal to recognise or admit to the possible influence of advertising on their product choices and grooming behavior demonstrated several discourses men use to talk about their identity and their bodies that have been identified by Gill et al (2005). These discourses illustrate the complexity of male identities in a twenty-first century consumer-driven culture, a complexity that has been stimulated by and is reflected in the images of men in media content. These images have cultivated somewhat conflicting pressures on men, namely an emphasis on the way men look and the use of image-enhancing grooming products, and a refusal to appear interested in appearance, grooming and consuming. The discussion that follows explores these pressures and illustrates the ways in which media content has impacted on how men talk about and understand their bodies and the bodies of other men.
Chapter Eight

Consuming and grooming talk: discursive themes and analysis

The data from my study are considered in terms of a much larger, but comparable project, by Rosalind Gill, Karen Henwood and Carl McLean (2005) that focused on the ways in which men talk about their bodies and engage in various bodily practices, including working-out, tattooing, piercing, and cosmetic surgery. In their study of body modification practices and men’s identity Gill et al (2005) identify five recurring discursive themes in the responses of 140 young British men they interviewed. The discursive themes identified as emerging from their interviews are described in the following terms:

1. **Individualism:** being different from other men, drawing contrasts, and being critical of others, and where consumption is used as a means of expressing individualism. Purchase of a brand or product may be described as a way of displaying being different, but refusal to do so may for other men serve a comparable purpose (Gill et al: 2005: 9).

2. **Libertarianism:** right to choose and autonomy in relation to bodily matters – ‘it’s your body so you can do what you want with it’ (Gill et al: 2005: 12).

3. **Rejection of vanity:** expression of disapproval of conduct or behavior that might be thought of as vain or narcissistic; health and other grounds invoked for consumer conduct or product use to counter risk that appearance enhancement might seem to be the motive (Gill et al: 2005: 14 - 15).

4. **Avoidance of obsession:** not taking things too seriously or becoming obsessive; ‘the “well-balanced” self’ (Gill et al: 2005: 18).

5. **Self-respect:** expressed by taking care of the body but also taking care to avoid appearing vain or obsessive (Gill et al: 2005: 19).

Broadly comparable discursive themes to those considered by Gill et al (2005) emerged from my focus group discussions in which a sample of men talked about consuming, identity, and the resources they used to manage and enhance their appearance. In the study conducted by Gill et al (2005) it was noted that one of the ways in which men cultivate ‘being different’ is by drawing contrasts with other men and being critical of them, their behavior, and their consumer product choices and practices. In my study one focus group member alluded to ways in which he was different to other men by making reference to his dislike of the aftershave Joop! and those who use it in the following terms:
Chapter Eight

“I have bad connotations associated with it because of seeing certain people in the streets having it and smelling it when you walk by and thinking I don’t wanna smell like that guy, he’s really really chavvy\(^2\) or whatever, or you think oh they’re wearing *Joop!* I don’t wanna be associated with that so you change the stuff you use, don’t you?” [EDWARD, working, relationship, 24]

This statement simultaneously signifies individual preference and the right to choose, and in turn to reject. It serves to differentiate the respondent from other men, other consumers whose product choices are, by implication, deemed inferior, so that as well as individualism and libertarianism, there is a theme of class taste expressed in the response.

Given the emphasis of my research project on male grooming products, masculinity, and identity, it is perhaps unsurprising that in the course of discussion the focus group made several references to vanity and the importance of avoiding being considered to be overly obsessive about appearance. Members of the group were keen to make clear that they were not preoccupied with their appearance and that their use of some grooming products was not routine but occasional. As the following two responses indicate, avoiding being considered vain is an important part of male identity construction:

“I won’t use any like fragrance, men’s fragrance or something like that, unless I’m going somewhere special. I won’t put it on daily. I’m not that [pause] vain” [FRED, working, single, 24]

Another participant shared a similar attitude to grooming:

“If I have to spend like 15 minutes being like that [mimicked hair styling actions] then I really just can’t be arsed. I think that’s just too vain in my opinion [pause]

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2 A term used to describe a young lower-class person who displays brash and loutish behaviours, and wears real or imitation designer clothes (Hayward and Yar: 2006)
if you spend longer than your girlfriend getting ready then you’ve got a problem”

[sniggers] [ADAM, student, relationship, 19]

Discussion between the group members indicated that it was not just the length of time spent on grooming that influenced their views and behaviour, but also what the grooming task actually involved. The group talked at some length about what they considered to be grooming and grooming products. They agreed that anything related to ‘getting ready’ was grooming and gave examples of shaving, showering, styling their hair, and dressing appropriately. They suggested that such practices demonstrated a self-respect for their bodies and helped them to appear presentable to others. The group agreed that shaving preparations, razors, deodorants, anti-perspirants and shower gels were part of their core or essential grooming products. They stated that they reserved the use of fragrance for ‘special occasions’ and used skin care products on an if-and-when-required basis e.g. to treat sunburn or a shaving rash. One clear implication of such remarks is that routine grooming behaviours are considered more important than others. But focus group members rejected the idea that such routine grooming practices as shaving, hair styling or using skin care products are part of a grooming regime or routine, terms that signified for them vanity, self-obsession, and an ‘excessive’ use of styling or facial products:

“Never really thought about it as a regime, I just kind of do it so I don’t really have a list that I go through, there’s no specific order in which I do things it’s just [pause] I do more or less the same thing every morning [pause] get up, have a shower, possibly have a shave [pause] if I can be bothered” [FRED, working, single, 24]

The group expressed the view that, in contrast to the routine grooming tasks they performed to make themselves presentable to other people, a grooming regime was something performed by men who were more image conscious. As one member commented:

“I don’t mind making any effort to obviously you know make my hair look nice, make sure that I smell nice and that I’m presentable but the whole kind of
Chapter Eight

*metrosexuality* and going into this level of ‘oh look after your face’ is to me it’s just materialistic and it’s vain and that just really puts me off having some kind of regime” [ADAM, student, relationship, 19]

Further discussion between group members revealed that use of hair dyes and anti-ageing creams were considered to be products and practices that required too much time and effort and signified vanity and an excessive concern with appearance. Although several members of the group had experimented with hair dye in their adolescent years they did not consider such behavior to constitute grooming. Such behavior was explained as exceptional, something that was done for a special occasion such as a party or ‘for a laugh’ as the following comments indicate:

“Yeah like I dyed my hair red when I was something like 14 but I’d never do it again, it’s way too much effort. It was just for like a joke, well not a joke but it was for something like ‘oh I’ve never dyed my hair before so let’s just go for like the most weird colour, oh there we go’. It was just something to do” [ADAM, student, relationship, 19]

Despite prominent product endorsement in campaigns for anti-ageing grooming products featuring older actors such as Hugh Laurie and Matthew Fox, or sportsmen Eric Cantona and David Ginola, the group demonstrated a seeming lack of interest in or a reluctance to engage in discussion about ageing and age-related grooming products. The group associated grey hair with old age and their fathers and responded unenthusiastically to questions about American actor Matt LeBlanc, who went prematurely grey in his twenties, but unbeknown to television audiences dyed his hair for his role in the sitcom *Friends*. Notwithstanding their recognition of the need for LeBlanc to dye his hair to appear young in his role in *Friends* participants considered hair dyeing to cover grey hair to be vain and something that would be too much effort for them to do should or when their hair turned grey. Whilst the participants’ discussion indicated that they associated grey hair with ageing they did not mention losing their hair which is often associated with the ageing process and

3 An American television series broadcast globally between 1994 and 2004. *Friends* became one of the most watched television series of the decade and had a significant influence on popular culture, fashion trends and hairstyles.
men’s concerns about their appearance. Participants’ lack of concern about the physical signs of aging e.g. aged skin, grey hair or hair loss may have been a result of their young age and an indication that they had not given significant thought to ageing or the anti-ageing products available, but their response may also have been reflective of the participants’ acceptance of the ways in which their appearance would change as they aged. The participants’ relaxed or unconcerned attitude may have been shaped by presentations in media content of ‘older men’ with descriptions such as ‘silver fox’\(^4\) or ‘salt and pepper’\(^5\) hair coloring cultivating an acceptance, and in some cases a proud, almost rebellious approach to the ageing process, which can be seen in male celebrities such as Richard Gere, Harrison Ford, John Slattery, George Clooney and George Lamb, individuals who are celebrated for their visible signs of ageing and provide a stark contrast to female celebrities who are often encouraged to dye their hair and cover up signs of ageing. Conversely, the group members’ attitude to ageing may have been shaped by the negative media attention male sportsmen and male celebrities have received for their endorsement or use of hair colourants or hair transplant services, an attention that has perhaps precipitated disinterest in, if not a degree of embarrassment about, such age-related grooming products and services. Analysis of the group members’ discussion about ageing revealed the complexity of contemporary masculinity, and the increasing diversity of associated forms of representation, experience, and identity. While demonstrating an awareness of the importance of appearance the comments of focus group members revealed a reluctance to be associated with any grooming behaviours that might detract from a normative heterosexual understanding of masculinity that rejects vanity and self-obsession (Gill et al: 2005).

During the focus group session participants used verbal indicators, such as sniggering and laughing, as well as humorous banter and vague descriptions arguably designed to convey the impression that they lacked knowledge and awareness, in order to demonstrate their distance from any topics of discussion that they were not comfortable with or willing to participate in. Participants sniggered at the use of skin care products such as moisturisers and serums, made jokes about fragrances, paused heavily to describe products that could be viewed as risqué such as waxes and used incorrect words like ‘floofy’ and ‘froofy’ to describe a loofah\(^6\). Their use of humour and vague descriptions of grooming products conveyed an impression of disinterest or distance from the subject matter which perhaps helped them to avoid appearing vain in front of the other group members (Gill et al: 2005:

\(^4\) A term used to refer to grey haired men who are considered attractive
\(^5\) A term used to describe men whose hair colour is a mix of grey and their natural colour
\(^6\) A scrubbing sponge used in the shower or bath
Their vague descriptions served as an impression management technique, signifying that either they had no awareness of a particular brand, product, or grooming practice, or that they had not paid attention to the products they used, signifying that they were not really that bothered, in short, not vain or obsessive. One participant tried to describe the shower gel he used daily, pausing several times as he attempted to remember the product name and scent. His perhaps deliberate, faltering and hesitant description signaled a lack of interest in the product and perhaps a lack of interest in grooming:

“Moose? And [pause] erm [pause] like the men’s natural one? I use it every day but erm [pause] I can’t remember [pause] it’s like brown pepper and something?”

[EDWARD, working, relationship, 24]

Of course, the group member’s vagueness may have been genuine; he may not have been interested in or aware of the products and brands he purchased, but when another member of the group suggested the brand of the product being described the participant was instantly able to confirm the name. His vague description may therefore have been a deliberate attempt to avoid appearing vain and to not appear obsessive. In contrast, the group were less vague when their discussion included well-known grooming brands such as Gillette and Wilkinson Sword associated with sport and a normative understanding of masculinity.

The focus group discussion demonstrated the ways in which a sample of men responded to representations of men and masculinity included in media content and advertising campaigns that had been designed to stimulate male audiences’ consumer engagement and their awareness of grooming products. The session also provided examples of the discursive themes invoked by men when they talk about their identity and their grooming behaviours. Analysis of the qualitative data suggested that whilst the male participants were aware of the importance of appearing groomed and attractive in a consumer-driven culture there was still a reluctance among the group to be associated with any grooming products or treatments that would detract from an understanding of masculinity that regards vanity and self-indulgence to be qualities associated with women and femininity (Cao: 01/03/2017, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Gill et al: 2005, Connell and Messerschmidt...
The impact of male grooming advertising and marketing images and statements was explored further in the online discussion forum where it was hoped that the anonymous setting would yield open and honest discussion about consumer engagement, male grooming products and practices, and male identity. Discussion in the online forum suggested that whilst participants were not overly concerned about their appearance they did take an active interest in appearing well-presented, especially in their place of work (an influence that will be explored further in Chapter Ten). All online forum participants used grooming products including shaving, skin care and hair styling products, shampoos, conditioners and deodorants. Some participants were able to specify which brands they used and describe the skin type the product was suitable for and even the scent of their preferred products as the following comments demonstrate:

“Lynx deodorant, Head & Shoulders shampoo, a deep cleansing moisturiser by Nivea, Gillette razor. All these I have used for years, sometimes I do change if I see something different, normally offers or reductions” [full-time student aged 18 – 24]

Another participant provided even greater detail of the products he used on a daily basis:

“Gillette shaving gel - I find it to be the best shaving gel on the market and its kind to my sensitive skin. Head & Shoulders - I have always used this and have never changed to any other brands as it does exactly what I want. Nivea for Men - I have a range of Nivea products (shaving balm, moisturiser etc.) as this is the best for my sensitive skin. Lynx - apparently I’m told (by adverts) that this is irresistible to the ladies. Fudge - for when you need that extra spikeyness to your hair” [full-time employment aged 25 – 34]
All of the participants recounted a series of tasks including showering, shaving and, for some, applying skin care and hair care products, before leaving the house each day. Participants described their attitude to their personal appearance as ‘laid-back’ and ‘low maintenance’, which may have been an attempt to distance themselves from the subject area and thereby avoid any suspicion that their grooming behavior could be regarded as vain or obsessive (Cao: 01/03/2017, Gill et al: 2005). But it may also simply reflect their sense that such grooming practices are a part of their mundane daily routines, as is implicit in the relaxed reference to grooming expressed below:

“When showering I like to use a nice fragrance shower cream or gel that will leave my skin feeling soft and smooth and smelling good but other than that, I’m not too bothered what I use” [full-time student aged 35 – 44]

Analysis of the data gathered from the forum confirmed the extent to which marketing messages had influenced the participants’ attitudes to their personal appearance and had impacted on their related consumer behavior. Participants’ response to media content was explored on the third day of the forum when participants were asked to view a selection of television advertisements for Gillette grooming products and comment on the images and the extent to which they felt that celebrity endorsement had influenced their approach to grooming and in addition their interest in the brand in question. Participants indicated that they were aware of the purpose of celebrity and sports star endorsement in advertisements which they described to be in the celebrities’ ability to represent a lifestyle and persuade audiences to ‘buy in’ to that ideal:

“As these men are quite high profile celebrities I believe most grooming conscience males would probably buy into their adverts. I don't see these men as me because of the celebrity lifestyles they live, however I do like their style and probably would buy the products they are advertising” [full-time employment aged 25 – 34]
Like the sample of men involved in the focus group, not all of the online forum participants were as receptive to celebrity endorsement though as some participants indicated a critical distance from the lifestyle celebrities represented and a skepticism towards the authenticity of celebrity endorsement:

“Some people will do anything for money - no matter how shallow and stupid it makes them look” [full-time employment aged 35 – 44]

This comment prompted a response from another participant who contributed to the discussion by adding:

“I view celebrity endorsements with a pinch of salt, they have been paid to say they like or use a product, and the opinions expressed on an advert cannot be seriously representative of what they really think” [full-time student aged 18 – 24]

Expressing a similar response to that of the focus group participants the sample of men involved in the online forum did not consider that celebrity endorsed advertising campaigns for grooming products had influenced or encouraged their product choices. However, much like with the focus group participants who suggested their individuality and difference from other male consumers the online forum participants believed that advertising campaigns could influence the consumer habits of other men. The online forum participants also voiced a reluctance to ‘buy-in’ to celebrity and sports star endorsement and, like the focus group participants regarded the endorsers’ relationship with a brand to be an exploitative marketing tool rather than a genuine reflection of product quality and performance. Several of the forum participants considered the men included in endorsed advertising campaigns to be stylish and attractive but they did not think that they represented ‘real men’, who are less concerned about their looks and tend to be:
Chapter Eight

“happy just to look reasonably neat and tidy in the morning” [full-time employment aged 45 – 54]

The participants’ comments concerning celebrity endorsement and media exposure to celebrity lifestyles illustrated participants’ awareness of their appearance as well as the ‘ideal’ representations of men included in media content and advertising images that have placed greater emphasis on men’s appearance and the resource they use to manage and enhance the way they look. In comparing themselves with the men in marketing materials and advertising campaigns, some participants revealed that they were concerned about how they looked and they became more critical of their own appearance (Waling: 2016, Simpson: 17/04/2010, Aubrey: 2006, Nixon: 1997). This led some members of the group to describe themselves as too conservative and not attractive enough to be represented in marketing materials:

“It would not make sense to use ‘real men’ like me in an advertisement, especially as I look like a bouncy castle” [full-time employment aged 35 – 44]

The impact of male audiences’ exposure to male celebrities and the increasing focus in media content on men’s bodies and the ways in which they manage their appearance will be explored further in the chapters that follow.

Concluding comments

In this chapter I have used qualitative and quantitative data to explore the ways in which media content and advertising campaigns have stimulated and reflected men’s greater involvement in consuming and grooming. I have presented the responses of male subjects in my research to selected media, advertising and marketing campaigns promoting male grooming products; providing examples from the focus group and online discussion forum to demonstrate the participants’ awareness of and interest in consuming and grooming, their views on specific grooming issues, and the respects in which these are articulated with aspects of male identity construction and expression. The groups’ discussion also provided
interesting examples of the discourses men use to talk about their bodies and the behaviours they perform to manage their appearance in a consumer-driven culture.

The quantitative data gathered from the online questionnaire provided a profile of a male consumer who is active in a range of markets including the male grooming product market. Whilst this quantitative data cannot confirm to extent to which media content stimulated questionnaire respondents’ consumer engagement the comments made by the samples of men involved in the focus group and online discussion forum indicated the importance of media content in terms of shaping and encouraging male audiences’ awareness of and interest in consuming, grooming and their appearance.

The analysis of data gathered from relevant media content together with the discussions that took place in the focus group and online forum suggested the importance of symbols and signs in a consumer-driven culture. Male participants involved in the focus group and online forum identified and spoke about a number of symbols and signs which they considered had been included in media content and advertising campaigns to refer to characteristics and attributes that male audiences would find appealing and would stimulate the consumption of the advertised grooming product. With this in mind, the following chapter addresses the symbolic value of consumer commodities, assessing the relationship between consuming, grooming and male identity in a society of consumers.
Consuming symbols of masculine identity and lifestyle

Introduction: sign-values and symbols in the representation and expression of masculinity

There is now an accumulating body of research that has documented the increasing importance of consumer activity for both national economies and the global economy and, in turn, for social inclusion and the felt sense of belonging to a community (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Smart: 2010, Bauman: 2007, Featherstone: 2007, Bauman: 2005a, Schor: 2002, Baudrillard: 1998, Miller: 1995, Featherstone: 1987, Douglas and Isherwood: 1979). As has been established earlier in my thesis participation in consumer activity has also become increasingly significant in the constitution of male identity, in the ways in which men experience, reflect upon, and present their sense of self (see Chapters Four, Five and Six). Male identity is increasingly wrapped-up in signs of consuming as men are now important consumers of a proliferation of consumer commodities and services. Data presented in the previous chapter demonstrated the ways in which men’s consumer engagement has been stimulated by the increasing number of media messages that illustrate the ways in which men might dress, care for, present, and express themselves through the purchase and use of consumer commodities. These media messages have contributed to the constitution of male forms of consumption, or perhaps more appropriately, it is consumption as a system of signs that needs to be at the forefront of analysis of the diverse consumer products and services directed in media content and advertising towards men. With this in mind, the topic of male grooming products, including relevant media content and expressions of interest in and experience of use by male consumers is a particularly rich research field for the exploration of consumption as a system of signs, where it is the image, the sign, the message that is consumed, that is central within contemporary consumer society (Baudrillard 1998: 34). It is to such matters that discussion is directed in this chapter.

Increasingly it is not so much the functional-value of commodities that is of primary concern within a consumer society, but the sign-value, what it is that a commodity symbolises or signifies, in the case of this thesis, for a consuming male. In short, what complex meanings and values are conveyed in media, advertising and marketing content that present and promote products, services, or brands, and engender social and cultural associations which inform and reflect the values, lifestyle, and identity of the male consumer of commodities and
services. In one respect commodities can be regarded simply as resources with a functional-value (one that fulfils a consumer’s needs) but as Bauman, following Baudrillard (1998), suggests it is the sign-value - what is signified by a commodity - that has become of increasing importance in modern times (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2007, Bauman: 2004, Bauman: 1999). Sign-value indicates and differentiates a commodities’ value and symbolic meaning in relation to other commodities and may be both constitutive and reflective of consumers’ desires and wishes (see discussion in Chapter Four). A car for example has a functional-value that fulfils consumers’ need to travel from one location to another and an economic-value (the cost of the car) but for a society of consumers a car also has a sign-value, the value of the car in relation to other cars, with the make, model and specification of the car communicating information about the consumer such as their income, lifestyle, tastes, financial priorities, ethical considerations, relationship or family status and in turn, the self, the identity or the image the consumer chooses to present or express. These values suggest that whilst the activity of consuming is concerned with the acquisition of material objects it also involves a complex process of infusing, interpreting and projecting symbolic gestures of value that are encoded into consumer commodities by marketing and consumer industries (Fill and Turnbull: 2016, Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Ervin: 2011, Tuncay and Otnes: 2008, Bauman: 2007, Featherstone: 2007, Bakewell and Mitchell: 2006, Bauman: 1999, Schor: 1999, Baudrillard: 1998, Veblen: 1994, Goffman: 1987, Douglas and Isherwood: 1979, Barthes and Lavers: 1972).

Analysing the symbolic meaning and sign-value of consumer commodities provides an appropriate sociological approach through which to explore men’s consumption of commodities and services purchased and / or used in a somewhat private, discreet, or covert manner e.g. cosmetic surgery, specialist treatments including tanning, waxing, threading and Botox, and in respect of my thesis, male grooming products. On the face of it, the inconspicuous or discreet manner of the consumption of male grooming commodities and services could suggest that the symbolic meaning and sign-value of such products is seemingly insignificant compared to other more visible consumable goods such as a car or a branded item of clothing (as relatively few observers will be aware that the male consumer has purchased or is using a discreet male grooming product). Yet the data gathered in the course of this research indicate that the participants recognised in media content significant symbolic meanings as well as a system of values associated with male grooming products, and in various ways were influenced by and invoked this complex language of symbols and
signs in their own lives in order to enhance their personal sense of self and public presentation of their identities. This chapter draws on the empirical data to address two important aspects of male consumers’ consumption and use of male grooming products – commenting on the symbolic references infused into male grooming products as well as the symbolic meaning of male grooming products in a consumer-driven culture. My collection and analysis of this data contributes to sociological discussion concerning the symbolic meaning and sign-value of consumer commodities in a consumer-driven culture.

Recognising and interpreting signs and symbols in direct and indirect advertisements

The analysis I conducted of a sample of men’s magazines and direct advertisements indicated the ways in which media content infused consumer commodities with a language of symbols and presented an understanding of consumer commodities as signifiers of aspects of consumers’ identities (Goffman: 1987, Barthes and Lavers: 1972). Analysis of these media sources indicated two threads of discussion relevant to this chapter and an exploration of the complex relationship between consumer commodities, signs, and identity. First, the respects in which configurations of significant images, symbols, and signs in advertising and marketing media content aimed at male consumers constitute subtexts or narratives that convey particular understandings or representations of male identity to readers and audiences. Second, the ways in which such representations of associations between consumer commodities and expressions of male identity may inform the various ways in which male consumers use products and brands to construct identity and present and express ‘self’ in everyday life (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Goffman: 1987, Barthes and Lavers: 1972). More detailed discussion of these matters is offered below in a reconsideration of aspects of advertising campaigns associated with GQ magazine, Gillette, and Lynx respectively.

An indirect advertising campaign that focused on new styles and patterns of men’s business suits in the September 2010 issue of GQ magazine drew attention to the various ways in which images and symbols were employed to construct representations of masculinity to GQ readers, representations of the complexity and fluidity of masculinity in a consumer-driven culture (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Bauman: 2005b, Bauman: 2000). In my analysis of the eight-page GQ Collections fashion feature I documented the ways in which the suit (an item
Chapter Nine

of men’s clothing regarded as a traditional symbol of male identity) reflected hegemonic masculinity associated with particular forms of paid employment, male dominance, patriarchy, social status, power and wealth (Ricciardelli, Clow and White: 2010, Connell: 2005, Frank: 1998). The suit as a symbol of conventional or normative masculinity was contrasted by more metrosexual or contemporary symbols and expressions of male identity in the images included in my analysis. These symbols signified new ways of understanding, constructing, and presenting masculinity associated with consuming and the way men look. They were presented to the magazine’s readers in the images of the bodies of young metrosexual looking male models, who were photographed in locations associated with leisure, decadence, indulgence and hedonism¹, adopting objectified, submissive, stylised poses, wearing eye make-up and sporting meticulously groomed haircuts, symbols that have historically been associated with the female beauty market and of concern to female consumers (McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell: 2006) (see Figure 9.1 for a selection of images included in the GQ Collections feature). The contrast between images, symbols and references to normative masculinity and metrosexuality included in the GQ Collections feature illustrated the complexity of modern male identities by drawing on old and new symbols of masculinity to construct fluid representations of masculinity in interregnum (Bauman: 09/01/2014).

The aim of the marketing images and texts in the GQ Collections campaign, the subtext, is to try to convey to readers the impression that they too can, in some shape or form, emulate the representations of masculinity contained in the pages of the magazine, that it is possible to achieve an association with the aspirational lifestyles and the desirable male attributes presented in the campaign through purchasing and consuming the commodities presented in the fashion feature (Ervin: 2011, Klein: 2010, Tuncay and Otnes: 2008, Campbell: 2004, Crewe: 2002, Goffman: 1987). The example from GQ magazine also illustrates the ways in which consumer commodities are presented as resources, or more appropriately commodities with sign-value, that convey information and signify things about consumers’ identities and lifestyles (Tuncay and Otnes: 2008, Bakewell and Mitchell: 2006, Campbell: 2004, Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Schor: 1999, Baudrillard: 1998, Goffman: 1987). In respect of the bold design, cut and styles of the suits included in the fashion feature what is signified is that the male consumer purchasing and wearing the suits displayed might appear

¹ The fashion feature was photographed in three locations - the Dorchester hotel London, a casino and a performance venue

154
as a confident, possibly rebellious, metrosexual male consumer, rather than a consumer who would want to ‘fit in’ to normative understandings of masculinity or conform to staid styles of men’s fashion.

Figure 9.1: Selection of images from GQ Collections fashion feature September 2010

In contrast to the ways in which the GQ text assembles symbols and imagery to signify the respects in which particular consumer commodities may contribute to the display of metrosexual forms of masculine identity, the Gillette brand of male grooming products, as I have discussed in Chapters Four and Five, deploys symbols of sport, competition, glamour, sexual attraction and virility in their advertising campaigns to generate a strong brand identity which trades on a pervasive cultural understanding of hegemonic masculinity and promotes normative male attributes (Bakewell, Mitchell and Rothwell: 2006, Connell: 2005, Elliot and
Elliot: 2005, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005, Sturrock and Pioch: 1998). Consider, for example, a direct advertisement for the *Gillette Fusion ProGlide Styler*, which was included in the sample of media content analysed. The advertisement employs three celebrity *Masters of Style*, actors Andre Benjamin, Adrien Brody and Gael Garcia Bernal, to endorse the grooming product. The Masters are dressed in smart, stylish suits, one Master is wearing a straw hat perhaps to signify a unique, confident approach to appearance, and are depicted interacting with each other and their peers in a party or social environment (see Figure 9.2). In the televised advertisement all three Masters are deliberately presented as having attracted the positive attention of three female figures who are presented as admirers. The form and content of this particular *Fusion ProGlide Styler* advertisement exemplifies the ways in which *Gillette* includes references to and symbols and signifiers of heterosexuality, sexual attention, and physical attraction in their direct advertisements, by means of which an understanding or recognition of the *Gillette* range as a grooming range for heterosexual men is cultivated and conveyed. I explored some of the respects in which *Gillette* grooming products may be regarded by consumers as signifiers of their identity, lifestyle, or sexuality with my focus group and online discussion forum participants (see discussion in Chapter Eight and the data that follows later in this chapter).

*Figure 9.2:* Still image from the television advertisement for the *Gillette Fusion ProGlide Styler*

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2 An electrical *styler* for shaving, trimming and styling facial and body hair
Perhaps the most explicit signifiers of stereotypical heterosexual masculine identity are to be found in direct advertisements for the Lynx range of grooming products that were included in the sample of men’s magazines I considered. Since the brand’s launch in the 1980s direct advertisement for the Lynx range have cultivated an association between Lynx and a particular representation of masculinity associated with heterosexuality, sexual attraction, sexual conquest, male dominance, lad culture and puerile humour (Ghosh: 14/01/2016, Oakes: 13/01/2016, Feasey: 2009). The advertisements produced to promote the Lynx range attempt to cultivate a laddish sense of humour by introducing more direct or explicit references to expressions of heterosexual masculinity and associated interactions and relationships than tends to be the case in grooming product advertisements for other male brands (Ghosh: 14/01/2016, Oakes: 13/01/2016, Feasey: 2009) (see Figure 9.3). The pivotal notion promoted in the Lynx advertising copy is irresistibility. The symbols and imagery employed in Lynx advertisements promote the idea that women are unable to resist men who use the advertised product, the inference being that male consumers only have to use the advertised body spray or shower gel to receive positive attention from women. The brand’s advertising tagline ‘Spray more, get more’ (a reference to consumers’ use of Lynx body sprays and their sexual achievements) perhaps highlights this association most clearly (Feasey: 2009). The humorous content and direct references to sexual attraction included in the direct advertisements for Lynx products have contributed to the brand’s appeal and market success with young male consumers whose purchase and use of Lynx products may be regarded as a symbol or signifier of their heterosexuality and their tongue-in-cheek unconcerned approach to grooming (a view that was expressed in the focus group discussion). Since conducting this documentary analysis of direct advertisements for Lynx grooming products in 2010 the brand have included more diverse representations of men and male identities in their campaigns (see further discussion and examples in Chapter Six).
Figure 9.3: Examples of print advertisements for Lynx from 2010 and 2011
The direct and indirect advertisements reconsidered above demonstrate some of the ways in which the advertising and marketing of consumer commodities to potential male consumers attempts to promote a close association, if not an identity, between, what are stereotypically regarded as, representations of attractive forms of masculinity and desirable male attributes. What I was interested in hearing from my focus group and online discussion forum participants was how they interpreted and responded to the advertisements I put before them; what symbols, imagery and marketing messages did they find in the advertisements and what was their reaction to them; and to what extent were their identities, their sense of self, and expression of who they were, and what they wanted others to think they were like, bound up with the purchase and consumption of specific products and brands. Before discussing this qualitative data I would like to present the data I gathered from the online questionnaire so that I might examine the relationship between consuming and respondents’ identity, assessing to what extent lifestyle factors such as employment and relationship status might influence men’s consumer engagement and their interest in their personal appearance.

**Signifying masculinity: symbolic connections**

Clearly, money is needed for the purchase of products and, for most, central to the ability to buy is employment status. Seventy four per cent of the sample of respondents to the online questionnaire were in employment and they reflected all nine of the major employment groups used in the *Standard Occupational Classification*\(^3\), with the single largest group in ‘professional occupations’ (a group that covers teaching and education professionals, health professionals, business, media and public service professionals, and science, research, technology and engineering professionals). Forty seven of the 60 respondents who answered the question about employment status said that they were in full-time employment as an employee, four were either self-employed or in freelance employment, seven were in full-time or part-time education and two were unemployed. Respondents were asked to estimate their monthly expenditure on personal care products (described as skin, hair and body care products, fragrances, grooming gadgets and grooming services). Thirty three of

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\(^3\) The nine groups include managers, directors and senior officials, professional occupations, associate professional and technical occupations, administrative and secretarial occupations, skilled trades occupations, caring, leisure and other service occupations, sales and customer service occupations, process, plant and machine operatives, elementary occupations (Office for National Statistics: n.d. ONS Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) Hierarchy)
the participants (51 per cent) estimated a monthly expenditure of less than £10, twenty three participants spent between £10 and £29 and five respondents estimated a monthly spend between £30 and £49 (three participants did not answer this question). Multivariate data analysis revealed that those in professional occupations spent more on grooming products than those in lower-income ‘elementary’ occupational roles; twenty one of the twenty three participants who estimated a monthly spend between £30 and £49 were employed in professional occupations. As well as greater spending levels on grooming products over a third (nine) of these professionals visited a salon or barber for specialist grooming treatments and services (e.g. tanning, waxing, threading).

The identity and lifestyle of the respondents was a recurring theme. For example their employment status affected their consumer engagement and grooming product use. Those in professional roles spent more on grooming products considered to be ‘non-essential’ items e.g. deodorants, shaving preparations and razors (a distinction that was made by participants and will be discussed shortly), which probably reflects their higher salaries and a larger disposable income. It is also reasonable to suggest that this higher spending on grooming products is related to their being employed in professional occupations which are more image-conscious causing these respondents to be more inclined to give greater attention to their appearance (an observation that is discussed in the following chapter). It may also be possible to regard the professional respondents’ higher use of and spending on grooming products as a visible symbol of their wealth or income, with respondents using their groomed appearance to indicate to those they interact with in a culture driven by individuals’ financial capabilities to acquire a proliferation of material items of their professional status or greater financial freedom (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Featherstone: 2007, Schor: 1999, Goffman: 1987).

In addition to respondents’ employment status and their grooming product use there was also evidence of the ways in which their relationship status effected their grooming product consumption and appearance-related behaviours. The majority of the respondents defined themselves as single (22), 16 said they lived with their partners and 14 were married. Single respondents used a greater number of grooming products compared to the respondents who were in a relationship. The single respondents said they took pride in their appearance and it can be assumed that this had prompted them to spend more money each month on
grooming products (in comparison with the respondents who were in relationships). Although married men were the second highest users of grooming products their individual usage (calculated by the standard deviation) was lower than single respondents. Those who lived with their partner used the fewest number of grooming products, a finding that reflects a similar response to the focus group participants who were in a relationship and described that they no longer felt a need to or a pressure on them to spend time on their appearance or use as many grooming products (a finding that will be examined in following section).

The quantitative data gathered from the online questionnaire suggests a causal relationship between lifestyle factors such as employment and relationship status and respondents’ grooming product expenditure and use, a relationship that may indicate the ways in which respondents’ consumer engagement reflects aspects of their identity. The higher expenditure and use of grooming products among single respondents may suggest the ways in which these men responded to the symbols, signs and imagery that referenced sexuality and sexual attraction in direct advertisements for male grooming products, with the single respondents consuming and using grooming products to enhance or improve their sexual attraction. I was able to explore observations such as this in face-to-face and online discussions with male participants.

Recognition of symbols in a consumer-driven culture

The face-to-face focus group and the online discussion forum revealed the extent to which the participants in the two samples were aware of the symbols and imagery apparent in media content as well as the symbolic meaning consumer commodities are infused with in a consumer-driven culture (Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Klein: 2010, Walker: 2008, Campbell: 2004, Schroeder and Zwick: 2004, Shields and Heinecken: 2002, Schor: 1999, Baudrillard: 1998, Goffman: 1987). As I noted earlier analysis of data collected from a sample of media content aimed at male audiences indicated two distinct threads of the discussion concerning the symbolic value of consumer commodities – firstly the use of symbols in media content and secondly the recognition and use of consumer commodities as symbolic gestures that

4 Quantity that expresses by how much the members of a group differ from the mean value for the group
consumers use to express aspects of their identities. These threads were explored further with the focus group participants.

The men in the focus group identified the ways in which advertisements for a range of consumer commodities employed symbols and imagery to promote product attributes and qualities and in addition to signify associations with consumers’ identities by inferring that increasingly what and how we consume expresses our identity or who we are (Ervin: 2011, Bauman and Bauman: 2011, Klein: 2010, Walker: 2008, Coad: 2008, Schroeder and Zwick: 2004, Shields and Heinecken: 2002). The group spoke about the use of sporting imagery and symbols in advertising campaigns for the *Gillette* range of grooming products, symbols which they suggested had been used by the brand to depict hegemonic masculinity and desirable attributes related to men’s physical strength, power, dominance, and competitiveness. Participants also commented on the ways in which text, imagery and narration were employed in *Gillette* advertisements to cultivate the tacit understanding that consumers could harness the hegemonic male attributes depicted in the advertisements, if or when they purchased the *Gillette* products advertised:

“Those adverts are designed to make you think that you could be like the people in the advert [pause] if you use the stuff in the advert” [EDWARD, working, relationship, 24]

Further to which another participant added:

“Yeah, the men’s adverts are like [pause] they’re directed at making you think what you can look like or smell like if you buy the aftershave or whatever” [FRED, working, single, 24]
Secondly, the groups’ comments reflected the sign-value of commodities and the ways in which promotion and consumption of particular grooming commodities, including not only the *Gillette* brand but also *Joop! Homme*, *Bulldog*, and *Lynx*, may serve to express a particular understanding of masculinity. The group agreed that symbols and imagery included in advertising campaigns for *Gillette*, for example young male models engaged in enjoyable, hedonistic or aspirational pursuits (such as playing sports, driving expensive cars, socialising and receiving attention from women\(^5\)) represented hegemonic masculinity, which served to promote a particular brand identity, one associated with a normative heterosexuality, strength, power and dominance. These identity attributes seemed to be firmly embraced and endorsed by members of the group, as comments they offered on an advertisement for *Joop! Homme* aftershave served to confirm.

While identifying the presence in an advertisement for *Joop! Homme* aftershave (see Figure 9.4) of what appears to be a heterosexual couple, signifying heterosexuality and virility, two members of the group commented that the well-groomed exposed body of the male model and the advertisement’s reference to the colour pink\(^6\) constituted symbols of a *metrosexual* masculinity. The group commented that the *metrosexual* symbols presented in this advertisement had deterred or would deter them from buying the aftershave as they were not interested in purchasing a product that was associated with *metrosexual* characteristics, attributes, identities or lifestyles as they did not want to reflect these

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\(^5\) A symbol that contributed to the groups’ agreement that the male models in *Gillette* advertisements represented heterosexual men and that *Gillette* could be regarded as a grooming range for heterosexual male consumers  
\(^6\) A colour the group associated with women
attributes in their own lives:

“It’s just not my thing [pause] I mean it’s not me is it? [Gestures at his appearance]. I’m just not that fussed about what I look like, like, I’m definitely not a metrosexual, am I? [DAVID, working, married, 32]

In their comments on the Gillette and Joop! Homme advertisements group members clearly identified the sign-values of the commodities and in addition differentiated signifiers of masculine identities while revealing the respects in which their consumption of grooming products reflected aspects of their own identity.

Further evidence of the groups’ awareness of masculine symbols and imagery in advertising and the relationship between consumer commodities and identity was evidenced throughout the discussion. One participant spoke about the grooming brand Bulldog and the symbols of masculinity that he had recognised in direct advertisements for Bulldog products:

“Obviously they use bulldogs in the advertisements and [pause] I guess they are thought of as strong, masculine kinda dogs [pause] ’cos of [pause] you know [pause] Churchill and everything. I’d classify Bulldog as a really masculine product. It’s quite strong and it’s something that you’d wear to make [pause], to make a statement about who you are. You know it says you’re a confident man” [EDWARD, working, relationship, 24]

Edward’s comments above demonstrated not only his awareness of the symbols included in advertisements for Bulldog, for example the breed of dog, and what those symbols represented, for example masculinity, but also the ways in which he considered the consumption and use of the Bulldog brand to be a symbol of a particular understanding of
masculinity, that is a strong confident man who wanted to ‘make a statement’ about his identity.

Whilst the ice-breaker activity did not include any examples of print advertisements for the Bulldog range of male grooming products an example of an advertisement for a moisturiser from the Bulldog range has been included below to illustrate the symbols referred to in Edward’s quote above.

Figure 9.5: Example of a print advertisement for Bulldog

The grooming brand Lynx was also referred to in the focus group discussion concerning symbols in direct advertisements. Participants recognised references to and symbols of sexual attraction, heterosexuality, virility and lad culture in advertisements for the Lynx range of grooming products (Feasey: 2009, Gill: 2003, Crewe: 2002). They suggested that these symbols as well as the tongue-in-cheek style of humour used in Lynx campaigns and the price point of the products had contributed to an association the participants had formed between Lynx and ‘school kids’:

“Lynx is a product that has never really appealed to me because it reminds me of 12 or 13 year old boys covering themselves with it. [Sniggers], School kids love it” [EDWARD, working, relationship, 24]
In the online discussion forum participants demonstrated a similar awareness and understanding of the symbolic meaning of consumer commodities. They were asked to view a sample of television advertisements for male grooming product brands and comment on the marketing messages included in the advertisements. Participants commented that the advertisements presented heterosexual masculine identities through references and images of heterosexual couples, expensive cars, sports activities and professional employment (inferred and interpreted through the models’ business suits and office and cityscape locations or backdrops) (see Figure 9.2 for an example of a Gillette advertisement that includes several of these references and images). The comments made on the forum suggested that participants considered these references and imagery to be symbols of men’s virility, dominance, income and power.

The group also spoke about the ways in which the activity of grooming had become a symbolic gesture replete with symbolic meanings of masculinity that depending on the activities performed could be regarded as a symbol of self-respect or a symbol of vanity and narcissism:

“I am mostly on a sort of middle path leaning most towards being laid back about my appearance. I find though that when I am in a relationship or just at random times I might occasionally get a bit more concerned with my physical appearance and facial appearance. It’s just a case of looking after myself though, it never becomes so extreme that I start taking drastic measures in regards to my appearance” [full-time student aged 18 – 24]

This participant considered grooming to be part of a healthy-living regime that he suggested was a symbol of a self-respect for his body rather than a symbol of a vain interest in his appearance. His comments reflected a similar understanding to the focus group participants and the sample of men involved in an extensive study conducted by Gill, Henwood and McClean (2005) (see discussion in Chapter Eight). His comments also implied that he considered some grooming behaviours to be more ‘drastic measures’ than others,
comments that suggest a system or a relationship of values between grooming brands and products and behaviours (an understanding that is explored later in this chapter).

There was further evidence of the symbolic meaning of grooming in the comments the participants posted in response to questions concerning their grooming regime or routine. Participants referred to the ways in which their grooming product use and grooming behaviours were directly associated with their daily activities and who they interacted with:

“If I’m just with my family then I don’t spend much time on my appearance. To be honest, I don’t spend any time at all if I’m just with my kids as they’re too young to care what their dad looks like” [employed, married aged 25 – 34]

The group agreed that they tended to use more products and paid a greater attention to their appearance on the days when they were working. Several participants commented that they only shaved for work and did not take an interest in their appearance at the weekend or on days when they were not at work:

“I like to make sure I am presentable at work, though I do not spend hours preparing myself for the day, I have a fairly quick morning routine and I don’t spend too much time staring in the mirror, if I’m honest usually it’s a cursory glance to make sure I’m not covered in toothpaste. Though this depends on the occasion, if I was for example, going for an interview I would spend more time ensuring I looked professional. You want to give the right impression, don’t you?” [full-time student aged 18 – 24]

This sentiment was shared by another participant who agreed:
Chapter Nine

“If I have a meeting that requires it or an interview I will make more effort than most days of the week. Situation dictates” [employed, married, aged 45 - 54]

The groups’ comments suggest that the participants used grooming products consciously in order to symbolise something about their identities, their daily activities and their attitudes towards those activities. They felt that a well-groomed appearance was a symbolic gesture that reflected the significance of their daily activity, for example that they were going to work. They also commented that it reflected their attitude and commitment to work, that they wanted to create the ‘right’ impression at work or ‘fit in’ to workplace expectations (an understanding that would be different for each participant, specifically in respect of type of employment and place of work). The relationship between social expectations, personal appearance and grooming is examined in the following chapter.

Consuming and grooming: the significance of sign-values

I have considered the value of consuming in Chapter Four, presenting Baudrillard’s discussion to suggest that “The act of consumption is never simply a purchase . . . [it] is thus simultaneously an economic act and a trans-economic act of the production of differential sign-value” (1981: 112 - 113). In order to understand a culture driven by the acquisition of a proliferating number of consumer commodities it is therefore necessary to address the value of consumer commodities that extends beyond their functional-value (the functional value of an item e.g. a business suit clothes the wearer) and their exchange-value (e.g. the economic value of a suit), examining what consumer commodities signify or their sign-value (e.g. the value ascribed to a suit made by a Saville Row tailor compared to a suit mass-produced by a clothing chain such as Primark) (Baudrillard: 1981). Whilst the sign-value of consumer commodities might be reflective of or is somewhat related to their exchange and use-value, the sign-value indicates a far more complex process of infusing and encoding in to the commodity signs and symbols that can be regarded as an expression or a mark of style, prestige, luxury or power (Baudrillard: 1981). With this in mind consumer commodities not only reflect a consumer’s economic position they also signify aspects of the consumer’s identity and lifestyle such as their interest in their appearance, their employment status, occupational position, social class (Cao: 01/03/2017, Bauman: 2007, Schor: 2002, Veblen: 1994, Bourdieu: 1984, Baudrillard: 1981, Barthes and Lavers: 1972). If we are to
recognise and understand consumer commodities in this way, regarding them to be not simply objects consumed for their use-value, it is important to examine the ways in which media content aimed at male audiences suggests the value of a commodity in relation to other commodities, stimulating an interest in consumer brands and commodities, as well as explore audiences’ interpretation and understanding of these signs and the ways in which consumers use the consumption and presentation of consumer commodities in their own lives to signify aspects of their identity or their sense of self.

Analysis of the GQ Collections illustrated the ways in which media content can ascribe a sign-value to consumer commodities, using images and symbols to promote associations with prestigious and / or attractive and desirable culturally significant attributes and qualities that signified the value of the commodities in relation to other commodities (Baudrillard: 1981). Whilst the functional-value of the suits included in the magazine’s feature was similar to other suits not featured in the indirect advertisement campaign (all of the suits in the GQ Collections would clothe the wearer) it is the representation of aspirational symbols, for example the glamorous locations, stereotypically attractive models and luxury accessories, as well as the price point of the suits (which ranged from £850 to ‘price on application’), that convey the sign-value or prestige of the suits in the GQ Collections in relation to other suits (Baudrillard: 1981) (see Figure 9.1 for examples of these aspirational symbols). As Baudrillard’s work establishes, increasingly it is sign-values that are consumed, and the sign-values conveyed in the GQ text are designed to encourage the magazine’s readers to recognise and consume the suits as a symbol of their social status and wealth, the commodities serving as resources that signify aspects of the consumer’s identity, lifestyle, taste, social status, class (Cao: 01/03/2017, Bauman: 2007, Shields and Heinecken: 2002, Baudrillard: 1998, Veblen: 1994, Bourdieu: 1984, Barthes and Lavers: 1972). A similar presentation of consumer commodities was observed in advertisements for male grooming products with these commodities positioned as resources that could be consumed and used to signify aspects of the consumers’ identity including their sexuality, relationship status and lifestyle (see previous discussion of Joop! Homme and metrosexual attributes or Lynx and normative heterosexual masculinity).

Analysis of men’s magazines and direct advertisements aimed at male audiences indicated the ways in which media content presents consumer commodities as a signifier (a material
object) of the *signified* (the concept) (Baudrillard: 1981, Baudrillard, Lovitt and Klopf: 1976). In the *GQ Collections* feature the formal business suit can be regarded as a signifier that *GQ* used to represent or symbolise concepts associated with patriarchal dominance or hegemonic masculinity (what the suit signifies) (Mort: 1996); concepts that readers may identify with or aspire to which may encourage them to consume the commodities included in the fashion feature. Once purchased readers may use these items in their own lives as resources that signify the qualities, lifestyles or identity they chose to present to observers. What consumer commodities signify to audiences and consumers will be shaped by the sign-value of the item which will be informed by marketing messages from media content and advertisements as well as social and cultural factors such as age, peer group, ethnicity, sexuality and economic factors such as income and product availability (Schroeder and Zwick: 2004, Baudrillard: 1981).

Data gathered from the online questionnaire research element provided further evidence of the ways in which consumer commodities can be regarded as signifiers. My analysis of the data suggests a correlation or causal relationship between respondents’ consumption of grooming products and their employment and relationship status. Respondents in professional occupations consumed and used a greater number of grooming products than the respondents who were employed in elementary roles. Respondents who were single consumed and used a greater number of grooming products than the respondents who were in relationships. This correlation may suggest that respondents’ consumption and use of grooming products signified aspects of their identity and lifestyle with the respondents, consciously or unconsciously, consuming and using grooming products to signify their employment status, relationship status, or both (Cao: 01/03/2017, Bauman: 2007, Schor: 2002, Baudrillard: 1998, Baudrillard, Lovitt and Klopf: 1976, Barthes and Lavers: 1972).

Although the members of my focus group session did not specifically use the term ‘sign-value’ the comments they made about their consumption of grooming products revealed the importance to them of signified cultural qualities and attributes, such as taste, style, and prestige, ascribed to and associated with commodities through advertising and marketing campaigns, and their sense of the systemic nature of consumption, exemplified by their mundane and at times profanely expressed differentiation and evaluation of male grooming commodities. While the cost of products was identified as important a range of other
symbolic factors and associations played a significant part in their choice and use of grooming products. Participants in the focus group commented that the brand of grooming product and the identities and representations of the men included in direct advertisements signified what type of male would be most likely to consume a particular product (see the focus groups’ discussion of *Joop! Homme* and *metrosexual* consumers presented earlier in this chapter). While differences in the price points of *Lynx* and *Bulldog* brands were noted by the focus group, it was brand identity and perception of the target market and typical consumer, arising from the symbols, imagery and advertising copy employed in the brands’ marketing, that ultimately led them to differentiate between the brands in question. Social class and status associations and prejudices were articulated in comments made about the sign-value of the respective brands with *Lynx* products being described as those typically used by ‘chavvy’ men and regarded as a symbol of the ‘chav’ culture (Harwood and Yar: 2006) which the participants demonstrated a critical distance to (Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005):

“I don’t really use it ‘cos the chav spray stinks [pause] I mean really fucking stinks. It’s obvious who the chavs are that use it [laughter]. They’re fucking idiots”

[ADAM, student, relationship, 19]

Only one member of the group admitted to using products from the *Lynx* range out of choice (a decision shaped by approval from his girlfriends). The other participants indicated that they had used *Lynx* products not out of choice or preference, but rather as an exception, out of necessity, and occurred only if an alternative option was not available, as the comments from one group member illustrate:

“I suppose it’s a smell to cover up a smell [pause] to cover up other smells ‘cos you’ve been out playing football or something and you haven’t got time for a full shower. Everyone’s late, you’ve got to run to your next class so everyone’s like ‘oh *Lynx*, oh can I borrow yours?’ Then everyone comes out of the changing room with that [pause] general smell of some random *Lynx*
spray. And it stinks, I mean you really fucking stink of it.” [BRIAN, student, single, 19]

Another participant added to this discussion commenting:

“Yeah, you don’t want to draw attention to yourself ’cos you smell of sweat but then you don’t want people’s attention ’cos you smell of Lynx. You don’t want anyone thinking you actually use that stuff out of choice” [DAVID, working, married, 32]

Whilst the quotes above refer to the functional-value of a Lynx body spray – a grooming product the participants had used to cover up the smell of body odour – they also indicate the sign-value the participants ascribed to the Lynx brand with their comments highlighting the stigma attached to using products from a brand the participants regarded as a symbol or signifier of chav culture (Harwood and Yar: 2006).

Later in the focus group discussion two participants spoke about the Bulldog brand of grooming products, describing the brand’s distinctive scents (e.g. rosemary and bergamot), the cruelty-free ingredients and the environmentally-conscious recyclable packaging. The participants suggested that these factors contributed to the identity of the brand, making it a premium grooming brand that signified quality, luxury and aspiration rather than affordability and availability. Their discussion illustrated the significance of signs and symbols used in advertisements for Bulldog products which had contributed to the participants’ perception of the brand and the value they ascribed to the Bulldog range of products.

Whilst the sign-value of grooming products was important for the focus group participants, with the identity of the brand and that of its consumers’ influencing the products the group used and their perception of a brand, the participants involved in the online forum suggested
that the exchange-value of grooming products was of more importance. Comments posted
on the online forum indicated that whilst the signs, symbols, imagery and types of men
included in advertisements for male grooming products contributed to the participants’
perception and use of grooming brands and products, and the value brands and products
were ascribed it was the price point of products that influenced participants’ product use
most significantly as the comment below illustrates:

“I tend to use 'own brand' shower gels etc. during the week and keep 'the good
stuff' (for that read ‘the expensive stuff’ that I occasionally get lured into
buying) for evenings and weekends. So in the week it tends to be whatever
shower gel is on offer at the supermarket when I am shopping, but if I'm off
anywhere I'm a bit of a sucker for decent aftershave 'gift sets'!” [employed,
married, aged 25 -34]

The discussion in both the focus group and the online forum indicated that it was not only
grooming brands and products that participants ascribed a sign-value as their comments
suggested that some grooming behaviours were considered to be more important to perform
than others. Both groups described showering and shaving to be ‘essential’ grooming tasks
compared to the use of fragrances and body care products which they regarded as
unnecessary unless attending a special occasions or in response to health-related concerns
such as sun-burn. The participants considered hairstyling and skin care products to be
examples of non-essential or 'overly involved' grooming products and behaviours. The quote
below illustrates one participant’s approach to grooming and the value he ascribed to
particular grooming behaviours:

“I shower everyday of course and I always wear deodorant, it's a must. But I
don’t bother with much else, especially not aftershave (I rarely shave now). I
may use body lotion but only if I think I have been out in the sun for too long”
[employed, single, aged 25 – 34]
Whilst the two groups of men ascribed similar values to the range of grooming brands, products, behaviours and services discussed throughout the research elements their comments highlighted the ways in which social and cultural factors such as ethnicity and age as well as media content and direct advertisements had influenced their attitude to and engagement in grooming. One participant described that the tendency for his Afro-Caribbean hair to cause ingrown facial hairs made a weekly wet-shave at a barbers an 'essential' grooming activity:

“If I do it [shave] myself I get really bad [pause] skin and stuff so I have to go like every week” [CARL, student, single, 19]

Age appeared to be a more significant influence on the grooming behaviours performed by two online discussion forum participants but for very different reasons. One participant confirmed that the increasing number of anti-ageing products he used daily and the greater attention he gave to had been prompted by the effects of ageing:

“As I get older my appearance is more important” [full-time employment aged 45 – 54]

But another participant disagreed commenting that he used fewer products as he had aged having become more accepting of his appearance and less concerned by how he was 'judged' by others:

“I've got to the stage in life that if people want to judge me on my appearance rather than on what I say or do that's their problem (that's an age thing I'm sure)” [full-time employment aged 45 – 54]
The sign-values the participants ascribed to grooming brands, products, behaviours and services illustrates the influence of social and cultural factors e.g. their ethnicity and age as well as their exposure to media content and direct advertisements. Another group of male participants who represented a different age group, ethnicity or sexuality may have expressed and ascribed different sign-values to grooming or had a different understanding of what grooming signified e.g. self-care, self-respect or professionalism rather than narcissism, vanity and indulgence. A group of metrosexual men may for example have considered personal appearance to be of greater importance than the men involved in this study, regarding the use of Botox or eyebrow waxing to be ‘essential’ grooming tasks. As a reflection of their occupational position and financial status a group of professional men may for example have ascribed different values to the grooming brands discussed in these research elements. Shaped by the representations of men included in media content a sample of black men exposed to magazines and advertisements aimed at black readers or audiences e.g. Black Men\(^7\) may for example have expressed cultural differences in perceived notions of attractiveness which may have cultivated a different attitude to and an engagement in grooming, as well as exposed readers to grooming brands, products and services designed for black consumers which the men involved in this study were not aware of or did not comment on. The extent to which participants’ attitude to and involvement in grooming was influenced by social and cultural factors as well as media content is explored further in the following chapter.

**Concluding comments**

The significance of symbols in a consumer-driven culture and the growing recognition of consuming as a system of signs that signifies aspects of individuals’ identity and lifestyle has been the focus on my discussion in this chapter. Analysis of media content aimed at male audiences highlighted the ways in which the consumer and marketing industries employ symbols, imagery and signs in direct and indirect advertisements to stimulate consumers’ interest in the advertised product. These symbols and signs also serve to signify concepts, attributes or characteristics the brand wish to associate themselves with. The significance of symbols in media content and the recognition of consumer commodities as expressions or

\(^7\) A men’s lifestyle magazine aimed at black readers that includes news and articles on lifestyle, fashion, sports, health and fitness, business and financial advice, travel features, cultural information and interviews with black celebrities
signifiers of identity was explored with the participants involved in the focus group and online discussion forum. The two samples of men spoke about the symbols they recognised in media content and the ways in which these symbols contributed to the identity of the brand as well as inferred the type of consumer that would use the advertised grooming product. The discussions highlighted the ways in which participants used consuming and grooming in their own lives to signify aspects of their identity and sense of self. Analysis of data gathered from the online questionnaire indicated a correlation between respondents’ consumption and use of grooming products and lifestyle factors which may suggest the ways in which consumer commodities signified information about respondents’ lives such as their employment and relationship status. The following chapter explores how representations of men in media content as well as cultural and social pressures such as workplace expectations have placed greater attention on men’s appearance which have not only encouraged men to become more aware of the way they look but have also stimulated men’s interest in the growing number of consumer commodities that have been designed to enhance male consumers’ appearance.
The changing face of modern men

Introduction: new modern men

There are a range of representations of men and masculinity in the media and in particular in contemporary advertising and marketing texts. Representations reflect some of the ways in which the social roles and responsibilities of men changed during the twentieth-century following transformations in the UK economy and the labour market as well as in family life (Shields and Heinecken: 2014, Crompton: 2006, Salzman, Matathia and Reilly: 2005, Zwick and Schroeder: 2004, Alcock, Beatty, Fothergill, MacMillan and Yeandle: 2003, Rohlinger: 2002, Simpson: 15/11/1994). But particularly relevant to my concerns is the increase in advertising and marketing images of men actively engaged in a growing range of consumer activities, portrayed as consumers of an increasing variety of new commodities and services, representations which promote new understandings of masculinity and male identities, exemplified by such notions as the new man, the new lad, the metrosexual (see discussion in Chapters Three, Four, Five and Six). The growing diversity of representations of masculinity is evidence of the respects in which within a late modern context the self, as Anthony Giddens (1991: 32) has argued, has become a ‘reflexive project’. Identity is more fluid, project like, to be worked at, and for an increasing number of men consumer brands and commodities are resources and advertising representations are influences on the ways in which they think about themselves and their appearance and attempt to manage ‘identity’ and present ‘self’ in everyday life.

It has been suggested that an increasing focus or preoccupation with men’s physical appearance in media content has contributed to an objectification of men whereby “the male body and its related parts are increasingly coming to signify the whole man” (Rohlinger: 2002: 70) with male bodies being “dismembered, packaged, and used to sell everything from chainsaws to chewing gum” (Kilbourne: 1999: 26-27). The objectification of men in the media, and in advertising and marketing texts in particular, and the associated expectations that may be engendered and experienced by men, is central to my thesis and consideration of the growth of the male grooming market over the last thirty years and the respects in which brands, products, and associated representations may inform the ways in which men regard their bodies, talk about them, and use commodities to manage and enhance their physical appearance (Cao: 01/03/2017, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Tucker: 09/01/2011, Strutton: 01/08/2010, Souiden and Diagne: 2009, Saucien and Caron: 2008, Gill, Henwood
and McClean: 2005). I draw on data I generated from a sample of men’s magazines and direct advertisements to consider representations of masculinity, in particular, new more image-focused representations of men, for example, the *new man*, the *new lad*, the *metrosexual*, the *sporno*, the *übersexual*; representations that have placed increasing expectations on men particularly in relation to their appearance and their projects of self (Simpson: 20/03/2017, Cao: 01/03/2017, Simpson: 10/06/2014, McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Martins, Tiggemann and Kirkbride: 2007, Shields and Heinecken: 2002). I then present the data I gathered from the focus group and online discussion forum research elements to explore the ways in which men think about and respond to the greater objectification of men in media content. The comments of participants demonstrated their awareness of the increasing attention devoted to men’s appearance in the media and advertising in particular, and made reference to the ways in which they modified their appearance in response to what they perceived to be more fluid social expectations about appearance, masculinity, and male identities.

**How the media represent masculinity to men**

A range of diverse representations of masculinity and male identities emerged from my analysis of the three men’s magazines and direct advertising campaigns included in my research project. These representations suggested the complexity of present-day masculinities as well as an increasing number of oppositional expectations on men’s roles and their physical appearance (Ervin: 2011, Salzman, Matathia and O’Reilly: 2005, Shields and Heinecken: 2002). Attributes and characteristics associated with normative masculinity were reflected in the toned muscular bodies of the male celebrities and sportsmen included in the sample of media content analysed (see discussion in Chapter Eight). The magazine content and advertising campaigns also included several different male body types, for example androgynous, slight, and overweight, as well as images which insinuate diverse, and at times ambiguous, forms of expression of male sexuality, including for example, heterosexual, homosexual, *übersexual*, *metrosexual* or *spornosexual* forms. The men featured in the media content are depicted in a range of roles, referencing various lifestyles and identities, for example professional and other working men, househusbands, and adolescents, and in addition there are representations that signify irresponsible teens, geeks, image-conscious males, and lotharios or players¹. These men are represented as

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¹ Sexually successful person, usually a man; a playboy (Oxford English Dictionary: 2017)
occupying several roles simultaneously, as performing more than one role, or exemplifying more than one representation of masculinity in the same advertisement (see further discussion in Chapter Six and the examples included in Figure 6.3). The greater diversity of representations of masculinity signified a relative increase in the roles and identities attributed to men, and a shift away from the somewhat limited number of roles in terms of which men were once conventionally depicted, in advertising and marketing media content, as holding or playing, for example, the breadwinner or the lothario role (Shields and Heinecken: 2002, Rohlinger: 2002, Goffman: 1987).

My analysis of media content also revealed a focus on the way men look with the audiences’ gaze directed on the exposed bodies of the men featured in the men’s magazines or in the direct advertisements aimed at male audiences. This relatively new way of looking at men reflects and stimulates new understandings of masculinity that focus on how men look and the ways in which they manage their appearance (Daniel and Bridges: 2010, Martins, Tiggemann and Kirkbride: 2007, Aubrey: 2006, Rohlinger: 2002, Shield and Heinecken: 2002). An example of this attention on men’s bodies in media content is found in an advertisement for Italian fashion label Dolce & Gabbana included in the September 2010 issue of GQ magazine. The composition of the advertisement directs the audiences’ gaze to the exposed bodies of the male models thereby objectifying the men featured in the campaign (see Figure 10.1). The models are seated in close proximity to each other (some on each other’s laps), a positioning that may be regarded as signifying homoerotic, metrosexual or spornosexual forms of masculinity. The Dolce & Gabbana advertisement in Figure 10.1 is important for my analysis as it illustrates a significant redirection of the audiences’ gaze, a change in the way men are represented in media content and the new symbols employed in direct advertising that reflect modern understandings of masculinity and what it means to be a man in the present-day.
Originally published in 1976, with updated editions published later that decade and throughout the 1980s, Erving Goffman's text *Gender Advertisements* includes examples of the different ways in which men and women were represented in direct advertisements, suggesting that the imagery, signs and symbols included in these marketing materials reflected and helped to re-enforce gender stereotypes or ways of understanding normatively male and female roles in the mid-twentieth century. Goffman describes the presentation of men in advertising material, observing men’s physical dominance, their occupational or executive roles and their authoritative or hierarchical position all of which contrast the representations of women included in similar sources. He comments on men’s strong physical form and the prominence of the male breadwinner or professional role which for Goffman reflected hegemonic masculinity and normative gender roles based on men’s dominance in a patriarchal society and women’s position in the home (Goffman: 1987: 37). The examples in Figure 10.2 demonstrate the distinct gender roles Goffman refers to illustrating the ways in which a direct advertisement for a breakfast cereal employed an image of a young boy saluting a billboard of a man in military uniform to refer to men’s authoritative, hierarchical or professional role, and an image of a married mother waving her
children off to school to signify a woman’s role as a care provider for her family; signs and symbols that presented and perhaps re-enforced normative gender roles to audiences in the 1960s.

![Figure 10.2: Kellogg’s Cornflakes 1961](image)

Although Goffman’s analysis refers to direct advertisements from the 1950 and 1960s, *Gender Advertisements* is a text relevant to my discussion of representations of men in media content in the twenty-first century as the examples included in this text illustrate significant changes in terms of the way men and the male gender role are represented in media content with increasing attention placed on the way men look. The examples included in *Gender Advertisements* reveal the social ‘norms’ and advertising conventions of the mid to late twentieth-century with the men included in advertising campaigns and media content fully clothed and 'covered up' which, together with other symbols and signs in the advertisement e.g. references to paid employment or men’s physical strength, help to signify hegemonic masculinity and normative gender roles. Whilst the *Dolce & Gabbana* advertisement in Figure 10.1 includes symbols that refer to normative masculinity e.g. the models’ work boots and flat caps which perhaps symbolise or make reference to men’s involvement in manual labour, the focus of the advertisement is on the models’ bodies, presenting audiences with a tableaux of physically exposed or objectified men whose
worked-on muscular groomed bodies signify new ways of representing and being a man that
male audiences are encouraged, by marketing and consumer industries, to look upon,
admire, identify with and attempt to emulate, working-on and managing their own bodies
using the *Dolce & Gabbana* brand and products to assist in their own body-projects. This
greater attention on or objectification of the men’s bodies has arguably contributed to the
growing number of image-related concerns experienced by some young men who attempt to
emulate the ‘perfect’ *metrosexual* or *sporno* male body type they observe in media content
direct advertisements for *Dolce & Gabbana* included in Figure 10.3 illustrate the fashion
brand’s objectification of and focus on men’s bodies in their marketing materials, presenting
audiences with new ways of looking at men and new ways of understanding masculinity
(men as the subject of objectification rather than the subject objectifying others).
Figure 10.3: Selection of print advertisements for Dolce & Gabbana menswear
The analysis I conducted of media content aimed at male audiences reveals new ways of understanding and representing masculine identities which have become increasingly prominent in advertising and marketing campaigns for consumer commodities designed for and marketed at men. The increasing focus upon and preoccupation with appearance in such campaigns and the growing number of expectations men may experience in respect to the way they look are matters I explored further with a sample of men in a focus group with the data collected presented in the pages that follow.

On the appearance of masculinity

The focus group discussion revealed the ways in which media content and direct advertising had made participants more aware of their physical appearance. In their discussion participants expressed their awareness of the growing emphasis placed upon men’s appearance in the media, and in advertising and marketing campaigns in particular, and the increasing expectations they experienced in respect of their appearance, how they 'looked', and the resources – the grooming products and services - they could consume to manage and enhance their appearance. Participants agreed with each other that the varied representations of men included in direct advertising campaigns for male grooming products, as well as terms introduced to describe new expressions of masculinity such as the *new man*, the *metrosexual* and the *spornosexual* (a term that only two of the younger participants had heard of), had made them more aware of their appearance and had made it more acceptable for men to take an interest in their appearance. But their comments revealed a degree of ambivalence about such concerns, a sense that there were limits to how much interest in their appearance they should display. In short, their comments suggested that while some interest in appearance and grooming products was acceptable and appropriate, men should not be overly preoccupied with their appearance. As one participant commented:

“Like [pause] of course I use some grooming [pause] products, you know [pause] you don’t want to be a complete smelly little bastard do you? [pause] But I’m not gonna be like one of those [pause] who like use loads of it and spends forever on how I look. It’s just so [pause] fake and not me” [FRED, working, single, 24]
In his description of those who spent time on their appearance and used what he regarded to be an ‘excessive’ amount of grooming products Fred stressed the word ‘fake’ to perhaps indicate his distance from and negative perception of men who consume and use a number of grooming products (Cao: 01/03/2017, Gill, Henwood and McClean: 2005).

The group was aware of how important grooming was in relation to how they were perceived by others and especially if they were looking for a sexual partner. They considered that being well-groomed was an expectation on them if they hoped to attract a partner and that an interest in personal appearance and the use of grooming products contributed to their sexual appeal and desirability:

“I’ve kept using Lynx Chocolate only because every girlfriend that I have had has seemed to always be like ‘Oh that smells really really nice’. So it’s always got like female approval in my eyes” [BRIAN, student, single, 19]

Single participants described how they used more grooming products on a ‘night-out’ and it became apparent that they spent longer working on their appearance when getting ready than group members who were in a relationship. Participants with a partner confirmed that expectations concerning their appearance were no longer as significant for them; they felt that the ‘pressure was off’ and that they had no need to ‘impress anyone’. They commented that they tended to spend less time on their appearance and had used fewer grooming products since meeting their partner:

“I’m so lazy though now, it’s like I’ve used my wife’s shower gel going ‘Oh fuck it I need something’, it’s just whatever is to hand now we’re married!” [DAVID, working, married, 32]

In discussing influences on the ways in which they thought about, managed, and sought to enhance their appearance the focus group participants differentiated between media
advertising and marketing campaigns and their peer groups. Group participants described the strategies they felt the marketing and consumer industries had employed in advertisements to stimulate and encourage the interest of audiences in consumer commodities, for example celebrity endorsement and aspirational representations of men. They suggested that advertisements are designed to influence the ways in which male audiences think about their appearance and the grooming products, gadgets and services they consume to manage their appearance and emulate or ‘fit in’ with the industries’ presentation of ‘attractive’ male model identities. But the participants did not feel that their own consumer decisions or their interest in their personal appearance had been significantly, if at all, influenced by such marketing messages or associated representations of masculinity (see discussion in Chapter Eight). The group did however comment that social interaction or peer contact had been a more significant influence on their grooming behaviours and the ways in which they managed and thought about their appearance. They spoke about social expectations related to their appearance and the resources they used to respond to these pressures suggesting that whilst it was important to use grooming products it was of equal concern that men should not appear overly interested in their appearance or vain in front of their peers. One participant suggested that men:

“shouldn’t care about their hair, should they? But then you’ve got metrosexuality where those guys really do care about their hair and can easily spend as much time as women on their hair [pause]. But I mean they shouldn’t, should they?” [DAVID, working, married, 32]

The relationship between appearance, grooming and peer expectations was a theme I was able to explore further with those who participated in my online discussion forum to which I will now turn.

Peer pressure, social expectation, and appearance

The anonymous setting of the online forum allowed me to explore with a sample of men the expectations they experienced in relation to their appearance. Participants talked about their awareness of an expectation on them to ‘look good’ and to take care of their appearance:
Chapter Ten

“I understand that my appearance is paramount in contemporary society. I am conscious of my looks and the need to come across as well presented, clean cut and a smart looking person. My main aim will always be to look smart and tidy” [full-time employment aged 25 - 34]

This participant described the tasks he performed to appear ‘well-presented, clean cut and a smart looking person’ and, in addition to showering and washing and ironing his clothes, these included a grooming regime of trimming his facial hair, using skin care products and applying hair styling products on a daily basis. The comments made by this participant suggested that the actions he performed in respect of his appearance were motivated by a self-respect for his body as well as an interest and pride in his appearance (see Chapter Eight for further discussion about the discourses men use to talk about their bodies). Another participant described how his interest in personal appearance was about more than just his physical appearance. In addition to a thorough grooming regime, that included the use of skin care, body products and hair styling products, this younger participant provided a detailed description of body maintenance behaviours that included working-out regularly at a gym and eating well-balanced meals. The participant commented that his holistic approach to his body and well-being had enhanced his physical appearance and given him greater confidence in the way he looked and this had, in turn, contributed to his ‘positive mental attitude’, confirming that he associated paying attention to his appearance with:

“a feeling of self-worth and feeling good about oneself” [full-time student aged 18 - 24]

Participants were asked to comment on how, if at all, they thought their daily life and activities impacted on the ways in which they managed their appearance. This discussion thread indicated that participants used grooming products to modify their appearance so they could meet or ‘fit in’ with the expectations they identified as being associated with the various social situations in which they were engaged. Those in employment talked about fitting in with workplace assumptions and expectations in respect of the way they looked. Their comments confirmed that they paid more attention to their appearance, spent longer over their grooming regime, and used a greater number of grooming products on the days
when they were at work. Several of the participants associated the activity of shaving with work and not shaving with days when they were not at work, or days of relaxation, an association which perhaps indicated that participants’ grooming behaviour was more a response to social pressure and expectation, rather than a reflection of interest in their appearance or an enjoyment of grooming:

“I always make sure my hair is combed before coming in to work and I shave everyday if I’m working but I don’t bother at the weekend, there’s no point” [full-time employment aged 35 - 44]

The participants’ descriptions of the grooming behaviours they performed in order to prepare themselves or the way they looked for work suggested the continuing importance of employment in terms of influencing the ways in which they conducted or managed their appearance or their presentation of self. Comments made by one participant described how he consciously managed his appearance in such a way when he was working but that he was less concerned by the way he presented himself on days when he was not at work:

“If I’m working then I make an effort. But if I’m not working then I’m not that bothered what I look like. I’m not bothered if I go to town in tatty jeans and a cartoon t-shirt” [full-time employment aged 45 - 54]

Whilst the online discussion forum participants described feeling a pressure on them to spend additional time on their appearance on the days when they were working, the amount of time they invested and the activities they performed varied between members of the group. Three of the participants suggested that presenting themselves in a way that was expected in the workplace included showering, wearing clean clothes, styling their hair and shaving. A fourth participant agreed but added that his colleagues also expected him to have well-polished shoes. Two of the participants opposed what were described as the ‘involved’ grooming behaviours of the other participants, commenting that it was only necessary to shower and wear clean clothes, in order to conform to their work colleagues’ expectations:
Chapter Ten

“As long as I’m showered and don’t come to work in my pyjamas my work colleagues don’t care what I look like” [full-time employment aged 25 - 34]

One participant described how his colleagues frequently commented on his appearance which had made him more aware of the way he looked and the way he managed his appearance on days when he was working:

“I usually dress casually at work but if it’s too casual or even too smart my colleagues are very quick to notice. They will always let me know what they think of how I look. On those rare occasions when I appear at work wearing a jacket or a suit and tie they will joke and say "Oh you look very smart today!” or "Are you going to a funeral?" [part-time employment aged 25 – 34]

The participants’ comments about the relationships they perceived between employment, personal appearance and grooming provided examples of the pressures the group felt to fit in to workplace expectations about appearance, expectations about the presentation of self in the everyday working environment that the group responded to by modifying their grooming behaviours and appearance accordingly.

Place of work and the comments of colleagues were not the only factors that determined attitudes and behaviours of members of the group. Comments from friends and family also affected how much attention and time participants gave to their appearance and their grooming routine. Participants described how they were made aware of their appearance by those they interacted with:

“My friends are always first to comment if something about my appearance isn’t right. If say, my hair wasn’t done, my friend would say something along the lines of "You’re not going out like that are you?" In a way I would expect them to say it. My family would also do the same” [full-time student aged 35 - 44]
Appearance-related comments made by participants’ friends and family members as well as by their partners had prompted them to regulate or discipline their grooming behaviours or grooming activities, as the quote below confirms:

“My wife is the person who comments on my appearance most frequently. Most times it’s to tell me to smarten up, have a shave, get a haircut, change my clothes, that sort of thing. I moan about it at the time but of course I eventually go and take a shave, change my shirt etc.” [full-time employment aged 35 - 44]

These comments were often described as remarks that were expressed humorously or as a point of ‘banter’:

“My dad normally asks me if there is a world shortage of razors as he shaves every day and I definitely don’t!!!” [full-time employment aged 25 - 34]

Another participant added:

“Family members will often inform me that I need a haircut, shave, wash etc. This is more banter though than an actual critique of my hygiene (I hope)” [full-time student aged 25 – 34]

Only one participant talked about positive comments he received about his appearance:

“Most people - family, friends, colleagues and my girlfriend, comment that I am a good-looking man” [full-time student aged 25 – 34]
Recognising the ‘ideal’ man in media content

As well as comments from family and friends the group acknowledged the possibility that grooming product advertisements, media content, and celebrity endorsements, to varying extents, may have shaped how they felt they should look and, in turn, may have influenced the grooming behaviours they performed. Participants identified several representations of masculinity included in the advertising campaigns, for example, *metrosexuals*, sportsmen, breadwinners, and Lotharios. But like the focus group participants the online discussion group agreed that the attractive male models and celebrities included in advertising campaigns were not representative of ‘normal’ or ‘real’ men, such as themselves, and they did not believe that the associated images and figures had influenced their grooming behaviours:

“I like what I like. It's always my decision whether to use a product or not - if I get it wrong there's nobody to blame but me” [full-time employed aged 25 – 34]

Although the group was critical of celebrity endorsement they agreed that their media exposure to celebrity lifestyles and the way celebrities looked had made them more aware of an ideal aesthetic that they felt they had to conform to. Referring to male celebrities in grooming product advertisements one participant posted:

“These people are supposed to be role models for young men because they are thin, have flawless skin and appear wealthy. They are an ‘idealised’ version that audiences are told to look like” [full-time employed aged 25 – 34]

Another participant agreed with the post above, adding that:
Chapter Ten

“Sportsmen are just used to sell the idea of a perfect sculpted body” [full-time employed aged 35 – 44]

The participants in the focus group also discussed demands associated with notions of perfection. In reaction to the selection of direct advertisements for male grooming products from men’s magazines the focus group participants referred to ‘fake’ looking male models and celebrities who encouraged ‘some’ (but not these) men to conform to a contrived aesthetic of the ‘perfect male’:

“I hate celebrities so much, they’re just so fake, like half the time they put me off a product, cos they’re telling you how you should look [pause] perfect and stuff” [ADAM, student, relationship, 19]

A similar attitude to celebrity lifestyles and celebrity endorsement was shared by the online forum participants who indicated their critical distance from the images of ‘perfect’ or ‘ideal’ male models found in direct advertisements. Their comments also highlighted a degree of scepticism towards the authenticity of celebrity’s endorsement for male products as the quote below suggests:

“They’re being paid to say they use the stuff and it’s this bias that makes me take little notice of these adverts” [full-time employed aged 25 – 34]

The online discussions indicated the extent to which participants were aware of the intention of advertising and the impact marketing messages had in terms of cultivating perceived notions of what is attractive. On a discussion thread concerning celebrity endorsement one participant posted:
“They represent everything the companies promoting them wish me and everyone like me to become so that our worlds will revolve around buying and using grooming products so that I can become 'sexy' like the people in the advert” [full-time student aged 35 – 44]

This participant’s post suggests not only his scepticism towards celebrity endorsement and direct marketing messages it also indicates the participant’s awareness of the intention of advertising which he identified as the stimulation of audiences' consumption and use of grooming products and the presentation of what consumer and marketing industries consider to be ‘sexy’. Whilst the comments posted on the online discussion forum suggest the participants’ critical appraisal of advertising with the participants' comments demonstrating a similar degree of scepticism towards the influence of advertising that the focus group participants had expressed (see discussion in Chapter Eight) they also indicate that participants had, in some ways been influenced by the power of advertising as it had shaped their understanding of what it means to be ‘sexy’ and had stimulated their awareness of, if not their spending on, male grooming products and consumer commodities related to their appearance.

Participants in the online discussion confirmed that their exposure to images of ‘perfect’ male celebrities and male models had placed a greater focus on men’s appearance, especially in regards to signs of ageing, a matter which was of concern for one participant in particular who explained that, as he became aware of increasing signs of ageing, he used a greater number of grooming products in order to better manage or enhance the way he looked:

“I use an eye cream for my eyes as it’s important to look fresh. Due to long days at work sometimes, I can look very tired and old so this roll on by Garnier for me is the best anti-ageing product. I also use Olay skin care. This is the product that I have used for 5 years now after trying various other face creams. I find the rich concentrated cream suitable for my delicate ageing skin” [full-time employment aged 45 – 54]
Personal appearance was clearly important to this participant as he described the pressures he felt to maintain a youthful appearance and conform to expectations of how he should look in his posts on the discussion forum. In addition to a daily grooming regime he had recently paid for ‘minor’ cosmetic dentistry as his dentist had suggested that he would look and feel better. He summarised his positive response to the dentist’s recommendation in the following succinct terms:

“What the hell?” [full-time employment aged 45 – 54]

This participant admitted that the cosmetic dentistry, together with his skin care regime, had significantly improved how he felt about himself:

“This sounds pretty cheesy and perhaps at my age I should know better but hey! I’m actually happier with them now [my teeth]. This and my skin care regime have, I am told, enhanced my facial appearance and I am not afraid to acknowledge that this had given me a bit of a boost. I like that” [full-time employment aged 45 – 54]

The comments made by this participant perhaps suggest a degree of embarrassment about the measures he had taken to improve his appearance (indicated by his references to sounding ‘pretty cheesy’ and being old enough to ‘know better’). But he explained that his use of grooming products and the cosmetic surgery he had paid for had only been a response to the pressures he felt concerning his appearance. His comments also suggested that he considered there to be a relationship between the way he looked and the way he felt; a relationship or association that historically has tended to be presented and emphasised generally only to female consumers (and not male consumers) through direct advertisements for female beauty products (Wolf: 1991).
Chapter Ten

The online discussion forum provided further evidence of the complexities of modern masculinities, particularly in relation to the way men look and the resources they can use to manage their appearance. The groups’ comments indicated the ways in which participants negotiated a balance between conforming to social expectation related to their appearance and not appearing vain or overly interested in the way they looked. The group talked about the attention they gave to their appearance and the grooming behaviours they performed to enhance, modify, or manage how they looked. They suggested that the attention they gave to their appearance was influenced more significantly by social factors, such as the expectations of their work colleagues, as well as by comments by friends and family, rather than the promotion of consumer commodities through the objectification of male models in advertising and marketing media content. The groups’ comments did however suggest that the participants were aware of the ‘perfect’ male bodies that male audiences were exposed to in media content, but that they did not consider these ideal types to be representative of themselves or other ‘real’ men.

Concluding comments

The increasing incorporation of men into consumer culture has had a range of consequences for how masculinity is represented, expressed, and experienced. Men are now a significant market and advertising and marketing images of men and goods and services designed and directed to men are increasingly prominent in contemporary media. In this chapter I have explored particular representations of masculinity and the plurality of sometimes conflicting male identities signified in advertising and marketing texts, identities that male audiences are encouraged simultaneously to inhabit. This discussion highlighted an increasing objectification of men in media content which has arguably placed greater attention on men’s appearance as well as stimulated male audiences’ interest in consumer markets as they attempt to manage and enhance the way they look by using an expanding range of male grooming products and services. Through my discussion with male participants I was able to explore the extent to which this objectification has impacted on how men understand and attend to their own appearance. Comments made by the samples of men involved in the focus group and online discussion forum indicated the pressures participants experienced concerning their appearance and the ways in which they regulated their grooming behaviours in order to ‘fit in’ with the social and cultural expectations they encountered in their daily lives.
Conclusions: *Consuming futures*

**Aims, objectives and significance**

This study has used a modified grounded theory approach to explore the ways in which significant social and economic changes in the late twentieth-century have impacted on how men understand, construct and manage their sense of self in the twenty-first century. The overriding aim of this thesis was to answer the overarching research question: *Why has men's grooming become a growing sector in the beauty industry?* To respond to this question an analysis of relevant research and studies which focused on the themes of identity, gender, employment, consuming and grooming was undertaken. There was relatively little empirical social research into or sociological analysis of the male grooming market when I began this study. Much of the material that was available was generated from quantitative data reports that focused narrowly on the growth of the consumer market for male grooming products to the neglect of sociological analysis of the significance of evident increasing consumption of such products by men. In response to the lack of sociological analysis I designed a research project to collect new quantitative and qualitative data concerning the relationship that has developed between consumer commodities and men's sense of self.

Whilst the men and masculinities academic discipline has sought to understand how social changes have impacted on male identity (Gregory and Milner: 2011, Legerski and Cornwall: 2010, Thébaud: 2010, Crompton: 2006, Aarseth: 2009, Edley and Wetherall: 1999) it has not to date recognised the significance of men's involvement in consumer markets, particularly the complex factors that have led to men's increasing consumption of male grooming products (McNeill and Douglas: 2011, Lennard: 2009, Dodson: 2006, Tuncay: 2006, Gray: 28/10/2004, Sturrock and Pioch: 1998). My study represents a significant sociological contribution to the academic fields of masculinity and men's studies as it has sought to explore what the growth of the male grooming market might signify in terms of how men define, express and manage their identity. In turn my research makes an important contribution to our understanding of the growing presence of male consumers within contemporary consumer culture.
Chapter Eleven

Quantitative and qualitative data

In this concluding chapter I draw together the quantitative and qualitative data collected to demonstrate how my research has fulfilled the research aims I identified (which have been listed below) to respond to my central research question:

1. Consider the recent proliferation of men’s grooming through the lens of Bauman’s thesis concerning the transition from a society of producers to a society of consumers;
2. Investigate the consumption of male grooming products in terms of social integration, social stratification and the formation of identity;
3. Examine the growth in the number and types of grooming products available to male consumers and analyse advertisements that are used to market these products;
4. Explore men’s perspectives on and engagement with grooming, the promotion of grooming, and the consumption of grooming products.

The empirical findings were discussed in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten which respectively addressed media representations of masculinity, the symbolic value of consuming, and the increasing fluidity of male identity in the twenty-first century. The analysis I have produced of the quantitative and qualitative research material I generated serves firstly to enhance understanding of the increasing fluidity and complexity of male identity in liquid modernity and secondly, effectively demonstrates the growing significance of consumer commodities and consuming in the lives of modern men.

1. The fluidity of male identity in liquid modernity

Zygmunt Bauman’s body of work has been a significant analytical resource throughout this thesis, particularly his consideration of the relative shift in emphasis from a producer-led to a consumer-driven society. Drawing on the quantitative and qualitative data I generated from the four research elements associated with this study I have outlined the various ways in which this shift has impacted on men’s sense of self. A once relatively stable identity, predicated on a life-long relationship with paid employment, has for many men become increasingly fluid and transient, and more closely connected to and realised through the consumption of a proliferating range of consumer commodities, specifically in relation to my
research project grooming products. The forms in which these fluid identities have been represented in media content and popular culture, and the ways in which the participants involved in the three research elements used consumer commodities to construct and perform their own fluid identities has been examined in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten. The findings that emerged from this data have been summarised below:

*Media representations of men reflects and stimulates flexible identities:* the two samples of media content I analysed revealed diverse representations of men that signified the fluidity of identity in liquid modernity. These representations suggested the ways in which consumer commodities can facilitate consumers’ transition between a plurality of fluid identities, appropriating consumer brands, goods and services that are reflective of the range of identities male consumers may choose to inhabit and perform. The participants involved in the focus group and online discussion forum provided examples of this fluidity in their own lives, using male grooming products to construct and manage fluid identities that were responsive to changing social situations and peer expectations.

*Celebrity endorsement reflects diverse representations of fluid masculinities:* participants involved in the focus group and online discussion forum suggested that male celebrities who endorsed male grooming products were employed by grooming brands to reflect hegemonic masculinity, embodying characteristics such as power, wealth, dominance and heterosexuality. But the participants’ comments also indicated that they recognised that celebrity endorsement could be used to generate, promote and reflect new male identities such as the *new man*, the *metrosexual* and the *spornosexual*, identities which challenged normative gender roles and suggested new ways of being a man.

*The objectification of men stimulates flexible identities:* my analysis of media content provided examples of the increasing attention on men’s appearance and the ways in which strategic marketing messages have encouraged male audiences to reflect on their own appearance and consume a growing number of male grooming products marketed in terms of their express ability to ‘solve’ image-related ‘problems’ and change their physical appearance to reflect their changing identities. The participants involved in the focus group and online discussion forum spoke about the ways in which they used consumer
commodities, particularly male grooming products, to modify their appearance and move between a series of identities, roles and expectations.

2. The greater significance of consumer commodities in the lives of modern men

The quantitative and qualitative data which I generated from the four research elements and subsequently analysed demonstrated the growing significance of consumer products and consuming in the lives of modern men and the various ways in which these consumer commodities facilitate flexible identities in a consumer-driven society. The significance of consuming in liquid modernity was explored in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten, focusing on participants’ engagement in consumer markets, particularly the male grooming product market. The themes that emerged from my analysis of this data have been summarised below:

*Media content reflects and stimulates a culture fixated on consuming:* my analysis of relevant media sources has illustrated the ways in which media content cultivates a relationship between men’s sense of self, consuming and grooming through the imagery, signs and symbols deployed in magazine content, and indirect and direct advertisements repositioning what was once a chore associated with women, housewives and domestic responsibilities into a leisure activity expressive of personal choice and fluid identities, which is associated with hedonism, indulgence, enjoyment and normative masculinity.

*Development of new male focused consumer commodities:* secondary qualitative data demonstrated the growth of consumer markets aimed at male consumers. My analysis of the data gathered from the focus group, online questionnaire and online discussion forum confirmed that participants were actively engaged in a range of consumer markets, spending their time and financial resources on consumer commodities related to their hobbies and their appearance. Whilst a growing number of household brands e.g. Dove and Nivea have diversified into the male grooming product market in the last thirty years the analysis I conducted of the responses of participants involved in my research project revealed a noticeably greater interest in and consumption of consumer commodities and brands deliberately designed and explicitly marketed specifically for male consumers.
New representations of men defined by consumer involvement: the new fluid representations of men featured in the two samples of media content analysed depicted men from different age groups, sexual orientations and ethnicities, men who were employed in a range of professional occupations, and who displayed different bodies, styles of dress, leisure interests. These representations demonstrated diversity in terms of how the men featured in the media content looked. However the text, language, images, signs, symbols and sub-text used in the marketing material analysed suggested that these diverse representations were all underpinned by an engagement with and display of relevant consumer commodities which emphasised the significance of consuming in relation to men’s sense of self and indicated that consuming was increasing becoming an activity associated with normative masculinity.

Blurred gender roles: the documentary analysis I conducted of media content demonstrated the increasing presence of representations signifying men’s greater engagement and interest in consumer activity, in particular in consuming grooming products. This relatively new development indicated a diminishment of differences and increase in similarities between the activities and roles typically performed by men and women, with a growing number of men participating in forms of consumer activity, consuming a growing range of commodities, a significant number of which had once been more closely associated with women. The increasing focus on men’s appearance, which I identified in my analysis of selected media content, also provided evidence of the various ways in which, to a degree, there has been a convergence in gender representations and gender roles, specifically with the increasing tendency for men featured in media marketing content to be fetishised, portrayed as subjects for consuming audiences to objectify. The participants involved in the focus group and online discussion forum spoke about the ways in which they experienced this greater attention on appearance in their own lives, consuming and using male grooming products to enhance their appearance – a shift in behaviour and attitude that is comparable to and reflective of female consumers of products from what in gendered terms is designated ‘the beauty industry’.

Why has men’s grooming become a growing sector in the beauty industry?

With the analysis summarised above in mind it is evident that, together with the capitalist corporations’ drive to pursue new areas of financial growth, a significant factor in the
expansion of the male grooming product market is that it has positioned itself, represented and marketed itself, and indeed has been adopted and embraced by male consumers as facilitating the performance of fluid male identities, reflecting the increasing attention accorded to men’s appearance and the consequent greater emphasis placed upon the purchase and use of related consumer commodities and services. Whilst this development could be regarded simply as a result of successful marketing messages and rising levels of disposable income it should also be recognised as an indication of the emergence and development of new cultural understandings and practices of masculinity that signify the various ways in which masculinity has been redefined as an increasing number of modern men have adopted (and enjoyed) activities that once were associated with women and a small number of male consumers active in niche consumer markets.

Despite these market developments, which reflect changes in men’s attitudes to and their involvement in consumer markets, particularly the male grooming product market, the conclusions of this study support those of related research conducted by Cao (01/03/2017), McNeill and Douglas (2011), Souiden and Diagne (2009), and Gill, Henwood and McClean (2005); suggesting that although men demonstrate an active engagement in consuming they remain reluctant to show an interest in consumer commodities, goods and services that have historically been associated with women or that may detract from an understanding of masculinity connected to men’s disinterest in their personal appearance and the way they look. Such conclusions highlight the complexity of male identities in the twenty-first century and suggest that further research in the subject area is needed in order to enhance understanding of modern-day masculinities that are being continually re-assessed and re-defined to adapt to a liquid social form.

Further research

My analysis of the data collected for this study as well as a critical reflection on my research design have helped me to identify further areas of research that would contribute to my understanding of the ways in which male identity is being constructed, managed and expressed in the twenty-first century liquid modern society:
Chapter Eleven

- **Workplace masculinities** – the data gathered from the online discussion forum demonstrated that whilst paid employment remained a significant influence on men’s identity the way employment shaped participants’ identity had changed and is likely to continue to do so as employment and work become ever more precarious. The groups’ discussion indicated that participants used grooming products as resources to manage their identity, modify their appearance and conform to workplace expectations. Further research could be conducted to explore the extent to which male consumers consume and display other consumer commodities such as clothing, technology, gadgets and lifestyle items to help them to adapt to social or situational expectations, using such items to construct and maintain fluid identities.

- **Male make-up** – secondary quantitative data demonstrated the growing popularity of male make-up products among male consumers (Libby: 29/07/2015, Mintel: May 2015). These products have been closely associated with female consumers and so male consumers’ use of make-up would suggest significant changes in the way some male consumers regard grooming and the products they are willing to use to enhance their appearance. Whilst none of the participants involved in this study admitted to using male make-up further research could be conducted to explore the profile of male consumers using these products. This research would contribute to discussion concerning the ways in which masculinity and male identities are defined and performed with consideration given to lifestyle factors, sexual orientation, relationship status, media exposure, disposable income and occupational position.

- **Trans-identities** – there is growing evidence that the media industry and consumer brands are becoming increasingly representative of LGTBQ audiences and consumers with a number of marketing campaigns now including trans-identities¹ (Simpson: 20/03/2017, Daniels: 24/02/2016, Lubitz: 23/02/2016). With this in mind the extent to which marketing and consumer industries recognise and reflect the LGBTQ community could be an area of further research with an examination of the representations of trans-identities in media content and the ways in which male audiences respond to and identify with these representations.

- **Online content** – with a growing number of magazines available in digital format only further research into the role and significance of digital media and online content, particularly in relation to the cosmically modified representations and the increasing objectification of men’s physical form, is needed.

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¹ “An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and / or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth” (GLAAD: 2016: 12)
Chapter Eleven

- **Social media** – related to the above and to develop Simpson’s discussion concerning the impact of social media on men’s identity (Simpson: 20/05/2016, Simpson: 17/04/2010) further research on men’s use of social media would offer insight into how online social networks have impacted on men’s sense of self. This research would indicate the new ways in which men objectify and fetishise themselves on social media platforms and mobile apps such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram.

- **Body insecurities** – the growth of the male grooming market suggests one measure that male consumers have adopted to respond to the increasing attention men’s physical appearance receives. Although the data gathered from my research indicated that participants were relaxed about their appearance there is growing evidence that suggests men are experiencing body related insecurities that have historically been associated with women (Be Real Campaign: 2017). Further research is needed to explore how the development of consumer culture and the increasing objectification of men in media content have placed new pressures on modern men. This research would explore in-depth the relationship men have with their bodies and how this impacts on their sense of self and well-being.

- **Female researchers and male participants** - this study has highlighted that further research to better understand the ways in which gender can impact on the research design and collection of data would contribute to the discussion initiated by Arendell (1997) and Gurney (1985) concerning the dynamics between female researchers and male participants.

- **Online research tools** – a critical reflection of my research design and use of an online questionnaire and online discussion forum indicated the ways in which online research tools can contribute to a sociological research study, facilitating virtual communities and the collection of quantitative and qualitative data with a wider sample than perhaps might have been possible using a paper-based questionnaire and a face-to-face focus group or group interview. Conducting further research studies using online research tools with larger samples of participants would develop my knowledge and skills of these tools and would contribute to discussion initiated by Ono and Zavodny (2003) by providing additional data on relatively recent technological developments such as the greater use of app software, mobile devices and smart technology².

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² Technology designed to adapt to users’ needs and requirements
Chapter Eleven

Conclusion

Using Zygmunt Bauman's thesis as a framework I have addressed one set of consequences arising from the relative shift from a production-led to a consumer-driven culture, specifically the various ways in which such a shift has facilitated and stimulated the constitution of fluid male identities predicated on men's active engagement in consuming and their relatively new interest in their appearance and the consumer commodities they can use to enhance the way they look. I have explored the social and economic factors that have contributed to the growth of the male grooming product market; a market whose considerable growth indicates significant changes in terms of the ways in which men understand, construct and perform their sense of self. The data collected from the four research elements designed and conducted for this study, and the discussion and analysis of this data presented in Chapters Eight, Nine and Ten represents a significant contribution to the men and masculinities agenda which has sought to explore male identity in the twenty-first century and the changing expectations on modern men. It also constitutes an important contribution to understanding of the continuing complex development of contemporary consumer culture.


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Lynx (2017b). "Is it OK for Guys...". Retrieved 19/05/2017, from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nx5oYrMuc1M.


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Bibliography


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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Term</strong></th>
<th><strong>Definition / meaning</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bigorexia</td>
<td>See megarexia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Breadwinner</td>
<td>The member of a household who provides financial support for others (Meisenbach: 2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chav / chavvy</td>
<td>A young lower-class person typified by brash and loutish behaviour and the wearing of (real or imitation) designer clothes (Hayward and Yar: 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer minimalists</td>
<td>Those who focus on purposeful consumer choices, attempting to reduce the unintentional excess associated with mass-consumption (Fields-Millburn and Nicodemus: 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convenience sampling</td>
<td>A sample available to a researcher by virtue of its accessibility (Bryman: 2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct advertisement</td>
<td>Includes information about a brand or product and are identifiable by layout of copy and text (Kotler and Keller: 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freegans</td>
<td>Those who attempt to minimise the impact of consumption on the environment by retrieving, consuming and using discarded consumer commodities such as food, clothes furniture and books (Edwards and Mercer: 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender-bender</td>
<td>A person who dresses and behaves in a manner characteristic of the opposite sex, or who combines attributes of both sexes; something which challenges or defies traditional notions of gender (Oxford English Dictionary: 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grooming product(s)</td>
<td>Consumer goods and services designed for male audiences and marketed as items that enhance or improve users’ physical appearance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Examples include hair and body products e.g. shampoo and shower gel, skincare products e.g. moisturiser, body lotion and eye cream, fragrance and deodorant, shaving items including razors, electrical shavers and hair trimmers, shaving preparations e.g. balm and post-shave treatment, specialist at-home treatments e.g. face mask, self-tanning and waxing preparations, as well as salon treatments e.g. hair removal, threading (see separate glossary entry), tanning, Botox injections
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition / meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guy-liner</td>
<td>Eye-liner make-up worn by men (Newling: 28/07/2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect advertising</td>
<td>Includes product placement, in-store promotions, sample stands, social media messages and product reviews (Kotler and Keller: 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lads' mag</td>
<td>A magazine aimed at or appealing to new lads (see separate glossary entry) in what has been described as sexist, irreverent editorial content that includes soft-porn representations of women (Benwell: 2004, Jackson, Stevenson and Brooks: 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lothario</td>
<td>A man who habitually seduces women or is sexually promiscuous; a libertine, a philanderer (Oxford English Dictionary: 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumbersexual</td>
<td>First used by journalist Tom Puzak in 2014 to describe a man who demonstrates an interest in the outdoors, or the pseudo-outdoors, partaking in outdoor activities and sports such as camping, foraging, hiking, rafting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lumbersexuals are identified by their consumption of clothes worn in industry such as RedWing 875 work boots, Jansport hiking backpacks, their styled facial hair, tattoos and facial piercings as well as their use of high-tech gadgets such as Apple MacBook Air (Puzak: 30/10/2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manscaping</td>
<td>The removal or trimming of hair on a man's body for cosmetic purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Megarexia</td>
<td>Term given to describe muscle dysmorphia whereby men are concerned with looking too 'small' or 'weak' even though they are of a muscular build (Osborne: 22/09/2015)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metrosexual</td>
<td>First used by British journalist Mark Simpson in the 1990s to describe a city-living heterosexual man that demonstrated an interest in their personal appearance, grooming and dressing stylishly. The term is derived from the words metro(politan) and (hetero)sexual (Simpson: 15/11/1994)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moobs</td>
<td>Unusually prominent breasts on a man (likened to those of a</td>
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<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition / meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>woman) typically as a result of excess pectoral fat (Oxford English Dictionary: 2017)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New lad</td>
<td>Popularised in the 1990s the term describes a type of young man who embraces sexist attitudes and the traditional male role as a reaction against the perceived effeminacy of the ‘new man’ (see separate glossary entry)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New Lad’s demonstrate an interest in activities associated with normative masculinity e.g. socialising, technology, gadgets, cars and football as well as a somewhat reluctant or ironic engagement in consuming and grooming (Benwell: 2004, Gill: 2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Media content focused on the physical appearance of new men describing them as young, white, slim, muscular males who balanced muscularity and hardness with egalitarian strength and who were depicted in exposed or vulnerable poses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Player / playa</td>
<td>Sexually successful person, usually a man; a playboy (Oxford English Dictionary: 2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>A message or comment users ‘post’ or add to an online discussion forum (Kim: 2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retrosexual</td>
<td>The term can be used in two ways - describing a man who demonstrates ‘old-fashioned’ values with little interest in their appearance or a man who self-consciously adopts traditional masculine styles e.g. the fashion and manners of men from the 1950s / 1960s (Weesner Jr.: 18/01/2004, Simpson: 28/06/2003)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salt and pepper</td>
<td>A term used to describe men whose hair colour is a mix of grey and their natural colour</td>
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<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition / meaning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scrotal lift</td>
<td>A procedure once used for physical abnormalities and cancer patients in which the excess skin is removed from the scrotum so it appears less wrinkled or ‘baggy’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silver fox</td>
<td>A term used to refer to grey haired men who are considered to be attractive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snowball sampling</td>
<td>A sample recruited by a researcher who “makes initial contact with a small group of people who are relevant the research topic and then uses these to establish contacts with others” (Bryman: 2016: 188)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporno / spornosexual</td>
<td>First used by journalist Mark Simpson in 2006 to describe an aesthetic adopted by some men who demonstrate a keen interest in physical fitness and grooming. The <em>spornosexual</em> aesthetic emphasises heavy, lean musculature in photographs that mimic homoerotic pornography. <em>Sporno</em> also refers to men who ‘work’ on their bodies with the aim of creating a similar physique to that of the professional <em>sporno</em>. These men tend to be active gym users or sports enthusiast who take pride in their appearance and indulge in consumer and grooming practices similar to that of a <em>metrosexual</em> man (Simpson: 19/06/2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target audience / consumer</td>
<td>The audience / group of consumers a brand market their products towards (Kotler and Keller: 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgender</td>
<td>“An umbrella term for people whose gender identity and / or gender expression differs from what is typically associated with the sex they were assigned at birth” (GLAAD: 2016: 12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threading</td>
<td>A method of hair removal in which unwanted hairs are plucked out by using a twisted cotton thread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ubersexual</td>
<td>Created by Marian Salzman for the advertising agency J. Walter Thompson to describe a male who has similar interests to a <em>metrosexual</em> e.g. an interest in appearance and grooming but who also displays a passion for global causes and physical strength which contribute to his overtly heterosexual identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition / meaning</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waxing</td>
<td>A method of hair removal in which unwanted hairs are removed by either a hot wax application or the use of waxing strips.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Window shopping</td>
<td>Browsing for consumer commodities without making a purchase. Regarded as a form of consumer research and/or activity consumers take pleasure from, experiencing (in person or online) the commodities they intend to/wish to purchase (Rowley: 2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viral</td>
<td>An image, video, piece of information, meme etc. that is circulated rapidly and widely on the internet among users/peers (Porter and Golan: 2006)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuppy / Yuppies</td>
<td>Introduced in the 1980s to describe Young Urban or Upwardly-mobile Professional People who worked in well-paid jobs in the cities, enjoyed cultural attractions and demonstrated an interest in designer clothing, grooming, lifestyle and technology brands, goods and services (Childs and Storry: 2009)</td>
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</table>
Appendix Two – Magazine Profile

GQ

GQ magazine is an international monthly men's magazine that focuses on fashion, style, and culture in articles on food, films, fitness, sex, music, travel, sports, technology and books.

The magazine was launched in the USA as Apparel Arts in 1931. It was a men’s fashion magazine aimed at wholesale buyers and retail sellers who would use the magazine as a guide to show new trends and styles to their clients. Apparel Arts was re-launched as a quarterly magazine for male consumer audiences in 1957. The magazine was renamed Gentleman’s Quarterly in 1958 but was renamed again in 1967 as GQ. In 1970 the magazine became a monthly publication (Conde Naste Publications Ltd.: n.d).

International editions of GQ were launched by the magazine’s publisher Conde Naste Publication Ltd., throughout the 1980s. The British edition GQ magazine was launched in 1988. In 2015 19 countries had their own edition of GQ which although reflect the original American editorial content that emphasises the importance of style and appearance, they demonstrate cultural and regional differences in terms of the fashions, consumer commodities, brands, television, celebrities etc. featured in the magazine.

GQ have devised two annual award ceremonies that reflect the magazine’s and its readers’ interest in style, grooming and consuming. The magazine’s Men of the Year Award ceremony launched in 1997 to recognise the contribution made to popular culture by male celebrities (actors, models, clothing designers, writers, sportsmen, film directors etc.). The first UK version of the GQ Men of the Year Award ceremony took place in 2009. The GQ Grooming Awards were launched in the UK in 2008 and attract attention from GQ readers as well as wider consumer

Figure A2.1: GQ front cover  
September 2010 issue
and marketing industries. Grooming products nominated for an award from GQ experience increased product sales with the award winners becoming market leaders among male consumers.

In 2016 the UK edition of GQ had a total circulation of 125,090 readers each month. The magazine continues to focus its attention on men’s style and grooming. The average age of the largely male readership (86 per cent of readers are male) is 33 years old. Readers tend to be single (56 per cent), living in London (57 per cent) and working full-time (62 per cent). The average household income of readers in £90,364. Three-quarters of readers are upper-middle or middle-class, employed in higher or intermediate managers, administrative or professional occupations (Conde Naste Publications Ltd.: 2016).

**Nuts**

The British weekly men’s magazine *Nuts* was first published in 2004. *Nuts* competed for readers with the rival weekly men’s magazine *Zoo* as well as men’s monthly magazines *FHM* and *Loaded*.

The magazine attracted media attention for their explicit headlines and graphic front covers. In 2013 due to consumer complaints the supermarket chain *The Co-Operative* requested that the publication was sold in ‘modesty bags’. *Nuts* declined this request and temporarily suspended their contract with the supermarket retailer. Due to the magazine’s sexist front covers and graphic content some *Student Unions* refused to stock and sell the title on university campuses (O’Neil: 31/10/2015).

*Figure A2.2: Nuts* front cover 10th – 16th September 2010 issue
Sales of *Nuts* peaked in 2005 when the magazine had a readership of 306,802 but due to increasing competition and a greater demand for online media content circulation figures declined from 2007. The magazine’s publisher *IPC Inspire* announced that *Nuts* magazine would close in April 2014 (IPC Inspire: 2009).

*Nuts* magazine targeted their editorial content and the advertising campaigns included in the magazine at 18 – 30 year old olds. The average age of the predominantly male readership (89 per cent of readers were male) was 25 years old with 63 per cent engaged in full-time employment in supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative, professional, or skilled manual occupations (IPC Inspire: 2009). Readers demonstrated an interest in their appearance as they felt it would impress women, they also demonstrated an interest in football, music, gaming and technology (IPC Inspire: 2009).

I have not been able to include the front cover from the August issue of *Nuts* magazine analysed in this study. I have however included the front cover of the following issue as an example of the magazine’s front cover (see *Figure A2.2*).

**FourFourTwo**

Monthly football magazine *FourFourTwo*¹ was first published in 1994 to coincide with the *Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) World Cup*². The magazine’s content focuses on football with a staff of regular and guest columnists providing commentary on national and international teams, and coverage of regional, national and international leagues and fixtures. The magazine includes interviews with professional and aspiring sports stars as well as football coaches, managers, physiotherapist, scouts etc. The magazine is now published in 17 countries (Haymarket: 2010).

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¹ The name of the magazine is a reference to the football formation ‘4-4-2’ which is considered to be a reliable and standard formation

² The 1994 FIFA World Cup was the 15th FIFA World Cup and was hosted across nine cities in the USA
FourFourTwo describe their editorial mission to deliver ‘insightful analysis’ with ‘a bit of a giggle’ to their intelligent audience (Haymarket: 2010). At the time of writing this thesis, the magazine’s publisher Haymarket did not publicise data that profiled the magazine’s readers on the magazine's or publisher’s website. Haymarket were not able to provide readership data following my request for such data.

Figure A2.3: FourFourTwo front cover
September 2010 issue
Appendix Three – Grooming Brand Profile

\textit{Gillette}

The \textit{Gillette} brand was founded in 1901 with the invention and design of the first safety razor by salesman King C. Gillette. The revolutionary design transformed the shaving experience for men by replacing the need for straight edge razor blades (that men had to send to the barbers for sharpening) with a smaller blade that could be changed by consumers when the razor edge had dulled. The disposable design and relatively low cost of the safety razor blades encouraged male consumers to make repeat purchases from Gillette. In 1903 Gillette had sold 51 razor sets and 168 blades but when he patented his design in 1904 sales figures rose significantly to 90,000 razor sets and 124,000 blades (Funding Universe: n.d. \textit{The Gillette Company History}). In 1918 the American government contracted \textit{Gillette} to manufacture 3.5 million razors and 36 million blades for their soldiers who were fighting in World War 1 (Funding Universe: n.d. \textit{The Gillette Company History}). This contract exposed a generation of men to the \textit{Gillette} brand and contributed to the growth of the brand in the first half of the twentieth-century (Funding Universe: n.d. \textit{The Gillette Company History}).

In 1942 \textit{Gillette} formed their \textit{Cavalcade of Sports} programme which involved the brand in the sponsorship and advertising of national and collegiate football and baseball events in America. The \textit{Cavalcade of Sports} provided \textit{Gillette} with an opportunity to expose millions of predominantly male attendees of sporting events (as well as audiences watching or listening to the sponsored events on televisions and radios) to their range of grooming products. Event sponsorship together with brand endorsement from successful athletes helped to convert loyal sports fans into loyal consumers of the \textit{Gillette} range (Soccio: 02/01/2012). \textit{Gillette}’s marketing presence at these events also cultivated a brand identity associated with sports and physically strong sportsmen (Soccio: 02/01/2012). The brand’s relationship with sport continued to develop throughout the twentieth-century with \textit{Gillette} expanding their portfolio of event sponsorship to include basketball, football, \textit{NASCAR}\(^1\), golf, hockey, rugby, cricket, tennis and motor racing. In 2002 \textit{Gillette} purchased a 69,000 seat stadium in the USA state

\textit{Figure A3.1: Gillette brand logo}

\(^1\) National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing
of Massachusetts in a contract that awarded the brand exclusive naming and sponsorship rights of the *Gillette Stadium* until 2031. This contract, which will cost the brand a reported $8 million a year, demonstrates *Gillette*’s committed investment in brand marketing as well as their continued relationship with sport (McIntyre: 04/11/2013).

In 1993 *Gillette* broadened their consumer audience by diversifying into the women’s shaving market with the launch of the *SenorExcel* razor for women. *Gillette* expanded their product range throughout the 1990s and 2000s with the introduction of hair and skin care products e.g. balms and moisturisers. In the twenty-first century *Gillette* continues to dominate the male grooming product market with their sustained success and popularity attributed to their considerable investment in marketing and promotions as well as in the research and development of their growing range of consumer commodities (Mintel: September 2014, Soccio: 02/01/2012).

**L’Oreal Paris Men Expert**

Eugene Schueller founded the *Oreal* brand of women’s hair dyes in 1909 selling his henna based dyes to exclusive salons across Paris. By 1913 Schueller had exported his hair dyes to Italy, Austria, Canada, the Netherlands, the USA, the UK and Brazil. *Oreal* was renamed *L’Oreal* in 1925 when Schueller unveiled his ground breaking *L’Oreal d’Or* hair-lightening product. The brand’s first foaming hair lotion *O’Cap* was launched in 1928 which changed the way women thought about their hair and hair hygiene as it offered female consumers a hair care product that had previously only been available to professional hair stylists. *O’Cap* was innovative not just for revolutionising women’s hair care routine though as it also introduced the concept of the marketing jingle, informing audiences about the hair lotion through song rather than spoken word in the radio advertisement for the product (L’Oreal: n.d.).
In 1933 Schueller launched *Votre Beaute* the first monthly health and beauty magazine for women which encouraged women to focus more on the way they looked and the beauty products they used to manage their appearance. Schueller hoped that the editorial content and carefully constructed advertising campaigns included in the publication would educate its readers about the beauty industry and the products available, and would stimulate consumers’ interest in the *L’Oreal* range of beauty products (*L’Oreal*: n.d.). Despite the outbreak of war in 1939 and the introduction of household rationing in the 1940s the *L’Oreal* brand continued to grow in popularity. Developments in consumer culture in the mid-twentieth century prompted a relative boom in *L’Oreal’s* sale figures. The brand’s popularity was also effected by popular film stars such as Marilyn Monroe and Bridgett Bardot who encouraged a generation of women to change their hair colour at home (*L’Oreal*: n.d.). Towards the end of the 1950s *L’Oreal* diversified into skin care with a range of products that were developed and marketed specifically for women. In 1966 *L’Oreal* moved into the luxury goods market with the first of its luxury fragrances. *L’Oreal’s* range of fragrances expanded throughout the 1970s with advertising campaigns that emphasised women’s independence and their sensuality which the brand hoped would have appeal with younger women (*L’Oreal*: n.d.).

After obtaining the *Ralph Lauren* brand in 1985 *L’Oreal* moved into the luxury men’s fragrance market distributing the already popular *Ralph Lauren Polo* aftershave. In the same year *Biotherm* (a brand *L’Oreal* acquired in 1970) launched its first line of skin care products designed exclusively for men (*L’Oreal*: n.d.). *L’Oreal* continued to make major developments in skin care throughout the 1990s and 2000s, investing in the research and development of sun care protection, pharmaceutical and cosmetic treatments for skin conditions such as acne, scarring and rosacea as well as cosmetics and hair care products for Afro-Caribbean and ethnic skin and hair tones and types.

*L’Oreal* launched its first mass-market range of skin care products designed specifically for men’s skin in 2004. Advertising campaigns for the *L’Oreal Paris Men Expert* range included product endorsement from notable male celebrities and sportsmen such as David Ginola, Eric Cantona, Matthew Fox and Hugh Laurie who highlighted the ways in which the advanced skin care technology would enhance users’ appearance as well as target the signs of ageing (*L’Oreal*: n.d.). Recognising the success of the *Men Expert* skin care range *L’Oreal* launched *Professionnel Homme* in 2005. As the first professional hair care range for men the
Appendix Three – Grooming Brand Profile

*Professionnel Homme* range includes shampoos, conditioners, hair styling and hair colouring products used and sold in licenced professional hair salons.

Following consumer and market research *L’Oreal* re-launched the brand’s 1973 slogan ‘*Because I’m Worth It*’ in 2009. Placing greater emphasis on consumers’ involvement in their product choice ‘*Because We’re Worth It*’ is no longer reserved for advertising campaigns for the women’s range of beauty and skin care products as the same slogan is now used in and spoken by male actors in the advertising campaigns for *Men Expert* which has encouraged male consumers to associate *L’Oreal* products with the way they feel about themselves and their appearance (*L’Oreal: n.d.*).

Ranked as the world’s 34th most valuable brand *L’Oreal* achieved sales figures in excess of $28 billion in 2016 (*Forbes: n.d. The World’s Most Valuable Brands*). Expanding considerably from the brand’s original hair dye for women *L’Oreal* now dominates four distinct segments of the beauty / grooming market: professional products (used and sold in hair salons), consumer products (affordable skin care and beauty products for men and women, sold in high-street retailers and supermarkets), *L’Oreal Luxury* (high-end skin care and beauty products sold in selective retail outlets such as department stores) and Active Cosmetics (dermocosmetic\(^2\) skin care products sold in pharmacies and specialist retailers).

*Lynx*

First launched in France in 1983 the male body spray was introduced to the UK consumer market two years later. Due to trademark agreements and naming rights the range is sold as *Axe* in the USA, Canada, India, South Africa, France and other European markets excluding the UK and the Republic of Ireland, and *Lynx* in the UK, the Republic of Ireland, Australia, New Zealand and the Republic of China (*Unilever: n.d.*).

\(^2\) Branch of dermatology concerned with the aesthetic appearance of the skin. Combines cosmetics and pharmaceuticals to treat skin disorders such as acne, wrinkles and redness
Initially the *Lynx* brand chose to focus on providing male consumers with a range of scents rather than a range of grooming products which made it the first body spray to be launched as a stand-alone brand with no other products in the range (Unilever: n.d). This focus made the fragrance range as well as the name of *Lynx* fragrances an important aspect of the brand’s marketing campaigns (Cozens: 20/11/2016). Fragrances have been introduced to and expired from the *Lynx* grooming range annually with popular scents withdrawn from the market to make way for new ones. The names of the three original *Lynx* fragrances described the scent of the body spray - Musk, Spice and Amber but these fragrances were withdrawn in the 1990s and replaced by a series of scents with names that referred to geographical locations e.g. *Africa, Inca, Alaska or Atlantis*. Since the launch of the *Gravity* scent in 2001 the fragrance names (which have tended to be a single word that feature heavily in the marketing campaign for the fragrance) have been words associated with sex or sexual attraction e.g. *Pulse, Touch, Vice, Instinct, Excite* (Unilever: n.d).

Sex and sexual attraction have been a key theme in marketing campaigns for *Lynx* products for over 30 years. Several of the brand’s campaigns have attracted attention from the media due to their controversial, overtly sexualised content (BBC: 23/11/2011). *Figure A3.4* provides an example of the style of marketing *Lynx* have employed with a sexual innuendo and a cartoon of a children’s story used to highlight the *Lynx Effect* (the ‘effect’ the brand suggests *Lynx* has in terms of making male users more attractive to women). The sexualised nature of *Lynx* marketing campaigns and the media attention these campaigns have attracted has had appeal with the target audience of *Lynx* users who are described as young males aged 16 to 24 years old (Mintel: October 2014). This age group have identified with the tongue-in-check sexist humour in *Lynx* advertisements that reflect a similar style of rebellious humour featured in popular *lad’s mags* (Feasey: 2009). *Lynx* campaigns are also popular with older male audiences who find the advertisements ‘amusing’ and ‘entertaining’ (Cozens: 20/11/2000).

With the growth of online content *Lynx* have used their *Male Grooming* and *Instagroom* websites as well as social media networks to emphasise to virtual audiences the relationship between *Lynx* products and product users’ sexual attraction. In addition to the list of products

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3 Short how-to video tutorials on style e.g. ‘*How to Hair Style: Mohawk Fade*’ (Axe: n.d.)
available in the grooming range the Lynx websites together with the brand’s Facebook page⁴ provide users with a range of dating tips as well as advice and information on fashion, hair styling and popular trends. The online content reflects the message of marketing campaigns for Lynx products suggesting that if men want to attract women they should use products from the Lynx grooming range (Lynx: n.d).

Whilst the body sprays remain the brand’s most successful product (used by one in four households in the UK (Unilever: n.d)) Lynx has introduced aftershaves, roll-on deodorants, shower gels and razors to their range. In 2012 Lynx expanded their grooming range and target audience with two additions; introducing Attract a unisex body spray as well as hair care and hair styling products for male consumers. Despite strong sales figures the unisex body spray has since been withdrawn from the market and replaced by an Attract fragrance for men and a separate Attract fragrance for women (Superdrug: 07/02/5012).

Figure A3.4: Lynx Apollo / Gingerbread Man advertisement 1998

⁴ A social media account that attracts over 25 million global fans (Unilever: n.d)
In an attempt to broaden their target audience and thereby increase product sales the *Lynx* range underwent a significant rebranding exercise in 2016 (Oakes: 13/01/2016). Whilst the *Find Your Magic* campaign demonstrated the comedic marketing style used in previous marketing campaigns for the *Lynx* range, referencing users’ sexual appeal and their sexual conquests the advertisements encouraged male audiences to express their individuality and embrace their differences (albeit to attract a partner). The marketing campaign included a diverse looking range of men who did not fit the conventional male model of what is considered to be attractive which *Lynx* hoped would “inspire and support men to be the most attractive version of themselves (Ghosh: 14/01/2016) (see discussion in Chapter Six).

The *Lynx* range of products remain leaders in the male grooming market with 8 million men in the UK and the Republic of Ireland using a grooming product from the range daily (Unilever: n.d)). Whilst the range has been repackaged and the advertisements have become increasingly reflective of a broader more diverse male audience the association between *Lynx* products and users’ sexual appeal remains an integral element of the brand’s identity (Ghosh: 14/01/2016, Oakes: 13/01/2016).
FORM UPR16
Research Ethics Review Checklist

Please include this completed form as an appendix to your thesis (see the Postgraduate Research Student Handbook for more information)

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<td>MARY WATKINS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Department:</td>
<td>SSHLS</td>
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<tr>
<td>First Supervisor:</td>
<td>PROFESSOR BARRY SMART</td>
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| Title of Thesis:                               | Grooming Men: Consumer Culture and the Constitution of Masculine Identities |
| Thesis Word Count:                             | 75,511                    |

If you are unsure about any of the following, please contact the local representative on your Faculty Ethics Committee for advice. Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the University’s Ethics Policy and any relevant University, academic or professional guidelines in the conduct of your study

Although the Ethics Committee may have given your study a favourable opinion, the final responsibility for the ethical conduct of this work lies with the researcher(s).

UKRIO Finished Research Checklist:
(If you would like to know more about the checklist, please see your Faculty or Departmental Ethics Committee rep or see the online version of the full checklist at: http://www.ukrio.org/what-we-do/code-of-practice-for-research/)

a) Have all of your research and findings been reported accurately, honestly and within a reasonable time frame? YES ☒ NO ☐

b) Have all contributions to knowledge been acknowledged? YES ☒ NO ☐

c) Have you complied with all agreements relating to intellectual property, publication and authorship? YES ☒ NO ☐

d) Has your research data been retained in a secure and accessible form and will it remain so for the required duration? YES ☒ NO ☐

e) Does your research comply with all legal, ethical, and contractual requirements? YES ☒ NO ☐

Candidate Statement:
I have considered the ethical dimensions of the above named research project, and have successfully obtained the necessary ethical approval(s)

Ethical review number(s) from Faculty Ethics Committee (or from NRES/SCREC): 16/17:51

If you have not submitted your work for ethical review, and/or you have answered ‘No’ to one or more of questions a) to e), please explain below why this is so:

Signed (PGRS): Date: 29/05/2017
STATEMENT OF ETHICAL COMPLIANCE

Name: Mary Watkins

Study Title: Grooming Men: Consumer Culture and the Constitution of Masculine Identities

Reference Number: 16/17:51

Date Submitted: May 2017

Thank you for submitting your application to the FHSS Ethics Committee.

I am pleased to inform you that FHSS Ethics Committee was content to grant a statement of ethical compliance of the above research on the basis described in the submitted documents listed at Annex A, and subject to standard general conditions (See Annex B).

Please note that the statement of compliance of FHSS Ethics Committee does not grant permission or approval to undertake the research/ work. Management permission or approval must be obtained from any host organisation, including the University of Portsmouth or supervisor, prior to the start of the study.

Wishing you every success in your research

Chair
Dr Jane Winstone
Email: ethics-fhss@port.ac.uk

Annexes
A - Documents reviewed
B - After ethical review
ANNEX A  Documents reviewed

The documents ethically reviewed for this application

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ANNEX B - After ethical review

1. This Annex sets out important guidance for those with a statement of ethical compliance from a University of Portsmouth Ethics Committee. Please read the guidance carefully. A failure to follow the guidance could lead to the committee reviewing and possibly revoking its opinion on the research.

2. It is assumed that the work will commence within 1 year of the date of the statement of ethical compliance or the start date stated in the application, whichever is the latest.

3. The work must not commence until the researcher has obtained any necessary management permissions or approvals – this is particularly pertinent in cases of research.
hosted by external organisations. The appropriate head of department should be aware of
a member of staff’s plans.

4. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study beyond that stated in the application,
the Ethics Committee must be informed.

5. Any proposed substantial amendments must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for
review. A substantial amendment is any amendment to the terms of the application for
ethical review, or to the protocol or other supporting documentation approved by the
Committee that is likely to affect to a significant degree:

(a) the safety or physical or mental integrity of participants
(b) the scientific value of the study
(c) the conduct or management of the study.

5.1 A substantial amendment should not be implemented until a statement of
ethical compliance has been given by the Committee.

6. At the end of the work a final report should be submitted to the ethics committee. A
template for this can be found on the University Ethics webpage.

7. Researchers are reminded of the University’s commitments as stated in the Concordat
to Support Research Integrity viz:

• maintaining the highest standards of rigour and integrity in all aspects of research
• ensuring that research is conducted according to appropriate ethical, legal and
  professional frameworks, obligations and standards
• supporting a research environment that is underpinned by a culture of integrity and
  based on good governance, best practice and support for the development of
  researchers
• using transparent, robust and fair processes to deal with allegations of research
  misconduct should they arise
• working together to strengthen the integrity of research and to reviewing progress
  regularly and openly.

8. In ensuring that it meets these commitments the University has adopted the UKRIO
Code of Practice for Research. Any breach of this code may be considered as misconduct
and may be investigated following the University Procedure for the Investigation of
Allegations of Misconduct in Research. Researchers are advised to use the UKRIO
checklist as a simple guide to integrity.
PART ONE
1. Study Title
Masculinity and Consuming

2. Invitation
You are being invited to take part in a research study. It is important that you fully understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and consult with others about the study if you would like to.

PART ONE explains the purpose of the study and the process you will be part of if you do take part.

PART TWO provides more information about the conduct of the study. The researcher can answer any questions you may have or explain anything that is not clear.

3. What is the purpose of the study?
This study will inform the researcher, undertaking a research degree at the University of Portsmouth, about men's use of grooming products and response to grooming product advertisements.

4. Why have I been chosen?
This study will involve current University of Portsmouth students and male support staff employed at the University of Portsmouth.

5. Do I have to take part?
No, your participation in this study is completely voluntary; it is up to you to decide if you would like to take part. If you decide to take part, you will receive a copy of this Participant Information Sheet and you will be asked to sign a Consent Form. You can withdraw from this study at any time, without providing a reason.

6. What will I have to do?
You will be asked to attend a 1 hour focus group with other male students and University support staff to talk about your use of grooming products, perception of product ranges and response to advertisements. All questions should be answered as honestly and accurately as possible.

Expenses and payments
There is no official funding for this research study and so participants will not be paid for the time.

7. What are the possible benefits of taking part?
There are no direct benefits to you for your involvement in this study but the information provided will help the development of this research study.

8. What happens when the research study stops?
The research collected will be written up and will form part of a paper to develop ideas about the chosen topic. A summary of the data collected and research paper can be sent to you upon request.

9. What if there is a problem?
A complaints procedure is in place in accordance with the University of Portsmouth complaints procedure. Details are provided in Part 2 overleaf.

10. Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?
All the information you provide for this study will be kept confidential, further details are provided in Part 2.

11. Contact details
For further information about this study please e mail mary.watkins@port.ac.uk

This completes Part 1 of the Participant Information Sheet. If the information in Part 1 has interested you and you are considering participating in this study, please continue to read the additional information in Part 2 before making your decision.

PART TWO

12. Can I see my data?
You will be given the opportunity to review the data collected during the focus groups, presented upon participant’s request.

13. What will happen if I don’t want to carry on with the study?
In full accordance with the requirements outlined in the Statement of Ethics published by the British Sociological Association (www.britsoc.co.uk) you can withdraw from the study at any time; data collected from the focus group will continue to be used in this study.

14. What if there is a problem?
If you are not happy with any aspect of this study you can discuss your concerns using the contact details above. If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally you can contact the University’s Research Ethics Committee www.port.ac.uk/research or 023 9284 6191.

15. Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?
Your confidentiality will be safeguarded during and after the study. Following the requirements outlined in the Statement of Ethics published by the British Sociological Association and in compliance with the Data Protection Act 1998 procedures for handling, processing, storage and destruction of your data will be in place. Your data will be collected and stored electronically under password protection. Only the researcher will have access to your data.

16. What will happen to the results of the research study?
The data collected from this study will be presented in a paper on the subject. This will be made available to the researcher’s supervisor for review, a summary of which can be sent to you upon request.

17. Who is organising and funding the research?
Mary Watkins is responsible for the organisation and funding of this research study which will form part of a research degree.

18. Who has reviewed the study?
This study has been reviewed by Professor Barry Smart (barry.smart@port.ac.uk) and Dr Kay Peggs (kay.peggs@port.ac.uk)

You will be given a copy of this Participant Information Sheet and asked to sign a consent form.

Thank you for considering taking part and taking time to read this information.
**Study Title:** Masculinity and Consuming

**Researcher's name:** This study is being conducted by Mary Watkins and supervised by Professor Barry Smart

**Organisation:** University of Portsmouth

**Invitation**

Thank you for reading this information. I would like to invite you to take part in my research study by completing this online questionnaire. It is entirely up to you whether you participate but your response would be valued.

You have been asked to contribute to this research study which is concerned with men’s attitude to work, interest in shopping and use of toiletries including skin care products, hair styling aids, body sprays etc. I am interested in gathering information from working men aged over 18 and hoped you would be willing to contribute.

You are being asked to fill in this online questionnaire which should take no more than 15 minutes to complete. The questionnaire will be open for three weeks between April and May 2012. After which point the questionnaire will no longer be available. You will not need to provide your name or any identifying details as the questionnaire can be completed anonymously. All reasonable steps will be taken to ensure confidentiality. Responses from completed questionnaires will be collated for analysis. Completed questionnaires will be stored electronically on a password protected database. If you wish to learn more about the results collected please contact the researcher for a summary of the data.

You will be given the opportunity to take part in a second stage of research involving a focus group where you will be asked to discuss your responses in more depth with other participants. This stage of research is also entirely voluntary. If you would be interested in contributing to this focus group please enter your name and contact details at the end of the questionnaire. This information will be reviewed and selected participants contacted by the researcher with further information.
Thank you for taking the time to read this information and the consideration you have given to taking part in this study.

Mary Watkins
Appendix Seven – Online Questionnaire

The questions are presented and indicated by number. The programmed responses available for selection are indicated with a bullet point.

Section 1 - Shopping Habits

This section will ask you questions about our shopping habits including where you shop, who you shop with and what you shop for

1) Do you enjoy shopping?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

2) How often do you 'go shopping' (whether in person or online)?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Bi-monthly
- Monthly
- Seasonally
- Yearly
- Whenever I can afford to
- I browse online more than make purchases
- Never

3) Aside from your general household shopping, what three items do you buy most often?

- Clothes
- Music (DCs or downloads)
- DVDs
- Fragrance
- Collectables
- Books / magazines
- DIY projects
- Presents
- Home wares
- Grooming products (moisturiser, hair products)
- Electronic games
- Hobby related items (sports equipment, musical instruments)
- Electronic items (PC, laptop, tablet, games console, television, DVD player, MP3 player etc)
Appendix Seven – Online Questionnaire

- Not relevant as I don’t shop (please skip to question 8)

4) A) What is your preferred method of shopping?

- In person at large shopping centres (please skip to question 5)
- In person on the high street (please skip to question 5)
- In person at supermarkets (please skip to question 5)
- Online (please answer questions 4b and 4c)

4) B) Why do you prefer to shop online?

- Quicker than in person
- Competitive prices
- Greater choice
- Safer payment options

4) C) When shopping online, what do you buy most often?

- Clothes
- Music (DCs or downloads)
- DVDs
- Fragrance
- Collectables
- Books / magazines
- DIY projects
- Presents
- Home wares
- Grooming products (moisturiser, hair products)
- Electronic games
- Hobby related items (sports equipment, musical instruments)
- Electronic items (PC, laptop, tablet, games console, television, DVD player, MP3 player etc)

5) What tends to be the main reason for you to go shopping?

- Preparation for going on holiday (shorts, flip flops, skiing items etc)
- Change of season
- Replace worn-out items
- Enjoy looking for new items
- Enjoyable way to spend time
- Buy latest or newly released items (gadgets, music, fragrances etc)
- Browse online more than make purchases
6) Who do you shop with most often?

- On your own
- With friends
- With partner
- With children
- As a family

7) Who do you shop for most regularly?

- Self
- Partner
- Children
- Friends
- Family members

8) Can you estimate your monthly spend on consumer items e.g. clothes, DVDs, CDs, electrical items, hobby related equipment

- Less than £10
- £10 - £29
- £30 - £49
- £50 - £99
- £100 - £199
- £200 - £299
- Over £300
- Don't know, I don't keep track of spending

9) Do you tend to buy from the same shop(s) / brand(s) regularly?

- Yes
- No
- Depends on the item

10) Can you estimate how long you spend on a shopping trip (whether online or in store)?

- Less than an hour
Appendix Seven – Online Questionnaire

- 1 - 3 hours
- 3 - 5 hours
- All day

11) When buying personal care products (shaving creams, razors, hair products etc) do you know which brand and item you will choose before entering the store / online shop?

- Yes
- No
- Depends on the item

Section 2 - Personal Care Routine

This section is concerned with the toiletries you use and the brands you recognise

12) A) Do you have a daily skin care routine e.g. moisturising, shaving etc?

- Yes (please answer question 12b and 12c)
- No (please skip to question 13)

12) B) If yes, where do you tend to buy your skin care products?

- Supermarket
- High street pharmacy (e.g. Boots)
- Online
- Barber
- Other outlet

12) C) Who buys the skin care products you use?

- Self
- Partner
- Self and partner
- Family member
- Receive them as gifts from friends, family, partner, children etc

13) Can you estimate your monthly spend on personal care products e.g. shaving items, moisturising products, hair styling products, deodorants etc?
Appendix Seven – Online Questionnaire

- Nothing, I don't use these products
- Less than £10
- £10 - £29
- £30 - £49
- £50 - £99
- Over £100

14) Do you consider your personal appearance important to you?
   - Yes, I take pride in my appearance
   - It's something I think about but don't spend much time or money on
   - No, I don't consider it important at all

15) Have you ever visited a salon for any treatments e.g. facial, specialist shaves, waxing etc?
   - Yes
   - No
   - I have thought about it but have not booked an appointment
   - I would never consider this
16) Please look at the brands below and tick as many of the brands that you recognise (you do NOT need to use or have used them)
17) Please look at the brands below and tick the brands that you currently use or have used in the past

Section 3 - Leisure Activities

Questions in this section are focussed on your hobbies and interests

18) A) Do you have any past-times or hobbies?
   
   - Yes (please answer 18b)
   - No (please skip to question 19)

18) B) If yes, please select your preferred past-time / hobby from the list below

   - Fishing
   - Sport
Appendix Seven – Online Questionnaire

- Literature
- Gym
- Blogging
- Playing cards
- Walking
- Theatre
- Cooking
- Gaming (X Box, PlayStation etc)
- Gigs
- Arts
- Collecting
- Travelling
- Film / cinema
- Shopping
- Dancing
- Yoga
- Band member
- Performance group
- Music
- Other (please specify)

19) Do you play any of the following sports or have membership to any sports clubs (you can select up to three from the list below)?

- Not a member of a gym or sports club
- Gym member
- Football club
- Rugby club
- Cricket club
- Tennis club
- Squash club
- Badminton club
- Cycling club
- Running club
- Fishing club
- Hockey club
- Sailing
- Other (please specify)

Section 4 - Profiling Information

This section asks about your age, employment, accommodation, marital status etc

20) Which of the following age bracket do you fit in to?

- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- Over 55

21) What is your current working status?
• Full-time paid employment
• Full-time student
• Part-time paid employment
• Part-time student
• Retired (proceed to question 24)
• Unemployed (proceed to question 24)
• Unpaid carer (proceed to question 24)
• Other (please specify)

22) What is your occupational position?

• Manager (e.g. manager, director, chief executive, senior official)
• Professional (e.g. doctor, dentist, health professional, nurse, legal professional, teacher, web designer and developer)
• Associate professional and technical (e.g. science and engineering technician, health and social welfare professional, sport and fitness occupation, design and media professional, community support officer, IT technician)
• Administrative and secretarial (e.g. office manager, administrator, bank clerk, market researcher)
• Skilled trades (e.g. building, metal, electrical and electronic trades supervisor, skilled agricultural worker)
• Caring, leisure and other services (e.g. care assistant, nursery assistant, hairdresser, leisure and travel occupation, paramedic)
• Sales and customer services (e.g. sales supervisor, sales and retail assistant)
• Process, plant and machine operative (e.g. assembler, transport driver)
• Elementary occupation (e.g. farm worker, forestry worker, labourer, hygiene operative, packing machine operator)

23) How important do you consider your job to who you are?

• Completely, it says everything about me
• I enjoy my work but I would rather have another career
• I enjoy my work but don't consider it important to me
• Not at all, it's just what I do to fund my life

24) What is your current status?
Appendix Seven – Online Questionnaire

- Single
- Married
- Living with partner
- In a relationship but not living with partner
- Civil partnership
- Separated
- Divorced
- Widowed

25) Do you have any children?
- Yes
- No

26) Who do you live with?
- On your own
- With parents / relatives
- With partner
- With partner and children
- With children
- With friends
- With other sharers

27) Could you select your current accommodation?
- Own home (with you own outright or pay a mortgage on)
- Rented
- Other

28) Could you please select your ethnicity?
- White British
- White Irish
- Any other white background
- Any other Mixed background
- Indian
- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
Appendix Seven – Online Questionnaire

- Any other Asian background
- Caribbean
- African
- Any other Black background
- Chinese
- Any other ethnic group
- Prefer not to state ethnicity

Section 5: OPTIONAL Contact Details

A second stage of research will be conducted following this questionnaire and is entirely voluntary. Participants will be given the opportunity to meet face-to-face to discuss attitudes to shopping and male toiletries including skin care products, hair styling aids, body sprays etc. If you would be willing to take part in a one hour focus group please add your contact details. Thank you for taking part in this study.

Full name

Please add your e mail address or telephone number in the boxes below

E mail address

Telephone number
1. What age bracket do you fit in to?
2. What is your current working status?
3. How important do you consider your job to who you are?
4. What is your current relationship status?
5. Which of the following best describes your sexual identity?
6. Which of the following best describes who you live with?
7. Do you have any children?
8. Which of the following best describes your ethnicity?
9. Do you use personal grooming products (e.g. facial moisturisers, body lotion, shaving applications, hair products)?
10. Who buys the grooming products you use?
11. Do you consider your personal appearance important to you?
12. Please look at the brands below and tick as many of the brands that you **recognise** (you do not need to use or have used them) (see Appendix Nine for images of brands included in questionnaire)
13. Please look at the brands below and tick as many of the brands that you **currently use** or have **used in the past** (see Appendix Nine for images of brands included in questionnaire)
The profiling questionnaire used in the online discussion forum included the 30 images or logos of male grooming brands below. These brands reflected the range of high-street and premium male grooming brands on sale in the UK at the time that this research element was conducted. The price of the products listed ranged between £1.99 for a Sure deodorant to £32 for a Clinique facial moisturiser. Participants were asked to indicate the brands they used as well as the brands they recognised. Participants could also specify any other brands that they used that were not included in the list provided. This quantitative data was used to assess the participants’ awareness of and engagement in the male grooming product market.
Day One - Use of grooming products

1. Do you use any male grooming products? If so, can you tell me about the products you use and why you use them?
2. If you don’t use any grooming products can you indicate why?

Day Two - Personal appearance and perception

3. Is your personal appearance and grooming important to you? If so, can you explain how it is important to you?
4. Do your friends, family or work colleagues ever comment on your appearance? What do they say if they do make comments?
5. Some men describe their attitude to their appearance as being laid back while others say their appearance is high maintenance. Others consider themselves to be vain while others do not care at all about their appearance. How would you describe your attitude to your personal appearance?

Day Three – Representations of men in media content

7. There are several representations of men portrayed in television and magazine advertising campaigns - such as businessmen, family men, sportsmen, metrosexual men. Can you tell me about any representations that you can relate to and how they reflect your lifestyle / interests?
8. Various celebrities and sportsmen are used in grooming product advertising campaigns e.g. David Beckham and Gillette, Eric Cantona, Matthew Fox, Hugh Laurie, Pierce Brosnan and L’Oreal, Jude Law and Dior, Ryan Reynolds and Hugo Boss. To what extent do you identify with male celebrity figures who have endorsed male grooming products? Does their endorsement encourage you to buy these products?
Appendix Ten – Online Discussion Forum Threads and Questions

Day Four - Influencing factors

9. What factors influence your purchase of grooming products?
10. What do you think influences your decisions about style, grooming and fashion?
11. Where do you tend to get information about style, grooming, and fashion?
12. Do you buy any men's lifestyle magazines such as *GQ, Men's Health, FHM*?

Day Five – Grooming behaviours

13. Do you have a grooming routine that you follow? If so, do you think this will continue and, potentially, expand in the future?
14. Do you think anything would stop you using grooming products in the future?
### Appendix Eleven – Summary of Online Discussion Forum Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>18 - 24</th>
<th>25 - 34</th>
<th>35 - 44</th>
<th>45 - 55</th>
<th>Over 55</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>Married / Civil Partnership</td>
<td>Living with partner</td>
<td>In a relationship but not living together</td>
<td>Separated / divorced</td>
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<td>Number of participants</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of participants</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Employment Status</strong></td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
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<td>Other White background</td>
<td>Bangladeshi</td>
<td>Other mixed background</td>
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