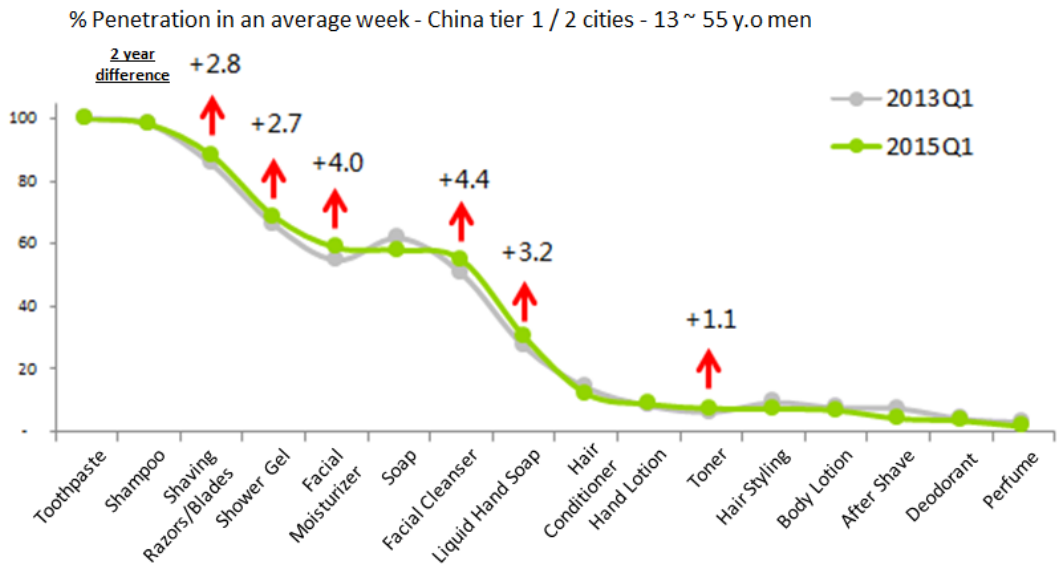
Male grooming: both functional and emotional matters

Chinese men are become increasingly conscious about their appearance not only to impress the ladies but also to satisfy themselves. However, for Chinese men, just being good looking is not enough. Possessing a distinguished personal brand, being charming and attractive both inside and outside is what matters.

Kantar Worldpanel studies how men use personal care products in tier 1 and tier 2 cities of China and the research has revealed that the number of men using personal care products is on the rise in recent years. Compared to 2 years ago, significant increases are seen in the penetration of facial care, body care and shaving products, among which facial care products enjoy the strongest growth. The penetration of male facial cleanser and facial moisturizer have grown 4.4% and 4.0% respectively in 2 years, demonstrating men's continuous pursuit for a better appearance.



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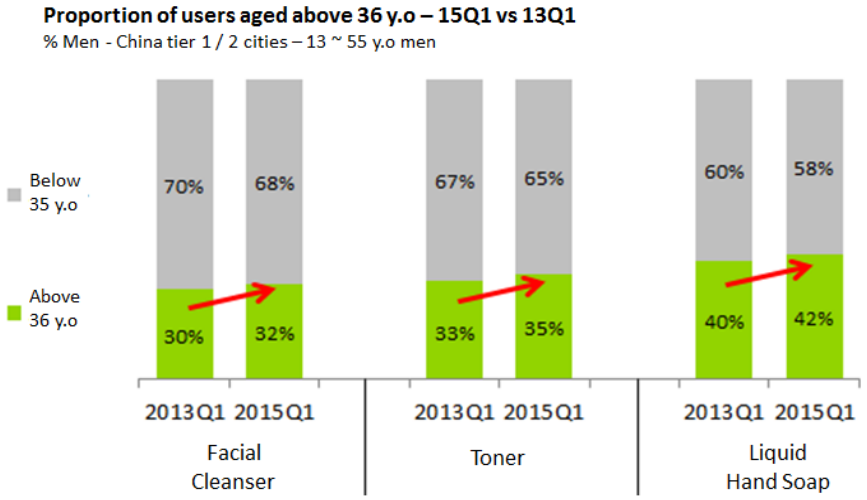
The study also found that it's not just young men who are growing the category. More and more middle-aged men have entered the category and have become increasingly important to category growth. Data from the usage panel of Kantar Worldpanel found that men aged above 35 years old represent a greater importance in the facial cleanser, toner and liquid hand soap markets compared to 2 years ago.



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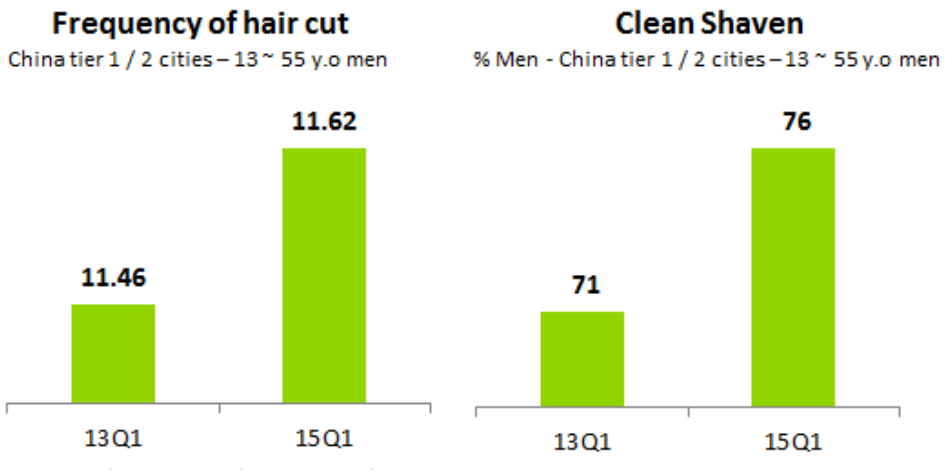
More interestingly, in addition to the higher usage of personal care products for improved looks, Chinese men now pay more attention on taking care of themselves by looking more clean and tidy. Based on the usage panel data of Kantar Worldpanel, Chinese men have their hair cut more frequently compared to 2 years ago. Besides, more men tend to be clean shaven when they go out.



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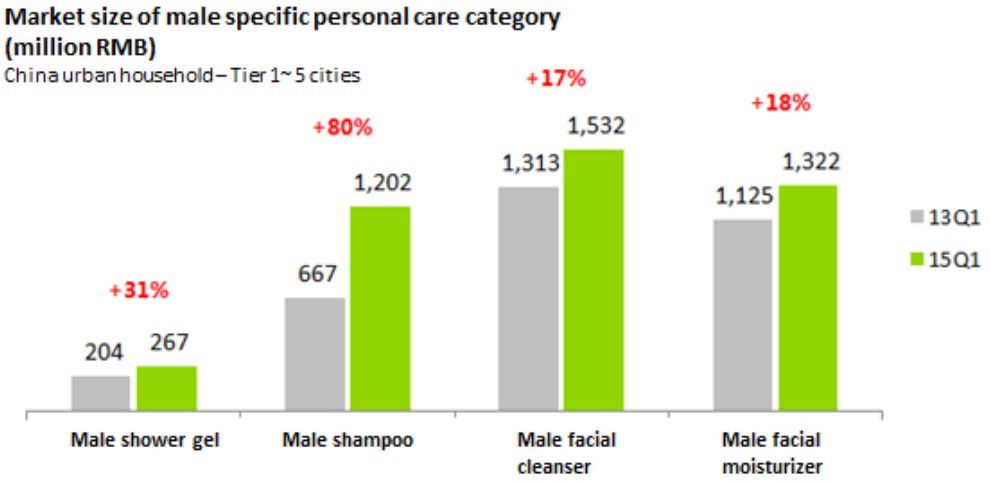
Build Brand Image by Functional Expertise

Brand quality is now more important for men these days and brands that meet the functional needs as well as portraying a brand image which men can relate to are increasingly popular. The explosive growth of male specific brands is the best example of this.

Those cool and fashionable male exclusive brands now occupy a prominent position on the shelf across a number of categories including facial care, shampoo and deodorant. The market size for

these brands has expanded rapidly as an increasing number of consumers are buying and using them. According to the purchase panel of Kantar Worldpanel, the market size and penetration of male specific brands have grown rapidly in shampoo, shower gel, facial cleanser and facial care market for the last 2 years. Male specific shampoo has enjoyed 80% growth in terms of market size over the last 2 years.



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It is not a blind choice that men choose male exclusive brands. Men often have different personal care needs and most brands will offer a choice of different variants each with different features and benefits tailored to men. The usage data of Kantar Worldpanel reveals that men are more likely to have greasy skin, thus, they have a greater need for oil control when using facial care products. Male specific brands emphasizing on oil control generally show a strong performance in this category. At the same time, brands can enhance the usage experience but offering other benefits such as ‘refreshing’ or ‘energizing’. Brands can attract more consumers via direct communication on these types of product benefits.

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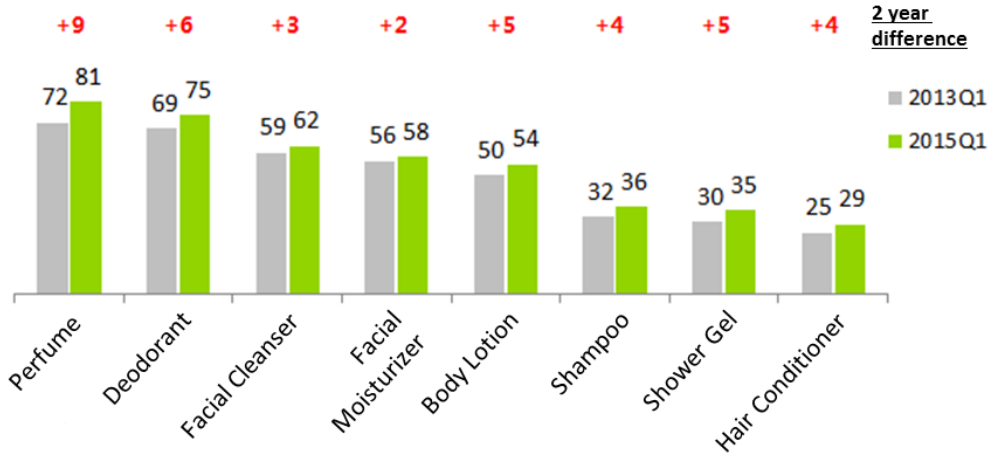
Winning Men's Heart by Direct Communication

The traditional idea that women take care of the household's shopping needs is no longer relevant in male grooming market as more and more men are engaged in the process of selecting their own personal care products. According to usage data of Kantar Worldpanel, the proportion of men who make their own purchase decision in key personal care categories is on the rise, and the trend is more evident in male exclusive brands. As men become more sophisticated they are more willing to participate in the purchase decision of category and brands. Talking to men directly is a key success factor for male specific brands.



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By looking at what men have to say about on their personal care usage we can further understand the reasons for the changes in their purchase behaviour. More and more men tend to agree with the statement “My look reflects who I really am” (rising from 76% to 78% in 2 years) and “It is important that I keep up with the latest fashions & trends” (rising from 36% to 39% in 2 years). Thus, they are more willing to “spend time to choose the right skincare products” (rising from 13% to 18% in 2 years) and they “find both the morning and evening skincare routine important” (rising from 51% to 55% in 2 years).

Men do care more about their appearance in this “appearance is the king” era, which opens up a large opportunity within male grooming. Those “for men” products which have been most successful have been able to both enhance men’s appearance and fulfil their emotional needs of personal value. Brands should focus on improving both functional and emotional benefits so that they touch men’s hearts as well as their wallets!